european ESK seminar for Kinetography

**EUROPEAN SEMINAR FOR KINETOGRAPHY**

Paper No.6.

# Some Thoughts on Kneeling as Written in Kinetography Laban

by Christine Eckerle,1989.

## Introduction

The problem of writing kneeling occasionally causes concern among practitioners of the Laban System,as it does not follow smoothly the established analytical criteria.

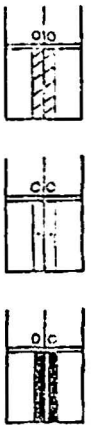
The real difficulty is caused by the anatomical fact that the knee joint connects the thigh and the lower leg,and it functions like a hinge.Thus it is moveable only in one direction.

The present paper summarises attempts made by the authoress over the years,to clarify this issue.The following presentations resulted from this research:

- Comments on the 1979 ICKL - paper "Foot/Knee Supports",by Ann Hutchinson-Guest (1981).
- Direction Signs denoting the various Levels of Kneeling (ESK,1983).
- Arguments against the Concept of "Angling" (ESK,1983).
- Levels in Kneeling (ESK,1988).

## I. Levels in kneeling

Direction symbols placed in the support column denote the progression of the body.This is being analysed as a movement of the centre of gravity,in relation to the "place",which is a point on the surface of support,located vertically below the centre of gravity (Principles, p.20/21).The shading of the direction signs denotes the level of the movements,thus the three-dimensional aspect of the progression is recorded.

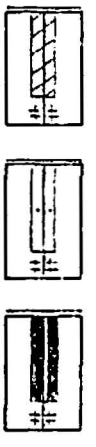


I.

In supports the levels indicate the situation of the centre of gravity in relation to the supporting point, i.e.the situation of the centre of gravity along the vertical (Knust,Principles,p.24).Thus the usage of levels (Ex.1)in describing movements of the centre of gravity follows the definition of supports,and it is a convention, established long ago in kinetography.This convention is followed consistently in the whole context of supporting movements.

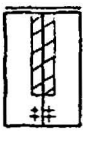
With kneeling the same criterion is applied,with a modification,however,which is dictated by anatomical conditions.The levels are thus defined as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| high level: | centre of gravity high above the surface of support;the thigh is in vertical position; |
| middle level: | centre of gravity lowered half way, the thigh is at an angle of 45 to the back; |
| deep level: | centre of gravity lowered maximally, the thigh is almost parallel to the surface of support (Ex.2). |



2.

As outlined above,all indications concerning the levels of supports are conventions (Knust,Principles p.41).Therefore in the case of kneeling this convention has also to be applied.



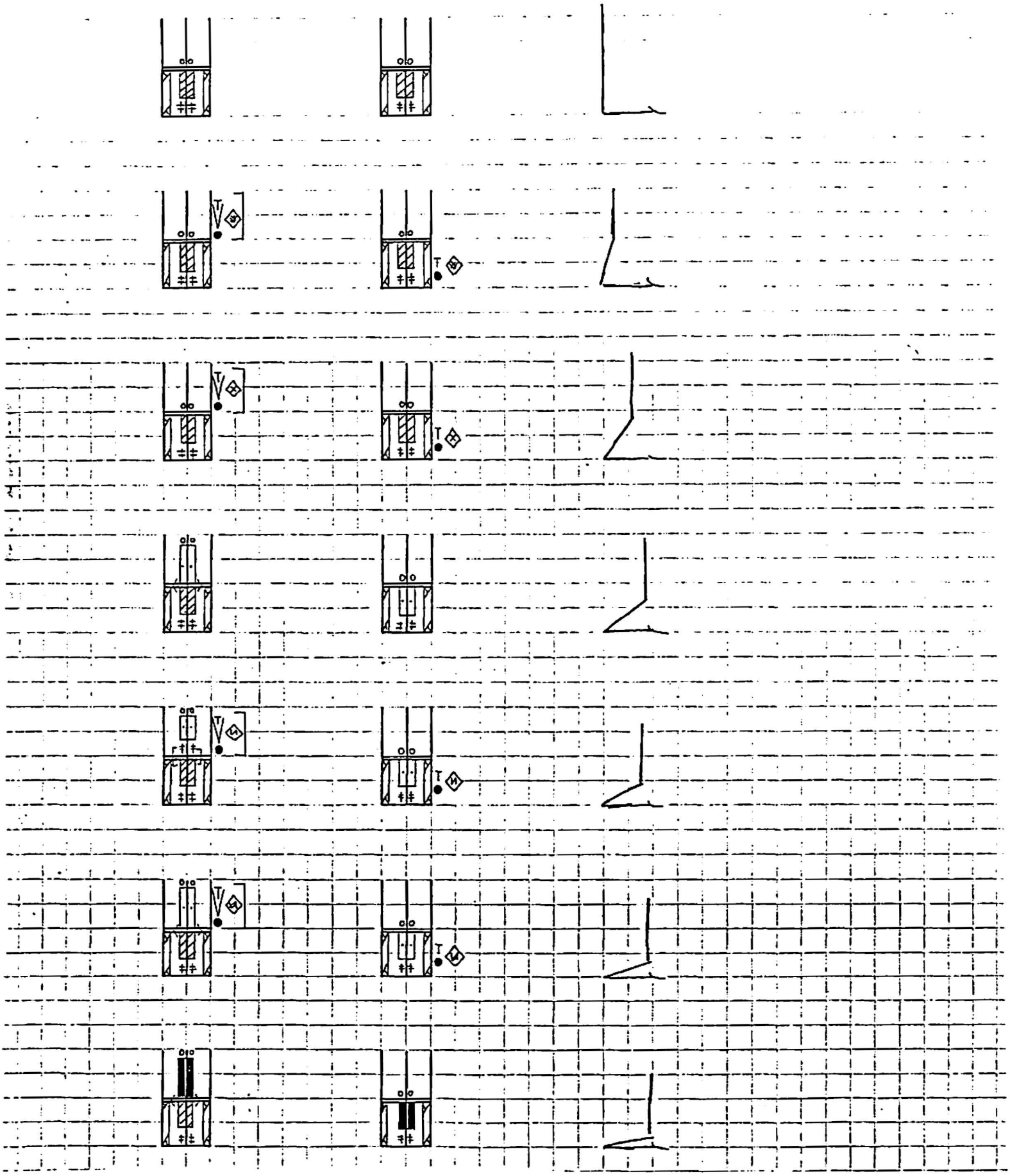
3.

