

# *National Dances* *in the Canon* *of Polish Culture*

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## ABSTRACT

The following dances are most commonly considered nowadays as national dances (or emblems of Polish national culture): the polonaise, the mazur, the krakowiak, the oberek and the kujawiak. These dances form the cultural canon as defined by Andrzej Szpociński (i.e. a constantly revised part of tradition which carries significance outside the domain of dance and is obligatory for all the community members). In Polish musicological studies it has been emphasised that the phenomenon of stereotyping of native folklore has played a major role in the formation and emergence of emblematic national phenomena. However, some of the phenomena and processes that have taken place during the formation and revision of the national canon cannot be reduced to the idea of creating a stereotype. The author of this paper draws on Maria Janion's treatment of the categories of myth and phantasm, which can be much more useful for the interpretation especially of borderline or clearly alien phenomena that have frequently found their way into the Polish national dance canon and played a very important role in that canon. The author also discusses the changing functions of dances from the canon, which resulted from external circumstances determined by political events and social processes.

**Key words:** cultural canon, stereotype, myth, phantasm, polonaise, mazur, kozachok, krakowiak, oberek, kujawiak

National dances are an intriguing phenomenon that has existed in Polish culture for many centuries. Five dances are presently considered as Polish national: the polonaise, the mazur, the krakowiak, the oberek and the kujawiak, as performed both with dance movement and in a purely musical forms in separation from the choreographic component. The dances are usually believed to have originated in peasant culture and been adapted by the higher social strata (the noble class called *szlachta*, as well as the bourgeoisie) as a result of a long process. In an altered musical and choreo-technical form, these dances acquired the status of national emblems and came to be considered as the quintessence of Polish musical culture. In this context, this set of dances became part of the cultural canon, which was consciously acknowledged at least from the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward.

What is a cultural canon? Witold Kula claims that “a more or less precisely defined cultural canon exists in every society and in every period.”<sup>1</sup> Andrzej Szpociński defines this phenomenon as follows:

The canon is such a part of tradition that is commonly seen by the community members as obligatory for all

those belonging to that community, and is passed down from one generation to another. The canon always refers in some way to the past, and is projected into the future. It may incorporate contemporary elements, but only after they have lost their transient, temporary character and acquired a timeless quality.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, the cultural canon is a derivative of the notion of tradition as defined by Władysław Stróżewski,<sup>3</sup> but it also includes phenomena labelled by Eric Hobsbawm as ‘invented traditions’.<sup>4</sup> Emphasis is laid on the conviction that the canon needs to be cultivated by all the community members, who are united by a common tradition. This is a duty resulting from the belief in the timeless values that make up the canon, which in turn implies that it must be protected, preserved undiminished, relatively unchanged, but may also be enriched. These convictions, however, should be considered as a collective illusion, since – as Szpociński points out – “The canon ‘in general’ does not exist; we only have the individual canons of the groups and communities that live in specific historical, cultural and social circumstances.”<sup>5</sup>

Of special significance in this context are the canons claimed as their own by national groups. Andrzej Szpociński explains:

The unique character of cultural canons generated by national communities results from two factors. Firstly, self-identification with the national community has played a key role in culture in the last two hundred years. It has shaped people's worldviews, behaviour and cultural competences. Secondly – the role of the cultural canon in the process of acquiring collective identity has been incomparably more important in the case of nations than for any other communities. In other words, national communities have developed their cultural canons in the fullest form, and the cultural competences which were grounded in the canons

**2** A. Szpociński, (1991). *Kanon kulturowy* [The Canon of Culture]. *Kultura i społeczeństwo*, No. 2, p. 47.

**3** W. Stróżewski, (1983). *Dialektyka twórczości* [A Dialectic of Art]. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, pp. 122–123. Central to Stróżewski's analyses of tradition is the notion of its dialectic quality: the remembered past determines the present, and is mutually reshaped by the present.

**4** E. Hobsbawm, (1983). 1. Introduction: inventing traditions. In: E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Polish translation 2008: *Tradycja wynaleziona*, M. Godyń, F. Godyń (Transl.), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, p. 10.

**5** A. Szpociński, (1991). *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

**1** W. Kula, (1958). *Rozważania o historii* [Reflections on History]. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 165.

generated by national communities have exerted a crucial impact on attitudes to cultural heritage at large.<sup>6</sup>

The canon usually incorporates those products of culture that begin to acquire the status of symbols of collective identity, representing the values important for the community.<sup>7</sup> This affects the original meanings or values of phenomena that become part of the canon:

Once a certain element begins to function in popular understanding as a symbol of the group's identity, it becomes independent from its original value, thanks to which it once became part of the canon. It is henceforth considered not as a means of conveying one specific value or idea, but as a receptacle of content or generally as a "place" where new content can constantly be discovered. Even though the original value of the element may become outdated, the event itself, form or product of culture will continue to function as a symbol of group identity and possibly convey other, currently relevant meanings.<sup>8</sup>

The values of dance are related to the functions of entertainment, contact with the opposite sex, the experience of movement and music with strongly punctuated metro-rhythmic structure. In the canon, these elements give way to other varied values related to social life, e.g. to the development and experience of unity, the affirmation of social structure, introducing the young generation to the socially desirable types of interpersonal relation, as well as to their sex roles.<sup>9</sup> These values, however, may undergo transformations with the passage of years, because "the internalisation of values (Pol. *swójskość*, see footnote 15) conveyed by the canon is secondary to the internalisation of names, events, forms and objectivised products of culture that make up this canon. This is why values are more prone to change than the elements of the canon with which they have become associated."<sup>10</sup>

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6 Ibid., p. 48.

