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### **Ritual sources of dance in Mesoamerica**

From the beginning, dance accompanied humanity - it stimulated the senses of those who participated directly in it and also influenced the observers. Through aesthetic and semantic values as well as the ability to express a dancer, it has always enjoyed enormous popularity and fascinated people. The dance was, is and will certainly be omnipresent. Nevertheless it should be emphasized that it depends on the period and culture in which it was created. A single type of dance may differ radically from the others, but on the other hand it also has a high degree of similarities. The main reason that directs this type of human expression and is responsible for its form is that the dance appeared both as a form of art and as an element of the ritual. The aim of the doctoral thesis was to describe ritualistic dances that have elements of pre-Columbian cultures and are played in today's Mexico and Guatemala. This is extremely important because the memory of many of them is slowly beginning to disappear, which is why it is the last opportunity to document and analyze them, thanks to which it will not be lost for the next generations. In my intention, I tried to use transdisciplinary studies, including the methodology of teatrological, anthropological, epigraphic and archaeological research. The main starting point of the observations were my independent ethnographic studies and collected interviews that took place in 2010-2013 in Mexico and Guatemala.

Based on selected examples of dance, it was possible to show the continuation of pre-Hispanic traditions in contemporary dances from the above-mentioned area. Geographically, the material featured in the dissertation refers to the Mesoamerica areas. The area of present-day Central America, where pre-Hispanic Olmec, Maya, and Aztec cultures appeared, were referred to as Mesoamerica.

Many of the dances discussed here have pre-Columbian elements that allow them to derive their pedigree from rituals and ceremonies of an iconic character. Currently, they are a perfect example of cultural syncretism, because very often they combine two, and sometimes even three, worlds - pre-Columbian, European colonizers, and sometimes also African slaves. Together, they create an amazing whole that affects local communities that want to keep their roots in mind and a sense of common identity. The role of dance is not only to satisfy the aesthetic needs. It is one of the elements of a cultural spectacle with significant social and community values. It is often associated with the manifestation of power, or the ritual of its transmission, hunting magic, and sometimes also with gratitude shown to the higher forces

(Christian and not only). An important point of reference for me is the role of dance as a medium of transmission of cultural values that survived in this peculiar ritual of *danza*. Spanish-language term *danza*, unlike *baile*, that refers to the movement that was an important element in religious rituals. The specificity of my research on dance allows me to call this field choreoarcheology, referring to archaeological sources from before the conquest and analyzing them in the context of colonial materials as well as modern times. In the author's intention, the doctoral dissertation was divided into five separate parts, which are then divided into separate chapters and sub-chapters. The first of the presented parts is entitled „Theoretical background” and it will contain the most important issues concerning the outline of the problems of the work, the concept of ritual, and also referring to research on dance anthropology. The next part was titled "Archeology of dance"; its aim is to familiarize the reader with the most important discoveries in the field of archeology and epigraphy of the Maya culture relating to dance. This chapter was based on the scheme proposed by Mathew Lopper in 2009, supplemented during the research conducted by the author during the work on the dissertation. The main theme of the aforementioned part of the work was the Maya civilization, from which the most monuments obtained as part of archaeological works were preserved. In the next part of "Ethnology of dance" Aztec civilization was introduced to the discourse, after which much more ethnohistoric and ethnological sources remained. The purpose of applying such a division and treatment is both to show and highlight the continuum of culture within a given community, and its syncretic character, which is discussed in later chapters. The chapter dealing with endemic dances is complementing this part; Its aim is to show the continuation and borrowings from pre-Hispanic culture, which were used and transformed during the concheros dance in the times of the conquest.

In the section titled "Ethnoscenic", they were shown two most important literary works left by the Mesoamerican communities - the holy book of the nation kitsch "Popol Vuh" and a show "Rabinal Achi." In addition, in this part, the author decided to include information relating to the space in which the dance could be shown. The penultimate part called "cultural connectivism" task is to point out how the theory of Jan Assman, referring to purely linguistic research can be applied in the study of dance and ritual. The last part of the work entitled "Anthropology of Performance" is also intended to show other examples of Mesoamerican performances as well as the continuity of traditions in the aforementioned region.

In the end, I systematized and summarized the problem being examined referring to the sources of dance in Mesoamerica.