Tomaž Simetinger

STAR PATHS AND TRACES OF DANCE

FROM PLATO TO THE PILGRIM SWIRL

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INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

Introductions are usually written at the very end. It is the ending, often also the climax, of a process that may present more questions that an author can answer while researching and writing a book. This introduction, too, is being written nearly at the end of the writing, when many things remain unclear and I find myself wondering whether to finish writing at all, if it might not be better to continue. The conviction that, to some extent, scientific writing is akin to an artwork, one that might never be completed while striving the inexistent ideal of perfection, will triumph in the end. At some point, one must wrap up their work, despite any possible imperfections. One must press that final dot and start anew or perhaps continue from that point onwards. Yes, this work is another one of those where I might one day say: If I wrote it again, I would do it differently. Would it be better for it? Perhaps, but not necessarily. Writing a book is a process that forms you while you form the text, it constructs and changes your view on things. Now it has brought me to a point where I continue with new knowledge and a different outlook. The writing itself was an endless dance between now and then during which I tried to function as a kind of translator between the languages and cultures of time. As such, it is destined to be partial – it is only when one tries to capture them that one realises how complex reconstructing individual phenomena is when you want to assemble a broader picture. In the end, it was not perfection that was strived for, but rather a sufficient degree of credibility with regard to using the epistemological apparatus to make this text a relevant part of the discursive truth of dance culture both in Slovenia and outside it.

INTENTIONS AND DILEMMAS

Dance is one of those human activities that is deeply linked to various others. It presents itself as such in this text as well, linking itself to areas that seem completely unrelated. The activity is difficult to research in its contemporary form and becomes even more complex when observed through the lens of various historical approaches. It is not surprising that in some regions, dance was mostly researched by musicologists. It is understandable that in addition to ethnology, it was musicology and (with regard to the structural analysis of movement) linguistics that played one of the most important roles in the early research of

dance culture. These sciences developed early and have a much longer and richer tradition than ethnochoreology and anthropology of dance. Their approaches can be traced to German-speaking countries, which importantly influenced the development of ethnochoreology in Slovenia. It was musicology and linguistic that offered some insights into the development and characteristics of dance culture, as well as into the epistemological frameworks that shaped our understanding of dance in both its contemporary and historical form. What is behind these frameworks and how to address it is therefore a question that necessarily arises. What images will form if we dare to look further than what is already known? One of the main goals of this text is to address the limits of the established assumptions about dance, cross them sometimes and supplement them with some new views on this large mosaic of images we associate with the phenomenon of dance.

The title *Star Paths and Traces of Dance* suggests an arc that spans between historically relatively old ideas and ideologies up to the physical and other practices that people have adopted, both in the past and today. Initially, the text was conceived as a case study of the pilgrim swirl, but during its creation it turned out that the study of the swirl is only a small part of a much broader picture. At the end of reading, the reader will probably realise that the text before was much more important than the chapter on the pilgrim swirl. In this respect, the interpretation and development of certain phenomena of dance culture in Europe are more important than the search for historical correlations of the occurrence of the pilgrim swirl alone. Other dance-related phenomena could also be studied by the explanations established in the text which is why, in the first chapter, the book outlines the beginnings of the Platonic idea, which had important consequences for the development of dance culture and beyond. Plato's theory, which was later transferred to Christianity, was the reason for the development of various concepts like the *chorus angelicus*, dance regulations and other symbolic meanings related to movement and the body. It is necessary to further highlight two more topics that spring up constantly throughout the text: rhythm and circumambulation. In Europe, these two parameters of movement have been preserved to this day as the foundations of the understanding of dance - and general movement aesthetics. Initially, in the pre-modern period, they were established as part of almost all dance practices, but from the Enlightenment period and subsequent modernisation on, they occur especially in vernacular and, to some extent, in popular culture ones. Circulation and rhythm are still considered important pillars of dance culture in Europe and elsewhere, so in the first chapter they are, from different perspectives, systematically interwoven with other topics.