7 Ibid., p. 49.

8 Ibid..

9 More on the functions of dance in: R. Lange, (2000). *Znaczenie tańca we współczesnej kulturze europejskiej: przegląd ogólny* [The Significance of Dance in Contemporary European Culture – An Overview]. In: D. Kubinowski (Ed.), *Taniec – choreologia – humanistyka. Tom jubileuszowy dedykowany Profesorowi Roderykowi Langemu* [Dance – Choreology – Human Studies. An Anniversary Publication Dedicated to Prof. Roderyk Lange] (pp. 103–128). Poznań: Foundation of the Institute of Choreology in Poznań. Idem, (2009). *O istocie tańca i jego przejawach w kulturze. Perspektywa antropologiczna* [On the Meaning of Dance and Its Manifestations in Culture. An Anthropological Perspective]. Poznań: Foundation of the Institute of Choreology in Poznań, pp. 88–107.

10 A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., p. 50.

In modern European history, this kind of attitude to selected dance forms first manifested itself in Italy, Spain and France (the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> cs.), was later taken up in England, Germany, Poland (in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century), and finally – in the remaining countries of Central-Eastern and Northern Europe (between the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Till the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term "national dances" was used with reference to social dances and sometimes also ceremonial dances. This term is still used in Poland and in most countries in Central Europe. Apparently the notion has remained relevant for so long as a result of the centuries-long domination of those countries by European empires, which made these landmarks of national culture important for the preservation of national identity in the social consciousness.<sup>11</sup> In other countries, whose continued existence as states was not under threat, the concept of national character in dance was discarded already in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as the old 'national' dances were going out of fashion. At the same time, as ballet audiences demanded to see some stereotypical forms of dance which attracted them with their originality or even exotic qualities, in some countries the 'national' dances came to be referred to more and more frequently as 'characteristic dances' (French: *danse de caractère, danse caractéristique*). This term had already been in use earlier, but had previously referred mostly to the dance culture of specific social and professional groups (such as peasants, craftsmen, seamen, and robbers) as well as non-European ethnic groups (Turks, Indians, Black men). It is only in the 1780s that we witness an interest in presenting the dances of European nations (Spanish, French – including Basque and Provençal, Styrian, Greek, Danish, Norwegian, and later also Italian, Hungarian, Cossack, Polish, Russian, Scottish, German, and Tyrolian) on the stage, and these dances gradually came to be termed 'characteristic dances'. The man who significantly contributed to this change of terminology was Carlo Blasis (1797–1878), especially in his extremely popular treatises on the dance theatre,<sup>12</sup> while models

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11 R. Lange, (2009). Op. cit., p. 119.

12 C. Blasis, (1820). *Traité élémentaire théorique et pratique de l'art de la danse*. Milan: Joseph Beati & Antoine Tenenti. Idem, (1828). *The Code of Terpsichore*. London: J. Bulcock. Idem, (1830). *Manuel complet de la danse: comprenant la théorie, la pratique et l'histoire de cet art depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours; à l'usage des amateurs et des professeur*. Paris: Roret. Idem, (1844). *Studi sulle arti imitatrici*. Milan: Dalla tipografia e libreria di Giuseppe Chiusi.

of such dances were provided by Filippo Taglioni (1777–1871) and Jules Perrot (1810–1894), particularly creative authors of Romantic ballets.<sup>13</sup>

As evident from this introduction, the concept of nationality as expressed in dance – and similarly in music – developed in the modern era as a reflection of the ambitions and aspirations of different national communities. This process developed mainly in relation to the rise of national consciousness in various parts of Europe. Having satisfied their national ambitions in this field, the communities gradually discarded the concept of national dances. With the growth of democracy and the egalitarian society, this concept was pushed to the margin of artistic culture, but remained relevant to those communities which were forced to struggle for the preservation of their national identity. For this reason, in present-day Europe we have countries where national dances are still a significant element of culture, as well as others, in which the concept of national dance is in fact no longer recognisable.

I have studied the thus defined phenomenon of national dances in Poland for the last five years, aiming to represent a panorama of the history of the Polish national dance canon – from its beginnings to the present day. Thanks to this comprehensive historical perspective, I have been able to trace back the processes of the formation and change of this phenomenon's forms and functions, taking place both as a result of conscious actions of the community that made use of those dances and of external factors. Undoubtedly we witness a “complex and changing interaction between ideology and form, taking place in response to the social, economic and political circumstances of the functioning of dance culture.” The dance form – and consequently also musical form – may be considered as “undergoing various transformations in time and space, and shifting deceptively from one context to another.”<sup>14</sup>

From this perspective, it is prerequisite that we discover the principle on which the idea of the canon is based. Andrzej Szpociński believes that this central principle of national culture is internalisation,<sup>15</sup> which guarantees the homogeneity of the domain of the national community's past independently of the chronological order of events. All the internalised elements are seen as ‘age-old’, though this quality is not gradable.<sup>16</sup> I applied the results of Szpociński's research to the phenomenon of the canon of national dances.

As my research into the oldest sources has demonstrated, the awareness of the “our-ness” of native elements of music and dance existed among the Polish noble class and bourgeoisie ever since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> It developed to a large extent under the influence of the gradually intensifying influx of fashionable foreign dances accompanied by new social norms. We know from historical records that chroniclers reported this influx as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and it continued to make itself felt in later times, albeit with varying intensity. New dances entered Polish culture mostly from Germany, and later also – from France, Spain, Hungary and Italy. Along with these influences, echoes of the Czech reaction against foreign (particularly German) cultural influences also reached Poland in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and locally met with a favourable reception among the Polish clergy.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, even as late as the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century the Church still in principle criticised all forms of dance, and it was only the general acceptance of Thomism that tempered the ecclesiastical rhetoric.

We should also remember that the attitude of the Polish nobles to new dance fashions from abroad was by no means

**13** Cf. B.B. Ванслов [V.V. Vanslov], (1981). Характерный танец [Kharakterny tanets]. In: Ю.Н. Григорович [J.N. Grigorovitch] (Ed.), *Балет: энциклопедия* [Balet: Entsiklopedia] (pp. 362–363). Москва [Moscow]: wydawca “Советская Энциклопедия” [“Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya”]. S. Au, (2004). Character Dancing. In: S.J. Cohen (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Dance: a Project of Dance Perspectives Foundation*, Vol. 2 (pp. 106–108). New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**14** S.A. Manning, (2013). Modern Dance w Trzeciej Rzeszy. Sześć pozycji i koda [Modern Dance in the Third Reich. Six Positions and a Coda]. In: J. Majewska (Ed. Transl.), *Świadomość ruchu. Teksty o tańcu współczesnym* [The Consciousness of Movement. Texts on Modern Dance] (pp. 393–396). Kraków: Korporacja Halart.