There have been discussions at ICKL over the years about using only two levels in kneeling,namely the "high" and the "middle".This,however,does not cover the whole problem.To indicate a gradual lowering of the centre of gravity from one extreme,the "high" situation (Ex.3) to the "deep" situation (Ex.4),one has to have an intermediate stage.A widened scale of possibilities in writing the lowering of the centre of gravity is shown in the attached survey.

4.

# Survey of levels of kneeling

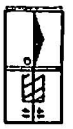
**Movements** **Positions**



5.

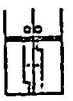
## II. The point of reference

Another problem encountered in writing "kneeling" is the supporting point.As it is the rule in kinetography,in transferences of the weight any new direction is judged from the last achieved point of support:the "place" (Ex.5 in this case the stance of the left leg).Therefore in "high" kneeling the new direction is judged from the point where the knees touch the floor (Ex.6)



6.

When lowering the centre of gravity the weight becomes more and more distributed over the lower leg.In "deep kneeling" there is in fact scarcely any weight left on the knees.Since the knees are indicated within the support columns they are still the point of reference,because there is no possibility to judge a direction from a surface.For instance,if in Ex.6.the whole lower leg were to be a surface of reference,where would the foot be placed on beat one?



7.

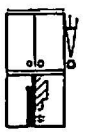
## III. Directions in foot/knee supports

8.

Directions in transitions of weight are generally judged from the last achieved "place".When standing on both legs the "place" is located between both feet,the weight distributed equally (Ex.7).If there are different levels,the centre of gravity is shifted accordingly (Ex.8);the "place" is still between both feet.

9.

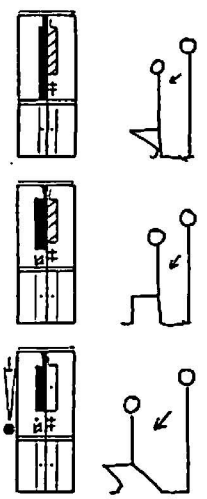
In foot/knee supports the same principle is applied.If both body parts are written within the support column,they both carry the weight,which is unequally distributed (Ex.9).



10.

When shifting the weight (the centre of gravity) between the two supporting points,the movement has to be appropriately recorded (Ex.10).The shift takes place only to a very small degree,because there is no change in the supports,and the kneeling leg does not change the level.