In the second chapter, the text touches on concrete practices and objects that, each in their own way, materialise the Platonic cosmogonic idea. Dances and

games, labyrinths and ambulatories and various processions, all ways of circular and rhythmic movement, point to a common denominator, but – at the same time – a very divergent development of these phenomena.

Without placing the body in the midst of the sacred and the profane, we can neither understand nor uncover the past. The ancient tradition and the relationship between the sacred and the profane, which was embodied in the bodies of the dancers, are one of the key and fundamental dilemmas of modern ethnochoreology and historical anthropology of dance. How our ancestors embodied space and how space was created by bodies is the topic explored in chapter three. In both the second and third chapters, one further thing should be noted.

The church space has had different roles in history, and it is precisely in the case of dance that it turns out to be a phenomenon that we perceive quite differently today to what some historical sources testify. In several sections, the text focuses on the design of church or sacred spaces which does not always correspond to the functions it has today or the concept of piety that a contemporary human being is used to exhibiting in these places. This opens new perspectives and, above all, raises questions about the understanding of the spatialisation of the sacred space.

The fourth chapter focuses on the issue of the pilgrim swirl and certain parallels with much older phenomenon discussed in previous chapters. For an even more extensive analysis of this dance phenomenon, we would necessarily have to consult additional sources or a different paradigmatic approach. One more fact must be emphasised about the fourth chapter. As mentioned, the material that I discuss in this chapter was the reason for this monograph came to be. The text was initially conceived differently than what the final product looks like now. The final chapter may seem as if it does not quite fit into the whole, but it's there for a reason. Even though it is somewhat different from the rest of the book, I have found a place for it in it. I could have made it a second and independent part of the monograph and thus possibly separate it more clearly from the whole. In any case, the intention was to present and list as many primary sources as possible about the pilgrim swirl and the context in which this phenomenon historically takes place. This achieves the goal of giving the non-Slovene-speaking interested public access to this ethnographic material, very interesting for researchers of the history of dance. These are references to primary sources and their context, which can at least partially help fill the gap that often occurs when researching the history of dance. As mentioned, Slavic (Slovene) sources are underrepresented in research. There are several reasons for this and I will not list them all here, but one of the main ones is the accessibility of resources and the issue of language barriers. In the case of the pilgrim swirl and what is now the fourth chapter, a small step has been taken to improve this situation.

When cultural and historical aspects of dance culture are subject to research, the question of sources always arises. It is crucial that we critically shake them up in the process of acquiring new knowledge and insights. The pilgrim swirl and some other movement and dance phenomena discussed in this text are interesting because they move away from (in the Slovenian ethnochoreological tradition called "older") sources. They mainly address the dance culture of the (in some places) usually better-documented upper social classes and represent a long tradition of vernacular dance practices. When studying the pilgrim swirl itself, it was still necessary to stem from historically relatively new sources. Despite this, the comparative method and diachronic analysis placed the phenomenon in a significantly more in depth (historical) perspective. The often mute masses of illiterate people, who – compared to how many records we have of their masters – have either wilfully or unwittingly been overlooked by various chroniclers, historiographers or other authors of sources, are given at least some small recognition. The recognition comes not in the sense of righting some historical injustice, but rather in the sense of the importance of understanding the complexity of the development of dance culture. It is precisely because of the uneven representation in sources that the practice of dividing dance culture into "high" dance culture and other, "folk" practices, has become established in some spheres. Such a division was further reenforced by the romantisation and frequent exoticisation of peasant life, and the European elites' search for an anthropological Other in the lower social classes. Empirical data and case studies show that sources from certain parts of history in which elites are better represented should not be outrightly believed, as they can be somewhat misleading. Dance transcended social boundaries and encroached into spheres that did not recognise social classes. The development of the waltz serves as an example. Without interdependent parallel currents of development in different social groups, technological development and development of musical currents, without political interventions, the economisation of free time, moral-theological interventions, etc., we would certainly not be able to know it, research it or, of course, (still) perform it the way that we do. Above all, we would not be able to understand it as we understand it today, when the frameworks of "high" and "low", "human" and "non-human", "school" and "non-school" have long been transcended. The case study of the pilgrim swirl will thus try to overcome these binaries and trace some symbolic and ideological (dis)continuities over time.