**15** Szpociński uses the term *swojskość* (our-ness), defined in opposition to *obcość* (otherness). This rather intuitive concept has been translated here as ‘internalisation’ or ‘our-ness’ of certain content and notions [translator's note].

**16** A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., p. 51.

**17** T. Nowak, (2016). *Taniec narodowy w polskim kanonie kultury. Źródła, geneza, przemiany* [The National Dance in the Canon of Polish Culture. Sources, Origins, Transformations]. Warsaw: BEL-Studio, pp. 52–64.

**18** Z. Nożyńska, (1962). *Tańce w Polsce na tle przeobrażeń społecznych (okres od pradziejów do połowy XVI w.)* [Dance in Poland in the Context of Social Transformations (from Prehistory till the Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century)], PhD. Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, pp. 118–123. A. Brückner, (1897). *Kazania średniowieczne* [Medieval Sermons], (Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział Filologiczny [Dissertations of the Academy of Learning, Philological Department], Series II, vol. 10). Kraków: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei, p. 183.

equivocal.<sup>19</sup> Some phenomena – like the volta – were rejected for a long time, while others, such as pairs of contrasted dances (*Vortanz - Nachtanz*, ‘the small’ and ‘the grand’, e.g. the pavane and the galliard, passamezzo and saltarello, allemande and courante, etc.) – met with approval and were even assimilated. Another example is the long-lasting popularity of the ‘dignified’ *chodzony* (‘walking’) dances. Notably, Poles always performed foreign dances in a manner far removed from the original. This is evident e.g. from the descriptions of bursts of laughter with which members of the retinue of Renée Crespin du Bec, spouse to Marshal de Guébriant (1614–1659) greeted Polish versions of French dances in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Similar reactions have been described in the case of high-ranking Napoleonic officers, with Joachim Murat (1767–1815) and Camillo Borghese (1775–1832) at the head of this party (the early 19<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that Polish dancers were clumsy; more likely, they ‘tinged’ their performances of foreign dances with characteristic elements borrowed from the core Polish repertoire.<sup>22</sup>

After a sufficiently long period of time, the noble class could forget and did forget about the origins of the imported elements, and therefore internalised them as ‘ours’ and age-old – even in the case of such evidently foreign dances as the *cenar*, the courante or the pavane. In my research I have pointed to many phenomena which have been internalised and accepted as national, but for which one can provide proof or at least circumstantial evidence of foreign origin. This is true, for instance, of musical and choreographic patterns typical of such

West European dances as the galliard, the courante, the volta, the chaconne, the sarabande and later also the minuet, the contra dance, the galop and the cotillion.<sup>23</sup> Most likely there are many other phenomena whose foreign origin we are not aware of, and by this lack of awareness we unwittingly contribute to the centuries-long process of revision of national traditions.

With time, those internalised traditions whose ‘our-ness’ was accepted in the First Commonwealth – came to be labelled as Polish, and in some cases – Rusyn / Ruthenian (*baletto ruteno*),<sup>24</sup> since the present-day Ukraine was incorporated into the Polish Crown in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. From the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, written sources unequivocally use the term ‘Polish’ with reference to some dances.<sup>25</sup> The apparently patriotic (and in some cases even chauvinistic) ideas of such writers as Father Stanisław Orzechowski (1513–1566) began to bear fruit. Those ideas were later developed in the writings of Father Szymon Starowolski (1588–1656), who stressed the unique qualities in Poles, and reached their apogee in the peculiar ‘fantasy on Polish themes’ produced by Father Wojciech Dębołęcki (1575–1645/47),

**19** R. Linton, (1975). Dyfuzja [Diffusion]. In: W. Derczyński, A. Jasińska-Kania, J. Szacki (Eds.). *Elementy teorii socjologicznych* [Elements of Sociological Theory]. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 274.

**20** J. Le Labourer de Bleranval, (1647). *Relation du voyage de la Reine de Pologne, et du retour de Madame la Maréchale de Guébriant, Ambassadrice Extraordinaire, et Sur-Intendante de sa conduite par la Hongrie, l’Autriche, Styrie, Carinthie, le Frioul, et l’Italie. Avec un discours historique de toutes les Villes et Etats, par où elle a passé. Et un Traité particulier du Royaume de Pologne, de son Gouvernement Ancien et Moderne, de ses Provinces et de ses Princes, avec plusieurs tables Généalogiques de Souverains. Dedié à son Altesse, Madame la Princesse Douairière de Condé. Par lean Le Labourer. S. de Bleranval, l’un des Gentilshommes Servans du Roy.* Paris: lean Camvsat et Pierre Le Petit, p. 214.

**21** J. Falkowski, (1877). *Obrazy z życia kilku ostatnich pokoleń w Polsce* [Scenes from the Lives of the Last Several Generations in Poland], Vol. 1. Poznań: I. K. Żupański, pp. 266–267.