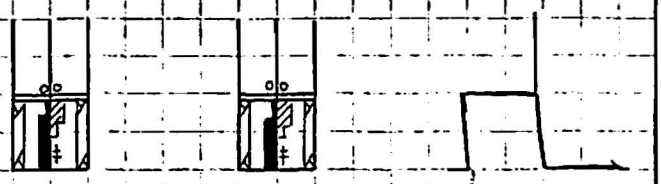
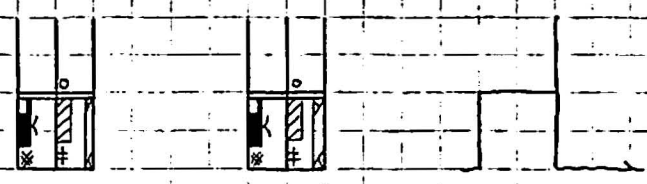
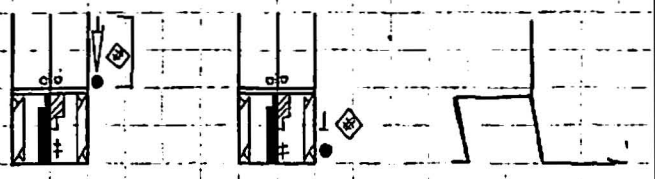
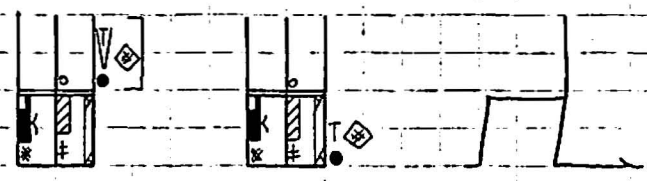
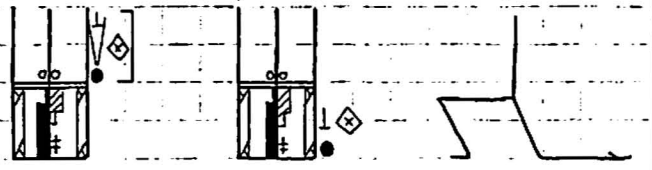
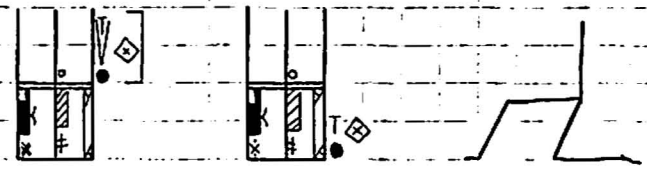
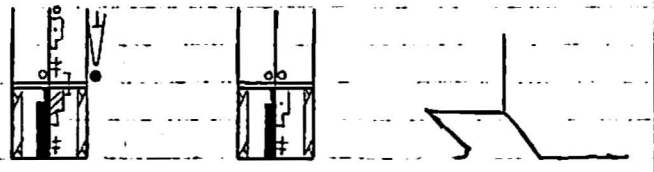
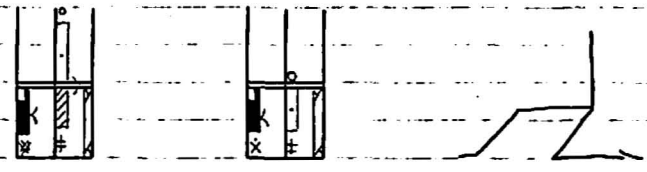
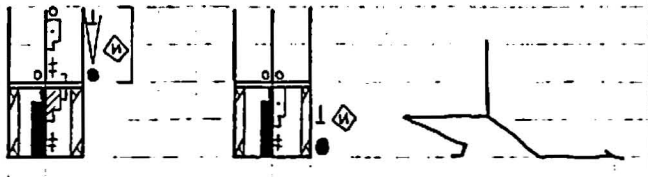
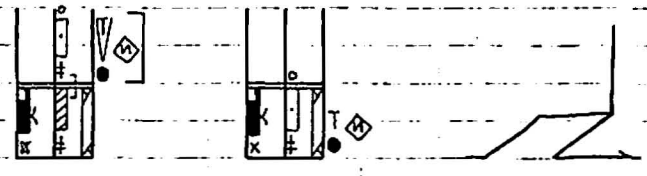
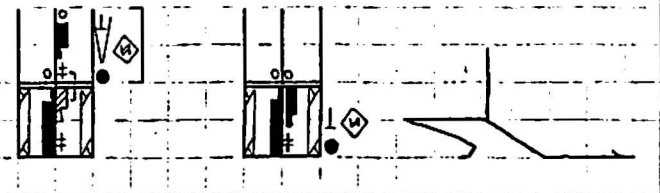
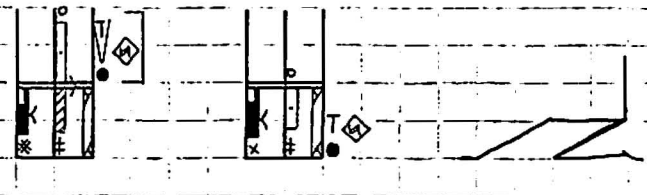
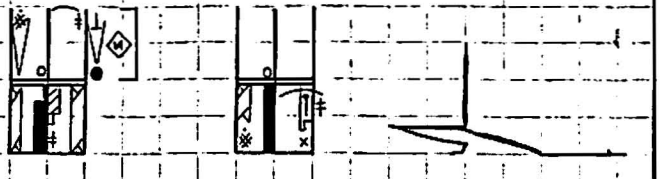
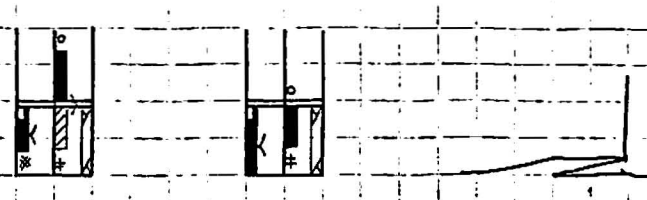
The grading of the shift of the centre of gravity is shown in the attached survey.By adding an indication for a large or a small performance,a very wide range of differentiation may be established.