Another aspect important for the introductory thoughts on dance culture and its imprints in historical sources is the question of language barriers and positivism. A number of examples of high-quality studies of dance culture exist in Western ethnological and cultural anthropological tradition. Many insights offers a new perspective in the field of research into the cultural history of dance. Language barriers, however, remain a (all too) common problem for authors in

this field. It is, of course, an old predicament. In Germanic, Francophone and Anglo-Saxon parts of Europe (and in other parts of the world which derive from or rely on these linguistic and ethnochoreological traditions), what researchers have in common is that in what are otherwise often very good and comprehensive studies, they often consider Slavic cultural environments unequally, if at all. That tends to be especially true of the time after the Second World War, when English took over from French and German as the primary language of science, and also became the *lingua franca* in large parts of the world. In addition to the varyingly strong traditions of dance culture research in Europe, language is certainly one of the main reasons for the lower representation of Slavic sources about dance culture in more comprehensive works. Because it was my intention to address this problem at least partially, I deliberately chose to study the phenomenon of the pilgrim swirl in the final part of the book. The choice, in addition to my personal convictions, meant that the dance sources of the Slovenian and a wider Slavic language environment were given precedence.

If this text can at least partially provide some answers to the discussion and place a historical dance phenomenon within a broader context, it is my hope that it will pass into the – in Slovenia still strongly rooted – positivist tradition within ethnochoreology[1]. Here, I must point out that diachronic analysis cannot exist without some positivist aspects. This paper is largely based on positivist approaches, so I wish to emphasise that the purpose of this writing is not in any way to portray this (in some environments strongly present) paradigm as something limiting, let alone negative. It simply uses such a paradigm and places it appropriately (even critically) within a wider epistemological apparatus.

As the next point of the introductory discussion, I would like to highlight the question of understanding certain phenomena in the context of time. This paper aims to shine some light on the complex area and show how temporal prisms can be deceptive. The point of view of the modern man and the use of his contemporary cognitive apparatus should not be sufficient when looking back into the past. If they are, one might be deceived by time itself. The concepts that the modern human faces and uses are important, but they have their limitations and can be deceptive enough to create a completely distorted perception of the more or less distant past. Diachronic analysis cannot be designed without considering the (dis)continuities and the temporal aspect of the development of individual

1 The Slovenian ethnochoreological tradition was mainly focused on the documentation and analysis of dance movement structures and their typology. Contextual approaches were given significantly less attention. In itself, this is not controversial, but it is problematic because that means that it has never undergone a critical shake-up of the dominant structural-analytical paradigm and the associated scientific and research work. The consequences for the development of Slovenian ethnochoreological science and, to a large extent, also its applied activities, were considerable.

ideas and concepts (even when dealing with dance). Concepts such as dance, movement, the body with its expressiveness, etc., are all the more complicated because they are very intangible and constantly changed over time. As studies show, they were closely tied to various forms of body politics and subjected to power mechanisms of theological, moral, aesthetic and (other) ideological nature. Today, it is crucial to understand and study them within a cultural, historical and anthropological context; otherwise, they can paint an even more blurred picture of the past.