**22** R. Lange, (2009). Op. cit., pp. 117–118.

**23** T. Nowak, (2016). Op. cit., pp. 52–64, 76–100, 106–120, 164–177, 233–256, 279–328.

**24** H. Morsztyn, (1843). Światowa rozkosz z ochmistrem swoim y ze dwunastą swych służebnych panien [Worldly Pleasures with My Housekeeper and Twelve Maidservants]. In: idem, *Pomniki do historii obyczajów w Polsce w XVI i XVII wieku* [Documents for the History of Customs in 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>-Century Poland]. J.I. Kraszewski (Ed.). Warsaw: S. Orgelbrand, p. 182. A. Chybiński, (1928). Lutnia, lutniści i tańce w poezji polskiej XVII w. [The Lute, Lutenists and Dances in Polish Poetry in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century], *Śpiewak*. No. 1, pp. 3–5. *Muzyczne silva rerum z XVII wieku* [17<sup>th</sup>-Century Musical Silva Rerum], (1970). J. Gołos, J. Stęszewski (Eds.). Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne. M. Szczepańska, (1933). Z folkloru muzycznego w XVII wieku [From 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Musical Folklore], *Kwartalnik Muzyczny*. Nos. 17–18, pp. 27–28, 30, 31. W. Potocki, (1970). Ogród, ale nie plewiony, bróg, ale co snop, to inszego zboża, kram rozlicznego gatunku [Unweeded Garden, a Store of Many Different Kinds of Corn, and a Stall with Goods of Many Kinds]. In: W. Potocki, *Ogród fraszek* [Garden of Rhymes], A. Brückner (Ed.). Lwów: Towarzystwo dla popierania nauki polskiej [Society for the Support of Polish Learning]. Vol. 1, p. 278; Vol. 2, p. 231.

**25** B. Przybyszewska-Jarmińska, (2009). „Taniec polski” w siedemnastowiecznych przekazach literackich [The “Polish Dance” in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Literary Sources]. In: Z. Fabiańska, J. Kubieniec, A. Sitarz, P. Wilk (Eds.), *Muzykolog wobec świadectw źródłowych i dokumentów: Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana profesorowi Piotrowi Poźniakowi w 70. Rocznicę urodzin* [The Musicologist at Work with Sources and Documents. Professor Piotr Poźniak 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary Book]. Kraków: Musica Iagellonica.



who laid the foundation for the belief in the special mission of the (chosen) Polish nation, understood (naturally) as the noble class only.<sup>26</sup> It is probably no accident that in 1647 Jan Aleksander Gorczyn also made claims about the 'Polish-ness' of selected phenomena in music. There are numerous examples from other areas of social life, such a literature, clothing and customs. In all of these we can observe the transition from the 16<sup>th</sup>-century sense of the 'our-ness' of some elements of culture to the mature form of Polish cultural identity among the Polish noble class in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was in this context that the conditions for the formation of the canon eventually appeared since, as Szpociński claims, "in a national group, the canon is one of the fundamental elements of identity, and members of the community are introduced to the canon already at the stage of early socialisation."<sup>27</sup> This was also the best time for the inclusion of dance in the canon, as dance had a very high status at the French court, which was then the model for European cultures. Besides, Europe's leading countries all aspired to ensure a distinguished position and universal recognition for their dance and music cultures, which is evident in the debate about Italian, French, English and German styles and tastes. These aspirations actually concerned what is referred to nowadays as the country's 'soft power'.<sup>28</sup> Almost at the very last moment – a mere several decades before its partitions, and a hundred years before the centre of gravity in European dance and music culture shifted toward universalism – the First Commonwealth joined the group of countries boasting a national canon. Thanks to this process, Polish culture – especially Polish music and dance – became a model for other emergent national cultures in the region, from Scandinavia to the Adriatic Coast, despite the fact that it lacked the support of an independent statehood.

Slow ceremonial *chodzony* ('walking') dances known as 'Polish' were performed at royal and aristocratic courts as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, we can only talk about the beginnings of a canon when these courts acknowledged the importance of 'internalised' dances

which enjoyed wide popularity among the noble class. This process took place around the second decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and concerned the original forms of what probably later developed into the polonaise or the mazur. However, unequivocal identification of the musical genres thus named only took place toward the end of the 1730s, when these dances also assumed new practical functions. From that moment on, joining the dance procession was no longer only a form of entertainment and a social occasion, but also – a manifestation of the participants' patriotic feelings, of their views on culture and the country's politics, as well as their attitude to fashionable foreign influences. Also for the Polish kings dance became a convenient and easily applicable way of building their image as guardians of the fundamental nobility (*szlachta*) values: national customs, the idea of Sarmatism and its consequences, as well as the 'Golden Liberty' and the privileges of the noble class. The authority of the king was thus no longer supported by the senators and ladies-in-waiting that followed him in the procession, but by the very fact of participating in and leading a Sarmatian dance, enhanced skillfully by an appropriate garment in the national colours (cf. the ceremonial courtly robes of the Saxon Electors on the Polish throne, kept in Dresden Castle's – Dresdner Residenzschloss – Grüne Gewölbe collection) and displaying the national clothing style and cut. On the other hand, the central place played by Polish dances during the 1719 wedding ceremony of Friedrich August II (August III of Poland, 1696–1763, son of August II, 1670–1733, the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania) not only elevated him to a higher rank among the electors, but also emphasised his position among the crowned rulers – as the king of a vast European state.<sup>29</sup> No wonder that August III similarly highlighted the role of Polish dances at the wedding balls held for his own children in 1747. Poland's last king Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732–1798) stressed the Polish-ness and Enlightenment-age refinement of his court by means

**26** J. S. Bystron, (1933). *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce: wiek XVI–XVIII* [History of Customs in Old Poland: the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries], Vol. 2. Kraków: Trzaska, Ewert i Michalski, pp. 273–277.