In transferring the weight on one knee and on the other foot,when starting from two feet,the position of the thigh of the kneeling leg results from the distance taken by the foot in relation to the previous "place". In a distance of more than two step lengths,the thigh has to be inclined by 45°,and the centre of gravity is shifted forwards.

11.

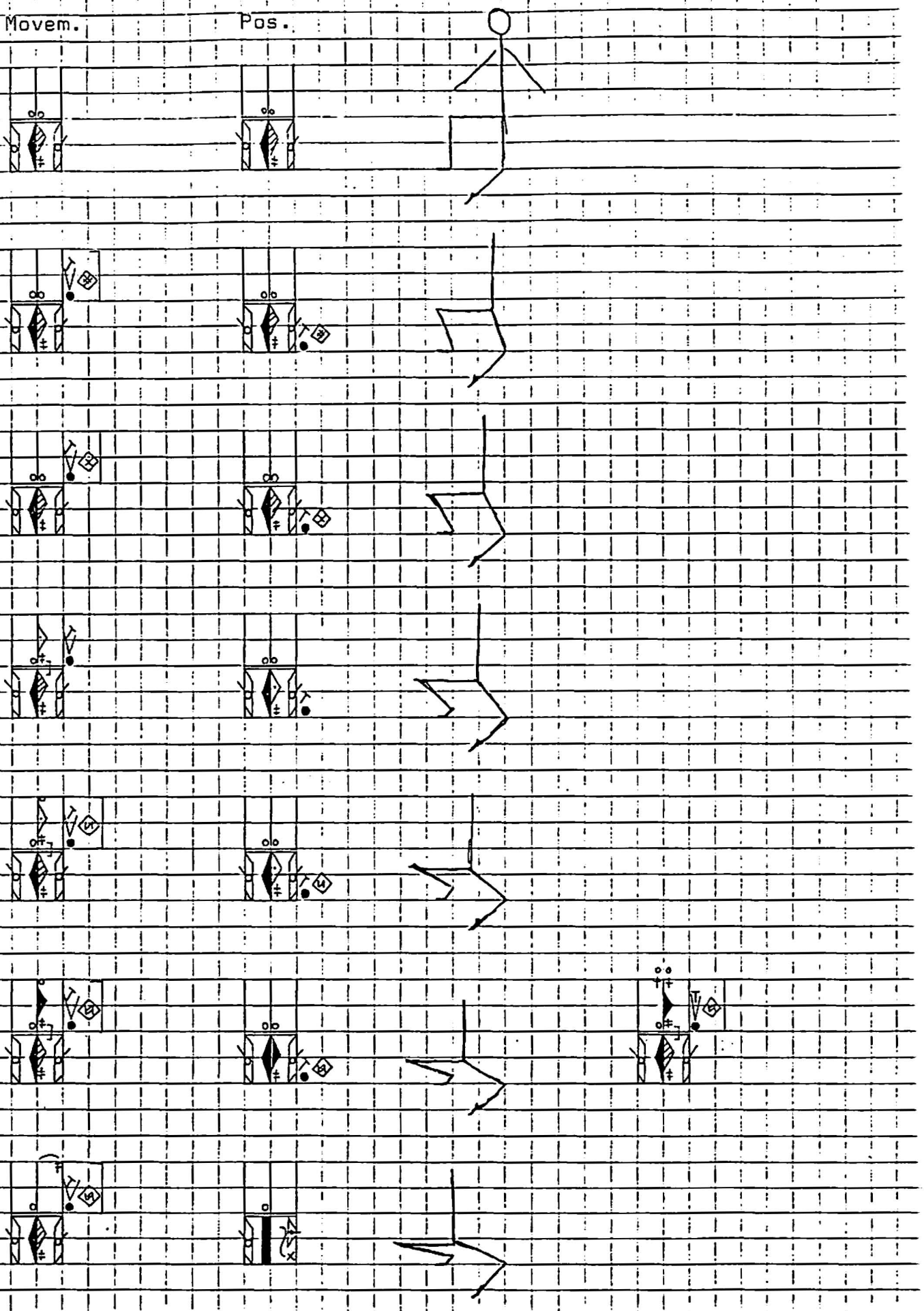
# A Survey of Foot/Knee Supports viewed as Movements and Positions

