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## Dance in tourism from an anthropological perspective: An introduction to the research issue

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## DANCE IN TOURISM FROM AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH ISSUE

**Abstract:** Nowadays, dance plays an important role in the modern tourism industry. Today, the craze for dancing creates great opportunities for cultural tourism. However, it should be remembered that there is a great danger of losing the most important meaning of dance by commercializing and reducing its essence. Dance tourism as discussed in the article is understood as travel for the purpose of learning about dance and its culture in places where given dance styles were born, or where they play an important national role as well as enjoying great popularity among the local community. This article is an introduction to the issue of dance tourism in an anthropological context. It presents potential attractions related to dance in the perspectives of cultural and sports tourism, it has an illustrative and descriptive character while its method is a literature review and presentation of popular examples.

**Keywords:** dance in tourism, dance anthropology, cultural tourism, sports tourism.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Dance-related journeys lie between cultural and sports tourism, with a special emphasis on event tourism (Buczowska, 2009; Buczowska, 2010; Gibson, 1998). Researchers agree that in academic terms dance should be perceived as an important cultural phenomenon, and thus a potential cultural and sports tourism attraction (Schwark, 2007; Topić, 2016). Tourists interested in dancing can, for example, learn Cuban salsa in Cuba (Kaczmarek, Kaczmarek, 2015), samba in Brazil or flamenco in Spain (Malchrowicz, 2009). Today, tango enthusiasts travel from all over the world to dance milonga in Argentina (Prylińska, Korczak, Nawrot, Strusio, Kaczmarek, 2018).

Dance tourism is understood as travel for the purpose of learning dance as a cultural phenomenon in places

where those dance styles were born, or where they play an important national role as well as enjoying great popularity among the local community. Such journeys allow dance to be discovered in places with a deep historical and cultural context for a given style, or to train under the watchful eye of dance masters. Sometimes, the motivation for setting off on this type journey is also the desire to experience the life of a specific dance subculture at its fullest. There are three groups of participants in dance tourism: passive recipients – spectators, visitors to dance museums, festival participants, etc.; active dance tourists – amateur dancers, e.g. work-shop participants; professional dancers – participants in dance competitions and members of dance groups, etc.

More and more people use their free time to travel long distances and spend considerable sums of money on dancing outside their place of residence (McCleary, Weaver, Meng, 2006, p. 277). As dance is an important part of cultural communication (Drożdż, 2012, p. 23) and allows cultural codes to be discovered (Kringelbach, Skinner, 2012, p. 12), dance tourism has undoubtedly become an important element of dialogue in the post-modern era. According to some researchers, a dance performance even for tourists, unlike many other artistic expressions, still remains the most authentic and creative act (Daniel, 1996; Banio, 2014). Nowadays, dance plays an important role in the modern tourism industry. In many cases dance classes during trips to, for example, the Dominican Republic (bachata, merengue), Mexico (merengue variation) or Jamaica (reggae in the rhythm of the Brazilian samba) is an additional feature of the program offered by organizers. Furthermore, dance is often used in the promotion of tourism and marketing of a given place. For example, many airports use dance and other forms of intangible heritage to make a strong and positive first impression on visitors (see *Using Dance heritage...*).

The aim of the article is to present dance tourism (as a phenomenon on the border of cultural and sports tourism) in an anthropological context as well as giving examples of famous attractions and destinations related to dance. The work is of an illustrative and descriptive character using a literature review method.

## 2. DANCE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

The increase in interest in ways of acquiring academic knowledge, which overlaps with the increase in the precision of tools used for analysing dance and human movement, can be seen in cultural anthropology. In order to understand the cultural significance of movement in dance as an 'embodied' way of knowing the world, a detailed analysis which treats the body as an artefact should be carried out. For many years, dance has been the subject of ethnographic research, however, it remained outside established trends in anthropology (Kaeppler, 1967; Dunham, 1969; Boas, 1972). Although European folklorists described folk dances, historians elaborated on traditions in classical dance, and methodologists developed a system of notation (Drożdż, 2012), all of them were interested in dance as a phenomenon and not as an element of human behaviour integrated in a cultural context. The American researcher Gertrude Prokosch Kurath wrote:

Two decades of my career as a stage dancer have convinced me that dance should be the subject of academic research in its own unique context as a form of

art, which takes into account exceptional, unprecedented features. On the other hand, my education in history [master of art history] and cooperation with ethnologists have convinced me that this is not enough. The real goal, which is difficult to achieve, is to show how dance and the accompanying music are an expression of other aspects of culture (Kurath, 1960, p. 233).