**27** A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., p. 51.

**28** J. S. Nye, (1990). *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books.

**29** A. Żorawska-Witkowska, (1997). Wiek XVIII – apogeum i schyłek muzyki staropolskiej [The 18<sup>th</sup> Century – The Climax and Decline of Early Polish Music]. In: U. Augustyniak Urszula, A. Karpiński (Eds.), *Zmierzch kultury staropolskiej. Ciągłość i kryzysy (wieki XVIII i XIX)* [The Twilight of Old Polish Culture – Continuity and Crises (in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, p. 69. Eadem, (2011). Über die polnischen Elemente im drama per musica „Ottone, re di Germania” (London 1722/23) von Georg Friedrich Händel, *Händel-Jahrbuch*. Vol. 57, pp. 49–76.

of a polonaise,<sup>30</sup> whereas in 1791 the Saxon elector Friedrich August III (1763–1806) tested Emperor Leopold VII's (1747–1792) and King Friedrich Wilhelm II's (1744–1797) attitude to a possible Saxon intervention aiming to save Polish statehood by means of the same dance.<sup>31</sup> Also Tsar Alexander I (1777–1825) used the polonaise in 1802 to convince his new subjects from the conquered lands of the First Commonwealth about his conciliatory intentions.<sup>32</sup> Prince Józef Poniatowski (1763–1813) danced the mazur to prove that he had not lost his Polish identity while serving in the Austrian army,<sup>33</sup> and Infanta Maria Augusta of Saxony (1782–1863) – in order to demonstrate that Warsaw was as dear to her heart as Dresden.<sup>34</sup>

In this way, dances from the canon acquired a symbolic dimension, which functioned at the same time as a self-stereotype<sup>35</sup> and a manifestation of essentialist thinking. This symbolic content comprised all that the gentry nation considered most important in the idea of Sarmatism and in the exuberant though rather conservative

gentry lifestyle, which bore a distinct if subtle mark of the Catholic church moral teaching concerning the relations between the sexes. Most of all, the form and pattern of the dances reflected the equality of all the noble class members before the law on the one hand and the complex hierarchical social structure on the other. The dancers' postures and gestures stressed the dignity and (frequently rather unpredictable) individualism of the nobility. Figures and movement patterns for dancing in pairs reflected a partnership model based on the dominant role of the man as leader, though with some margin left for the woman's independence. They also demonstrated men's distance and respect toward the fair sex. The mazur – and later also the hopak and the krakowiak – also allowed the males to demonstrate their dash and agility, and the females – sparkling health and grace. This, however, was not all, as the catalogue of character traits making up the nobility's self-stereotype was gradually expanded after Poland had disappeared from the map with its third and final partition (1795), and later also after the Congress of Vienna (1815). Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, founders of the national ideology saw the polonaise, mazur and krakowiak dance practice as a declaration of strong family ties – the family being the stronghold of national tradition in the face of the threat to national identity. The dances were also assumed to be a declaration of faith, constancy, respect for the opposite sex and for the other dance participants. The family started to be considered as the mainstay of national identity because it was the vehicle of intergenerational transfer of key elements of culture (moral values, patriotism and national traditions, basic cultural competences necessary for a member of a national community under alien rule). After the fall of the November Uprising of 1830–31, the salons of noble and bourgeois families became the main centres for the cultivation of Polish culture, in which national dances also played an important role. Women occupied a special place in both the families and in salon life. The female dancers' steps and gestures were therefore supposed to represent the exceptional virtues of Polish women: their extraordinary beauty and grace, good health, prudence and a specifically conceived independence. This was a peculiar adaptation of the myth (propagated by Father Wojciech Dębołęcki nearly two centuries earlier) of the Polish nation's special mission. As for men's dance movements, these were seen as a demonstration of their physical fitness and readiness for military service, of respect for the national history and for Polish military traditions – qualities that were

**30** J. Bernoulli, (1963). *Podróż po Polsce 1778* [Journey through Poland]. In: idem, *Polska Stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców* [Poland under Stanisław August, In the Eyes of Foreigners], J.I. Kraszewski (Transl.). Vol. 2. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, p. 416.

**31** *Gazeta Narodowa i Obca* (1791). No. 73, p. 292.

**32** *Messenger de Vilna* (1802). No. 96. After: Z. Jędrzychowski, (2012). *Teatra grodzieńskie 1784–1864* [The Theatres of Grodno, 1784–1864]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, p. 62.

**33** F. Schulz, (1963). *Podróże Inflantczyka z Rygi do Warszawy i po Polsce w latach 1791–1793* [A Livonian's Journey from Riga to Warsaw and across Poland in 1791–1793]. In: idem, *Polska Stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców* [Poland under Stanisław August, In the Eyes of Foreigners], J.I. Kraszewski (Transl.). Vol. 2. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, p. 510.

**34** P. Lelewel, (1966). *Pamiętniki i dziariusz domu naszego* [The Memoirs and Diary of Our House]. I. Lelewel-Friemannowa (Ed.). Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, pp. 114–115.

**35** Maria Janion understands a self-stereotype as “a product of the consciousness that often bears traces of a ‘myth’, but appropriately rationalised.” As such, the self-stereotype “justifies a certain type of social behaviour by supplying a schematic justification (‘black-and-white’) derived from a repository of values or pseudo-values, which are believed to be self-explanatory, universally accessible and unequivocally defined.” M. Janion, (1991). *Polski korowód* [The Polish Procession]. In: J. Tazbir (Ed.). *Mity i stereotypy w dziejach Polski* [Myths and Stereotypes in Polish History]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Interpress, pp. 187–188.

much welcome in Polish men as they were expected to go fighting for the country's independence. In this context, even the musical component of the dance alone, or the dance gestures as separated from the music, or the genre identification itself (a polonaise, a mazur, a krakowiak, etc.) were sufficient to represent the values contained in the dance stereotype.<sup>36</sup> For the same reason, artistic works were frequently considered as vehicles for values important for the national community, which raised the social status of dance and music on the one hand (as means of conveying national values) and on the other – limited the possibilities of artistic expression and of popularising many of the forms outside Poland.