| Movem. | Pos. | Movem. | Pos. |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |

Survey

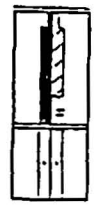
Movem.

Pos.



## IV. Timing in Kneeling

The timing in kneeling is indicated as it is in supports (i.e. transference of the centre of gravity).It lasts from the beginning of the support sign to its end (Knust,Dictionary 167).As is the case with steps,the preparatory moment of touching the floor with the supporting leg is not written.Analogically in kneeling,which is analysed as a support (Ex.12),the usual way of indicating the final state is adequate.The preparatory movement results from the connection to the starting position.



12.

## V. The Writing of Levels of Kneeling by means of "Angling"

In another attempt to solve the problem of notating levels in kneeling,a new approach has been proposed,the "angling".

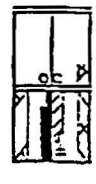
In "angling" the directions are judged from the relation of two meeting lines of which one is the "surface of support".But this surface changes,depending on whether one stands on the feet,kneels on the floor,sits on a chair, or hangs from a trapeze.That means that in "angling" there is no constant element present in the system of reference. This will cause problems in assessing the successive directions.

In Kinetography,however,the whole system of reference depends basically on a vertical axis,which runs through the body in the upright position.All directions are orientated from this vertical axis.Consequently KIN has a constant element in its system of reference.

Additionally "angling",as a method,seems to contain basic contradictions.


13.

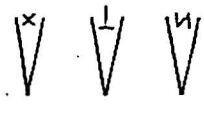
For example the angle between the thigh and the floor is judged from 90° to about 0° (Ex.13).As a result the angle is growing <u>smaller</u>,when the two lines approach each other. This does not portray visually the changes in the quality of levels.



14.

The joint of the knee consists of a part of the thigh and a part of the lower leg.It is like a hinge and therefore it is only moveable in one direction,with the thigh approaching the lower leg.For this reason the position of the lower leg,including the rotation of the leg,should not be disregarded (Ex.14).In this example the right leg is slightly rotated inwards,and the angling takes place to "left backwards", second degree. This,however,cannot be achieved without losing the balance.

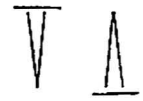
The putting together of V (approaching),and — (a meeting line),signs is contradictory in itself.The increase sign V denotes a <u>motion</u> - a gradual change of a state.The state one has to reach would have to be written correctly <u>into</u> the sign (Ex.15).



15.

The meeting line,on the other hand,is a sign which divides the space around a person in two parts (Knust Dictionary,613).It is a sign showing a spatial indication.

Therefore,the sign for "angling" is a mixture of a movement sign and a sign for spatial indication.If,for example,the "angling" indicates a forward motion,one part of the sign turns instantly into a contradiction:the decrease sign is used to denote this occurrence (Ex.16).



16.

Altogether,"angling" is a different way of analysing and writing movements,and cannot be identified with the system of Laban's notation.

## VI. Conclusion

The writing of kneeling or foot/knee supports seems to be sufficiently covered by the existing means in Kinetography.The problem arises from the unawareness that all indications about levels in transitions of weight are in fact conventions,and that there are shifts of the centre of gravity involved in foot/knee supports.

## SOURCES


The Principles and Basic Ideas of Kinetography Laban, by Albrecht Knust,1963.

The Principles and Basic Concepts of Laban's Movement Notation,ESK,Paper No.1.,1985.

A Dictionary of Kinetography Laban (Labanotation), by Albrecht Knust,Plymouth:Macdonald & Evans Ltd.,1979.