The author believed that anthropologists were afraid of taking up this subject, as they considered it a mysterious phenomenon touching on the esoteric. They also underlined the difficulty in observing, gathering, analysing and storing information about dance.

The way of perceiving dance changes with the context in which it takes place. It is a part of intangible culture which has become modified along with industrialization and technological development. However, this does not mean that it becomes a less significant part of culture. People do not stop dancing, but make numerous changes to its forms and usually dance for different reasons. It is said that in illiterate cultures dance functions like a written language, whereas in the context of a ritual it constitutes the literature of oral cultures (Duncan, 1905; Banio, 2015). Unquestionably, it is impossible for movement to express content in such a manner as words, as dance carries meanings that cannot be translated into words. Isadora Duncan (American dancer and instructor, precursor of modern dance techniques) often used to say that dancing would not make sense if she could express the same meaning with words (Duncan, 1905). In anthropological studies, the presentation of communities as entities per se has replaced the analysis of the relationships between individuals and particular groups. Nowadays, this is of great importance, given that under the same influence, some groups maintain a coherent identity while others lose it. Dance is a form resistant to distortion and deviation, which is why it is possible to precisely study culture both in its actual personification and in the sphere of memory. From the anthropological perspective, dance is inextricably linked to individuals and culture remaining in a mutual relation. This proves the inseparability of dance and culture (except for analytical and technical purposes), as dance cannot be separated from its creator or tools of expression. They are embedded in the cultural context that shapes them and creates their movements. Dance cannot exist without the dancer, which is why analysis should include not only the form, but also the meaning dance has for creators, performers and spectators.

The phenomenon of dance can be approached in many ways. For the dancer, it gives the opportunity to improve the body and mind, allows physical relaxation and achieving well-being, as well as enjoying friendship between performers, as well as performers and the audience. On the other hand, there is the per-

spective of the recipient who derives satisfaction from the possibilities offered by dance, which entertains, moves, relieves anxiety or strengthens the sense of community (Royce, 2002, p. 44).

Anthropology gains insight into the motivations of human actions and helps understand the fundamental issues of existence. In anthropology, dance has been investigated for over a hundred years, and in a very wide range. Five dominant research areas can be chronologically distinguished: 1) evolutionary approach, 2) study of cultural features, 3) study of culture and personality, 4) problem-oriented approach in relation to pluralist societies, 5) dance seen as a unique phenomenon (Royce, 2002).

The oldest and most popular research method in anthropology is participant observation. It involves personal participation in the life of the studied group and observing it from within (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, 2001). Therefore, learning a culturally foreign dance in its place of origin as well as performing it together with native people in their native culture, in a sense, makes everyone a researcher. It is not without reason that the phrase "in a sense" was used here, as the expressed opinion does not correspond literally to the actual state of affairs, but is very close to it. A researcher is aware of her/his role and refers to theory and research methods unlike a tourist. Undoubtedly, training a dance technique in the country of origin of a given dance is the best way to feel and understand the local aesthetic which constitutes a part of the dance tradition. The first contact with something unknown may initially cause discomfort, however after a while, understanding of diversity becomes fundamental in an absolutely 'embodied' manner. In the cognitive, emotional, but also physical sense, the distance between an ethnic dancer and a student of a different nationality is a natural thing. Although anthropologists have for a very long time underlined the importance of knowledge of the local language, which shortens this distance, recently they have also begun to appreciate 'embodied' language (Royce, 2002; Brocki, 2015). Naturally, due to this, implementation requires great vulnerability and sensitivity, as well as openness to possible awkwardness, which is more easily experienced than in the case of verbal communication alone. Wilson (1972) pointed out that the interaction between foreign people, speaking different languages and coming from other cultures, often leads to misunderstandings and errors in communication. Hence, stereotypes are also present in dance. Moreover, there is a risk that the performer's cultural manners may affect the interpretation of foreign traditions.

Nevertheless, traveling around the world in order to take dance lessons as well as participate in events, which can have considerable importance in a given culture or dance subculture, is becoming increasingly popular. Sometimes these trips may be limited only to visiting

important places, museums, exhibitions, or watching a show, spectacle or performance. All this, however, leads to getting to know a foreign culture, arouses curiosity and ignites the senses. Dance research among tourism researchers, however, constitutes only a niche. In the following section, selected examples of tourist attractions related to dance are presented. These are places that are attractive for tourists who travel for cultural or sports purposes.