Most of the above listed qualities concern dances which developed in contact with the court, or at the court itself: the polonaise and the mazur, which formed the original canon of Polish national dances. However, as Andrzej Szpociński observes:

The space of national history, and therefore also the boundaries of the canon, are not stable and unchangeable. They change in social space and time, and so does their relation to the canons and traditions of other communities. The scope of the canon and of the nation's own past is, to a greater or lesser extent, a reflection of the community's definition of the groups which that community is currently willing to accept as part of itself.<sup>37</sup>

The Polish canon of national dances also underwent transformations. New dances were added to the canon if they were accepted as 'ours' (*swojski*), that is, incorporated into the extended sphere of our-ness. Only those new dances were therefore incorporated whose source forms had originated in the Polish Crown territories. But even within those limits, the Polish nobility had to cross some barriers and open up to the culture of other social classes, or other ethnic groups. This was a long and multi-stage process that was not far-from-simple. Undoubtedly the interest in the dances of "others" always originated a phantasm<sup>38</sup> of sorts. It was only later that the observations

and experiences of the community incorporating those dances took the form of a social vision of the dances of another social group – a vision that had the character of a stereotype. In order to reinforce the position of a dance stereotype within the national canon, it had to be mythologised. Myth<sup>39</sup> made it possible for the Polish nobles to link its own stereotypes of dance phenomena that had fascinated them – with their own dance culture, and to explain why those stereotypes now ought to be viewed as internalised or 'ours'.

During my research I demonstrated<sup>40</sup> that the phantasm related to the kozachok dance proved to be particularly intense and influential. To Polish eyes, it embodied unrestrained freedom, wild spirit and youthful spontaneity. The dance owed its popularity particularly to the habits of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Polish landowners in the territory of present-day Ukraine, who loved to watch Cossack dance displays on their own manors. As a result, kozachok became part of the teaching syllabuses and shows staged by religious schools. Also of much significance was the change in the Polish public image of the Cossacks that took place in the mid-17<sup>th</sup>-century. The belated Treaty of Hadiach, which the Polish nobles signed with Ukrainian Cossacks in 1658 and later partly repeated in the 1660 Treaty of Cudnów, was the First Commonwealth's desperate attempt to retain its eastern territories, but also – proof that the Polish nobility had now matured to the point where it was ready to share some of its privileges with the free Cossacks of the Zaporozhian Host. For this reason, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the Polish nobility did not oppose the idea of their sons learning kozachok at schools and presenting these newly acquired skills in public –

36 A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., p. 49.

37 Ibid.

38 A phantasm is understood here as "the various fantasies, delusions, illusions, mystifications and dreams which have a clear-cut structure (...) and mostly serve the purpose of theatricalisation of both inner and external life" (M. Janion, (1991). Op. cit., pp. 187–188). Though this category is derived from Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) psychoanalysis, it found its broad application in literary studies. This was made possible first and foremost by the ideas of Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), who observed that "the unconscious is structured like language", which was used as a pretext for references to the concepts of

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). Lacan also claimed that one signifier can stand for many signifieds, which activates and reveals "the unconscious" in many ways. Of special importance to literary studies is the unconscious fantasy called a phantasm, constructed around the object of desire and pleasure. A phantasm provides an answer to the subject's own questions concerning the mysteries of existence and the subject's relation to others. Desire can never be satisfied because, once we have achieved something that we thought important for us, it turns out not to be the thing we dreamt of. Hence the eternal sense of lack and the eternal quest for gratification

39 A myth is a complex rooted in "extra-rational strata of the consciousness, which form a pattern exhibiting evident archaic qualities, but also – a current potency, depending more on impulses of the imagination than on the tenets of rational thinking" (M. Janion, (1991). Op. cit., pp. 187–188).

40 T. Nowak, (2016). Op. cit., pp. 80, 120–122, 126–137, 177–179.



also at aristocratic courts, side by side with Cossacks themselves. However, a lot of time had to elapse before the public performances of hopaks by adult members of the nobility came to be accepted in the society. Jesuit school graduates, who were the first to learn kozachok at dance lessons, were already very old by the time this happened. In this way the treaty signed in Hadiach and in the fields near Cudnów – though politically a failure – found its realisation in dance practice.

The position of the kozachok in the canon was undermined by the annexation of Cossack lands by Russia during the first partition of Poland, which meant that Cossacks now entered the service of the Russian tsar. They thus ceased to be seen as ‘ours’. This new hostile sentiment was aggravated by Cossack participation in the pacification of Polish manors, villages and towns after the third and last partition of the Commonwealth’s territories (1795), the withdrawal of Napoleonic troops from Moscow (1812) and the defeat of the November insurgents (1831). No mythology developed in the meantime that could form a permanent connection between Cossack dances and the culture of Polish nobles. Consequently, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these dances were on the wane, until they were completely eliminated from the canon. This void was filled by the krakowiak, which featured in many ballets, operas and *Singspielen*<sup>41</sup> in response to the Western fashion for showing peasant dances representing specific regions on the stage. Such dances were staged in Warsaw<sup>42</sup> and probably also in aristocratic theatres set up especially in the First Commonwealth’s Eastern borderlands in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The characteristic energetic drive of the krakowiak undoubtedly influenced the nobility’s treatment of it as a phantasm, which was later musically reproduced at the court and in vocal versions during all kinds of feasts.<sup>43</sup> However, it was the association of the krakowiak with the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794 (owing to the importance of the play *The Pretended Miracle, or Cracovians and Highlanders* in motivating the Polish society, and to numerous insurgent songs written to krakowiak-type

melodies<sup>44</sup>) and the symbolic, pioneering role that the “Cracow militia” (the later Cracow Grenadier Regiments) played in the uprising – that elevated the krakowiak to a special status in the canon of national culture. Interestingly, the dance was elevated from the very beginning to the level of a myth, even before the uniform choreographic stereotype of peasant dances from villages in the Cracow region was formed and accepted by the nobility in all the provinces of the former Polish Crown. In Warsaw and Vilnius nobles danced two completely different types of krakowiak.<sup>45</sup> The common “national” form of the krakowiak appeared only later, inspired by Kazimierz Brodziński’s (1791–1835) literary descriptions<sup>46</sup> and the choreographic vision of the authors of *A Wedding in Ojców* (a ballet premiered on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1823)<sup>47</sup>. With the traditional sleigh ride (*kulig*), now enriched by the game of *A Cracow Wedding*, this new krakowiak reached – in the High Romanticism – the nobility’s country houses and the villages of impoverished gentry throughout the former Polish territories. Notably, the nobles of the Cracow region did not adopt any stereotype of a Cracow region peasant dance for their own use. There was most likely too much concern here about what might happen if the barriers between the nobles and the peasants were abolished. As the peasant revolt of 1846 demonstrated, this was by no means a groundless fear.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century reinforced the myth of Kościuszko and his uprising, and consequently enhanced the position of the krakowiak within the canon of national dances. This position was also strengthened by the ideology of Romanticism, which postulated a return to folk roots

41 I preserve the German inflectional form: Singspiele, but – in Singspielen (translator’s note).

42 J. Prosnak, (1955). *Kultura muzyczna Warszawy XVIII wieku* [The Musical Culture of 18th-Century Warsaw]. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, p. 131.

43 H. Rudnicka-Kruszewska, (1968). *Wincenty Lessel. Szkic biograficzny na podstawie listów do syna* [Wincenty Lessel. A Biographical Sketch Based on Lessel’s Letters to His Son]. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, p. 114.

44 J. Horoszkiewicz, (1889). *Echa minionych lat. Wiersze, pieśni z muzyką, marsze wojska polskiego z końca XVIII wieku i początku XIX wieku, Zeszyt I. Słowa* [Echoes of the Past. Verse and Songs with the Music. Polish Army Marches from the Late 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Part 1: The Lyrics]. Lwów: for sale in the bookshop of Seyfarth and Czajkowski, pp. 13, 20, 27, 28. Idem, (1889). *Echa minionych lat. Wiersze, pieśni z muzyką, marsze wojska polskiego z końca XVIII wieku i początku XIX wieku, Zeszyt II. Nuty* [Echoes of the Past. Verse and Songs with the Music. Polish Army Marches from the Late 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Part 1: The Music]. Lwów: for sale in the bookshop of Seyfarth and Czajkowski, pp. 6, 8, 12.

45 Zdania cudzoziemców o tańcach polskich [Foreigners on Polish Dances], *Gazeta Polska* (1830). No. 38, p. 4.

46 K. Brodziński, (1925). *Wiesław. Przemysł-Warszawa-Łódź*. Lwów: Książnica Naukowa, pp. 8, 9, 10.

47 K. A. Jürgensen, (1982). *Reconstructing La Cracovienne*, *Dance Chronicle*. No. 6, pp. 233–234.

and a new understanding of the nation as an ethnic community. All this paved the way for the incorporation into the canon of peasant dances from other provinces – the Mazovian oberek and the Kuyavian kujawiak. Still, even the Romantic myth of an ethnic community did not guarantee to these dances the kind of position that was attained by the krakowiak due to its associations with the insurrection. Furthermore, the oberek, popular and performed in villages nearly throughout the country, gained a higher status and frequently absorbed the kujawiak. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the kujawiak as a separate genre was only cultivated among landowners in the Kujawy region, whose desire to stress their regional identity far outweighed any potential fear of fraternising with the peasants and their culture. The peasant community in that period was also already quite different from the one existing in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century acts of granting freehold to peasants abolished the main source of antagonism between the villagers and the manor, and the process of democratisation was accelerating and influencing social life.

But the acceptance of the Romantic ideology and of the concept of a nation rooted in ethnic identity had another consequence. National ideologists and dance theorists had to go to enormous lengths and perform nearly acrobatic feats to prove the peasant origins of the polonaise and the mazur. They selected possibly the most general arguments which did not really refer to the most characteristic qualities of these dances. For instance, they emphasised the similarity of the procession<sup>48</sup> in the courtly polonaise and the peasant *chodzony*, and of the circle of pairs<sup>49</sup> in the mazur, the oberek and the kujawiak, as well as some frequently chance or ambiguous similarities in dance terminology. They did not care to notice that these common qualities testified more to eagerly manifested ties between social strata than to the common origins of these various dances.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, those theorists and ideologists failed to mention, or marginalised the far-reaching autonomy evident in the dance steps, gestures and figures of the once sophisticated courtly dances. They quoted incomplete, laconic or just plain fabricated historical accounts, which afforded an opportunity for displays of oratorical skill. In this way, they tried to prove the validity of the theory that all

the dances in the national canon had common origins. Those excerpts from historical documents, quoted and re-quoted *ad infinitum*, became imprinted on the communal consciousness and in this way the theory of the peasant origins of national dances came to underlie the whole concept of the dance canon.

In fact, the canon of national dances was by no means the only example of this process. One possible analogy is the Romantic treatment of the historical Polish gentry house or manor (*dwór*). As modern research has demonstrated, in the Baroque the manor was a young concept in Poland. It had developed in the 1630s as a functionally and formally reduced version of the great modern-age European residences. It was by no means unique to the Polish territories. All the same, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the development of the myth of landed gentry's version of patriotism meant that the literary-historiosophic construct of a Polish manor house took root in the public imagination as a token of Polishness. What is more – historicism and the local myths of Sarmatism and Slavophilia saw the Polish manor house as originating in the peasant cottage, and thus endowed it with apparently 'native' and 'ancient' provenance. With time this mythologised construct became an important ideological weapon in the struggle to divert successive threats to social unity and communal identity.<sup>51</sup> With dances it was a similar case.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought many significant changes in the functioning of national canons. First and foremost, progressively wider social circles began to be incorporated in the canons of culture. In the area of music and dance, this was mostly made possible by the operation of numerous and easily accessible institutions such as: public dance rooms and dance schools, open-air and popular theatres, as well as open-air concerts. At the same time, democratisation of social life caused a departure from "a strictly defined and – in a sense – 'closed' canon in favour of an open-type canon."<sup>52</sup> The first symptom of this change was the growing interest in the musical and dance culture of the Tatra highlanders,

48 R. Lange, (2009). Op. cit., pp. 95–96.

49 Ibid., pp. 94–96.

50 Ibid., p. 98.

51 M. Leśniakowska, (1997). Architektura „staropolska” – architektura „nowopolska”. O problemie ciągłości w kryzysach [“Old Polish” and “New Polish” Architecture. On Continuity in the Face of Crises]. In: U. Augustyniak Urszula, A. Karpiński (Eds.), *Zmierzch kultury staropolskiej...* Op. cit., pp. 113–128.