### 3. FAMOUS DESTINATIONS RELATED TO DANCE: SELECTED EXAMPLES OF DANCE CULTURE ON THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

For the lovers of salsa, the most important destination is undoubtedly Cuba. This dance of Caribbean origin was created in the 1940s and has many followers to this day (McMains, 2015). Numerous travel agencies cooperate with Cuban dance schools and organize trips for tourists combined with sightseeing and a dance course. Another dance practiced in Cuba is rumba, a word which refers to Cuban folklore and is of Spanish origin. Like many Latin American dances, it was inspired by the rhythms, songs and physical activity of the first African slaves who were brought to the Caribbean Islands about 400 years ago. Currently, the intangible cultural heritage of Cuba is becoming a basic resource to generate local income (Ruxander, 2018).

Tango was born in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, and especially popular in harbour districts, bars and brothels. It is in these places that the real tango spirit emerged, manifesting itself in passion, infatuation, anger and sadness. It was mostly danced by poor people who dreamt of a better life, and who wanted to forget themselves in the rhythm of music. Today, tango is one of the most important tourist assets of Argentina and the symbol of Argentine tourist promotion. In 2009, together with its music, it was included on the *UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* (Davis, 2015).

One of the most popular Latin American dances is samba which can be performed solo or with a partner and is characterized by dynamic and sensual hip movements. Today, it is a Brazilian hallmark (Vianna, 1999) strongly associated with the carnival in Rio de Janeiro. It is in this city that the world's largest parade is held presenting the best samba schools who compete with each other on the famous sambadrome. It is difficult to determine where and when exactly it was created. However, it is assumed that samba comes from the state of Bahia (Vianna, 1999) and derives from the rhythms

and melodies danced by African slaves. Most often this dance was performed in order to seduce or attract a partner. It is often called the dance of lovers, as it contains a whole arsenal of intimate movements and gestures, expressing sometimes very bold feelings. It is also a dance of joy. Its rhythm is based on syncopation, while the tempo depends on the circumstances that accompany the dancers. Since the 1930s, samba has also been a symbol of the national identity of Brazilians (Chasteen, 1996).

Another dance from the *UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* is flamenco from a mix of diverse cultures such as Persian, Arabic, Jewish and Balkan. The tradition of flamenco comes from Andalusia and is strongly connected with gypsy folklore. It is danced solo, as a duet, as well as in a group, often during such popular Spanish fiestas as *Feria de Abril* (Malchrowicz, Buczkowska, 2010). The name of the dance is derived from the Latin word *flamma* meaning flame. The art of performing flamenco includes not only dance but also music, singing and costume. Each dance tells a story that certainly would not affect the imagination in the same way without its setting. Most often, the music is created only with the accompaniment of a guitar, and then enriched by details provided by both singers and dancers who tap out the rhythm, clap or use castanets. Furthermore, props such as big red flowers or lace fans are significant and used to stimulate the senses, tempt and delight. Together with the *corrida*, flamenco is an important symbol of Spanish tourist promotion. Especially in Andalusia, in the cities of Granada and Seville, there are many flamenco schools and restaurants where it is possible to watch live shows (Malchrowicz, 2009).

An important destination on the world dance map (Fig. 1) is Egypt where belly dancing was born (Drożdż, 2012). This type of dance is based on graceful and harmonious movements of the hips and chest as well as subtle movements of the hands, especially the wrists.

A very characteristic element is the so-called shimmy, i.e. hip movements that make the dancer's body shake. Apart from the very art of performing the dance, the dancer's clothing is also very important. Women usually wear beautiful, richly decorated costumes consisting of a bra, a wide airy skirt and a shawl. The belly dance is very seductive, and for this reason it is officially banned in some Arab countries (e.g. Libya and Algeria) (Bliss, 2014).

One of the symbols of tourist promotion in Greece is the *sirtaki* dance (popularly known as *zorba*) which has its roots in Crete. It is a popular Greek pseudo-folk dance, similar to authentic Greek folk dances and its name is a diminutive form of *sirtós*, the most traditional Greek folk dance accompanied by *bouzouki*. Nowadays, *sirtaki* is a regional attraction in taverns or during so-called Greek nights in hotels organized for tourists.