52 A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., p. 53. Idem, (1994). Od zamkniętej do otwartej formuły kanonu kulturowego [From the Closed to the Open Concept of the Cultural Canon], *Kultura współczesna*. No. 1, pp. 40–45.

promoted by authors of various literary, musical and press publications, as well as in theatres, opera and ballet houses, and in the graphic arts. The highlander and *zbojnicki* (highland robber) dances undoubtedly functioned as yet another phantasm derived from folk origins, but, unlike in the case of the previously developed phantasms, this time there was no clear stereotype of highlander dances accessible to the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Polish intelligentsia. No such stereotype was provided by education, the stage, or by dance handbooks. For this reason, members of the intelligentsia had to rest satisfied with dance shows performed by highlander groups and staged by Tytus Chałubiński (1820–1889), Maria Dembowska (1854/6–1922) and Bronisław Dembowski (1847–1893), as well as their numerous followers.<sup>53</sup> Though no stereotypes of these dances developed within the canon, the dances themselves nevertheless found a place on the peripheries of the canon in their traditional forms, modified (to some extent) by being separated from their original, natural context. Importantly, though, these dances continued to be performed by representatives of the common folk. Even though the villagers usually received instruction from mentors and sponsors belonging to the intelligentsia, those rustic performers joined the social discourse by ‘speaking’ for themselves in song and dance about their own cultural canon.

This new model, in which dances entered the wider social circulation without first being stereotyped by the dominant group within the national community – became extremely common in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The development of ethnographic studies provided vast source material that confirmed the value of many village dances. As the example of Scandinavia amply demonstrated, those dances could perform their social functions (also those of education and integration) better if they were left unaltered. What is more, after the fall of the three monarchies that divided Poland between themselves, and after many Central European states had regained their independence, the canons of national dance usually no longer played the role of a Noah’s Ark for the endangered national values and their meaning became largely historical. This was also the case in Poland where, despite many attempts by the local elites to introduce regional dances into the national canon (mostly by presenting them on the stage and describing them in publications dedicated to the canon) – the basic set of national dances remained unchanged.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of those intellectual elites (national ideologists, regionalists, researchers, choreographers, composers and musicians), which for many decades had had a decisive impact on the formation of national canons, began to decline as the place of intellectual elites was being taken over by political ones.<sup>54</sup> Naturally, it was not easy for Poles to get used to this new situation, so different from the one that existed under the partitions. Collaboration with the invaders’ administration had been considered as evidence of rejecting one’s national identity. However, in the independent country people had to learn to obey the authorities and collaborate with them.<sup>55</sup> The political elites between the World Wars had quite a lot to offer in the area of culture: the programme “Poland and Its Culture”, implemented by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, as well as the repertoire designed by the Methodological Centre for the Propagation of Culture and the new social-dance versions of the national dances. Despite this effort, rather than resulting in the revival of national dances in everyday social practice, all these initiatives mostly led to the development of amateur artistic movements, primarily associated with the stage.

The present-day concept of national dances in Polish culture is dominated by forms that have established themselves (though certainly not in a final, definitive shape) over the last several decades. Those forms were developed primarily for the needs of the stage and of dance education at schools, and in the context of limited access to source data. One could claim that genres that have already been a historical rather than a living phenomenon for more than half a century are now being reconstructed on the basis of indirect information which includes oral transmission. The national dances as performed in present-day Poland can hardly be interpreted as direct reconstructions of the dances from the age of Sarmatism, the Duchy of Warsaw or Congress Poland, although they have for a long time been considered as such. The cultivation of national dances on amateur and professional stages can rather be interpreted as what Walter Wiora (1906–1997) described as ‘a second lease on life’ (*Zweites Dasein*),<sup>56</sup> which

**53** L. Długolecka, M. Pinkwart, (1992). *Muzyka i Tatry [Music and the Tatra]*, Warszawa-Kraków: Wydawnictwo PTTK “Kraj”, pp. 40–41, 58.

**54** A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., p. 53.

**55** Ibid., p. 50.

**56** W. Wiora, (1959). Der Untergang des Volkslieds und sein Zweites Dasein. In: W. Wiora (Ed.), *Das Volkslied heute, Referate der Tagung des Arbeitskreises für Haus- und Jugendmusik 1958 (Musikalische Schriften. T. 7)*, Kassel-Basel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, pp. 9–25

leaves the way open for further transformations of these genres.

Andrzej Szpociński points to the fact that we are currently witnessing a 'privatisation' (though 'individualisation' seems to be a more adequate term) and an 'autonomisation' of the canon. On the basis of comparison with West European cultures, Szpociński forecasts a cultural stratification of the Polish society and a diminishing role of the cultural canon as one of the main constituents of national identity.<sup>57</sup> In his article on Polish-ness in music, Jan Stęszewski asks these question: "The past teaches us that ethnic and national musical stereotypes satisfy the human need for a sense of direction in the world around us. Will this need, however, remain valid in a standardising world? Will it not be considered as a symptom of undesirable, outdated 'allergies' with regard to racial, ethnic and national issues?"<sup>58</sup> Stęszewski leaves these questions without answers.

Publications on Polish national dances that have appeared in recent years build an atmosphere of decline. They very frequently reproduce the same contents, or create closed catalogues of dance components.<sup>59</sup> In this context one could ask: is this really the end of the history of national dances? This question cannot be answered unequivocally. After all, thousands of children and teenagers are still willing to present those dances either on the stage or at dance competitions, and they do actively explore the spaces left by experts in the competition regulations. The Polish Section of CIOFF (International Council for the Organizations of Folklore Festivals) has recently brought together a large coalition of people and societies involved in (or related to) the cultivation of the national dance canon, for a project which aims to promote the phenomenon and its further development. On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015, the Polish national dances were entered in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It therefore seems that the canon will last, and will continue to attract scholarly interest in the coming years.

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- 57** A. Szpociński, (1991). Op. cit., pp. 55–56.
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