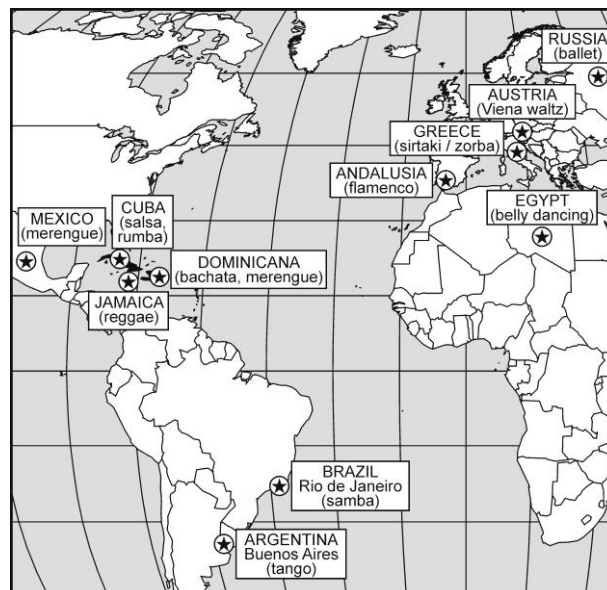


Fig. 1. Major destinations of dance tourism  
Source: author's elaboration

However, due to its extreme popularity, it is played in hotels all over the world to make the time spent by tourists more enjoyable (Papadimitriou, 2000).

In turn, ballet lovers travel to Russia where this is an important element of Russian culture. The history of Russian ballet dates back to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A person who contributed to the development of Russian ballet was the French dancer and master Jean-Baptiste Landé who prepared the first true ballet spectacle with choreography. Two years after the performance, he received official permission to open the first ballet school in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg (Lifar, 1969).

#### 4. MUSEUMS OF DANCE

One of the most famous museums dedicated to dance is the Dance Museum located in Stockholm (Swedish: *'Dansmuseet'*) – Fig. 2. It houses all exhibits associated with dance: costumes, masks, scenography designs, works of art, posters and books. Since 1953, the museum had been located in the basement of the Stockholm Opera, but in 1999, it was relocated to new headquarters at Gustav Adolf Square (see *Dansmusset*). Another important place dedicated to dance is found in the United States, where the National Museum of Dance (with a Hall of Fame) is located in Saratoga Spa State Park, Saratoga Springs, New York. The museum was founded in 1986 and houses photographs, videos, artefacts, costumes and biographies of famous dancers. The museum is located in a former Washington Bath House building and was founded by Marylou Whitney (see National Museum of Dance). Other dances with

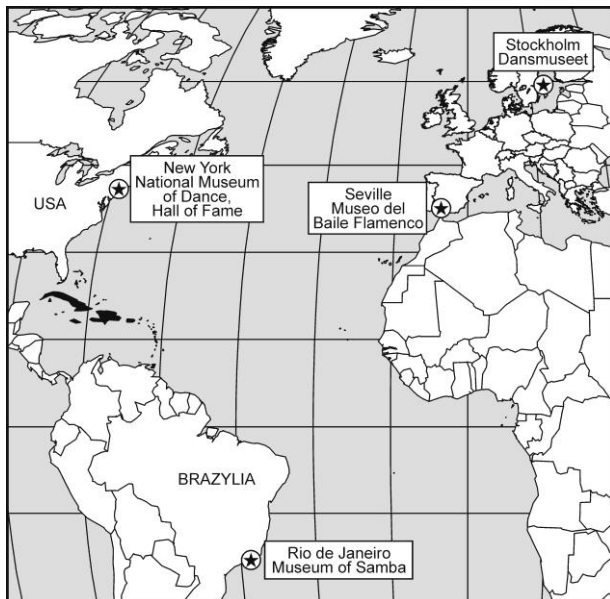


Fig. 2. Museums of dance in the world  
Source: author's elaboration

dedicated museums can be found in Rio de Janeiro – samba museum, and Seville – flamenco where the *Museo del Baile Flamenco* is located in the Santa Cruz district and presents daily shows. The central patio of the museum has been specially designed for performances with just a small number of spectators.

## 5. FAMOUS DANCE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Dance festivals are living museums of culture and tradition. The most popular are carnivals which take place annually in many cities around the world. Of course, the most popular is the 4-day samba school event in Rio de Janeiro while, slightly shorter, a 2-day competition for dancers takes place in Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago (see Fig. 3). The carnival tradition is so strong that the African-American immigrants, who came to Great Britain began to share their culture with the British in the late 1950s, and this continues to this day with people from around the world visiting London to see the Notting Hill Carnival. Many Europeans visit Tenerife Carnival, a 2-week fiesta which, according to many, can only be surpassed by the carnival in Brazil. The charming 20-day festival of dance and theatre, the *Carnevale di Venezia* in Italy, is based on old masquerades. Among Asian dance events, one of the most frequently mentioned is the *Intruz* festival in Panaji, India. It lasts 3-4 days and undoubtedly reflects the clash between the hedonistic energy of the carnival and the conservative customs of India. An interesting dance event is the Festival of Whirling Dervishes in the Turkish city of Konya whose characteristic feature is

meditation in motion. Rumi, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet and theologian of Islam, believed that communication with God was possible through movement. In this way, the dance of the dervishes, whirling in white robes, black cloaks, and a conical headgear (Sawala, Krawczyk, Bednarski, 2005) was born. On the other hand, the most prestigious event for ballroom dancers is the Blackpool Dance Festival held in England, which hosts over 1500 couples from all over the world.

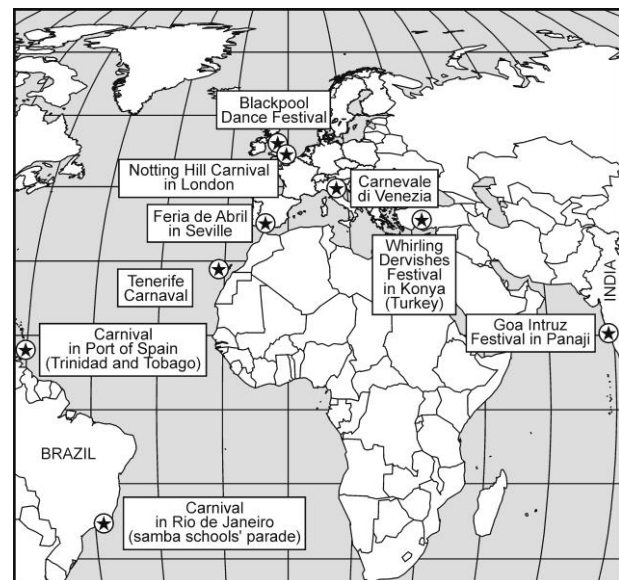


Fig. 3. Dance events and festivals in the world  
Source: author's elaboration

Regardless of the type and style of dance, an important event for all lovers of this art is the International Dance Day established in 1982 by the Dance Committee of the International Theatre Institute operating under the auspices of UNESCO. The day of the celebration, April 29, was chosen to commemorate the birth of Jean-Georges Noverre, the great reformer of the art of dance, founder of the European ballet, and dancer and choreographer himself. On Dance Day every year, a different artist prepares a proclamation addressed to those who practice and love dancing. In recent years, one author has been the American dancer and specialist in dance anthropology, Katherine Dunham. Proclamations have also been written by Maurice Béjart, Mahmoud Reda, Kazuo Ohno and Robert Joffrey.

In Poland, dance related tourism events are the Tanga Festival in Łódź, the Łódź Ballet Meetings (*Łódzkie Spotkania Baletowe*) and the International Festival of Mountain Folklore (*Międzynarodowy Festiwal Folkloru Ziemi Górskich*) in Zakopane are particularly worth noting.

Undeniably, these are just a few examples of numerous dance events organized around the world. The multitude of dance styles, as well as techniques and possibilities of combining or disrupting them, results

in an annual increase in such events. Today, the craze for dancing creates great opportunities for cultural tourism. However, it should be remembered that there is a great danger of losing the most important meaning of dance by commercializing and diminishing its original essence.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Dance tourism aims to enrich the free time of an individual with new cultural experiences, social competences, knowledge of a given dance subculture, as well as the culture of another region of the world. Trips of this type take a person out of their drab reality and to be transported into a different and magical dimension where they fulfil themselves and their dreams. Consciously or not, dance regenerates psychophysical health and enriches people spiritually.

Dance also teaches divergent thinking, which is a part of creative thinking. People enter a kind of unreal world, which they feel a part of, and become a co-creator of art, which allows expression of their feelings, as well as themselves. It helps discover the possibilities of a person and their talents as well as shaping their personality, attitudes and actions. By experiencing the art of dance, a person develops sensitivity towards values and sustains cultural identity. Dance also ensures the continuity of cultural heritage in the consciousness of future generations as well as other nationalities. Through it, tolerance for what is new, different and unpredictable is taught (Banio, 2015, pp. 78-79).

Most often, people going on a trip are already experienced travellers and these trips are not accidental. Encouraged by the offer of a given event or place as well as fascinated by culture, they become dance tourists. This article constitutes an introduction to the issue of dance tourism. It presents potential attractions related to dance in the perspective of cultural and sports tourism. Dance as an important socio-cultural phenomenon requires further in-depth analysis on the part of tourism researchers.

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