In addition to classical examples and descriptions of individual phenomena, the text is devoted to triads such as body/soul-dance/movement-liturgy, body/soul-dance/movement-cosmogony, dance/movement-ritual/space, etc. Using various perspectives, it tries to shed light on the (dis)continuities of Platonic ideas in the everyday life of people in the past. Dance or movement is the connective tissue of this book. It necessitates understanding liturgy, religion, the sacred and the profane, cosmogony and space, as well as other phenomena created by the bodies of our ancestors through movement. Dance is an essential element of all of the above, which is why the text tries to depict the meaning and role of dance/movement especially within the different contexts of Christianity. Christianity, at least in a certain historical perspective, is very much a dancing religion, but it leans on and draws heavily on pre-Christian and non-Christian traditions and philosophies. The text shines light on the various practices of people's everyday lives and attempts to link them to the ideological foundations from which they originate.

From the outset, I must thus point out an important dilemma that occurred while I was writing the paper. The reader could well be critical of this text for its methodological inconsistencies, seeing that in places it links and compares data from very different historical and geographical areas. All of this information definitely still needs to be improved upon and further researched. Writing about some segments of the cultural history of dance touches upon areas that have been relatively poorly or not at all researched. Any data that we have on dance culture is often partial, poorly summarised or translated from older sources, cited without appropriate historical context, etc. We still lack systemic studies of individual areas of dance culture. I draw attention to this several times in the text itself and cite similar insights from other authors. One of those insights, related closely to the content of the book, pertains to dance and physical practices in the context of the history of (Catholic) liturgy and the church environment. Despite numerous sources on the subject and even some historical studies, our understanding of it is not complete. For various reasons, researchers of dance encounter the lack of sources and systemic insight into dance culture relatively often – especially if the time in which such sources were written did not look favourably upon it. This book was written during a period when all public in-

stitutions were closed because of the spread of a virus across the world, which imposed a quarantine and shut down almost every form of public life. Libraries and archives were relatively difficult, if not impossible, to access during this time. It was a period which prevented many people from working. Precisely because of the blank areas in the knowledge of the dance culture of the past, because of a lack of sources or their inaccessibility, and because of what some might perceive as methodological inconsistencies, this book is meant to be a comprehensive hypothesis, not a presentation of conclusive findings. To achieve those, a series of further studies is required to either complement or refute some of the theses in this text.

THE STEPS OF THE STARS

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS, OR FOLLOWING THE PATH OF TERMINOLOGY

The heading of the subchapter is somewhat misleading as it presupposes that the dance culture of the Western world began in Ancient Greece. That is untrue. That is only a milestone that will serve to start this discussion. We must take into account the fact that Greek dance culture also developed on the basis of and under the influence of various previous and contemporary cultures. The text begins in ancient Greece because the vocabulary and sources make it possible to follow the development of a phenomenon. I am aware that the development of dance culture is significantly more complex. The movement and dance concepts known to the ancient Greeks came into contact with the different cultural environments of Europe. These different concepts, when put into contact, influenced each other and developed. Still, we can trace them throughout history to a certain extent. Individual words or phrases that denoted dance or dance-related activities were far from content-wise or semantically static; they changed greatly depending on time, place and different cultural environments. At least in part, the text will focus on this as well, which is why it is necessary to first explain two key ancient concept which allow us to at least partially track the conceptual perception of dance over time (e.g., Zimmermann 2007, Pont 2008: 267–268). On the basis of etymology and the use of dance-related vocabulary, Julia Zimmermann traced the development of dance practices from late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages. Two types of dance were known in late antiquity, the ορχεομαι (*orcheomai*) and the χορεια, or χορος (*choreia* or *choros*).

Ορχεομαι is a term that generally denoted dancing, leaping, or jumping. The term was used to describe any rhythmic movement through space, including the movement of individual limbs or just the eyes. In some instances, its meaning extended to cover dances in a theatre or during various rituals associated with the military. It is key, however, that this is a label whose meaning also incorporated the dance of an individual (solo forms of dance) that can also be linked to artistic expression. This meaning of the word *orcheomai* was established particularly in the post-Constantine period, which is discernible from translations of biblical passages that describe the dance of Salome or King David. They appear in different circumstances, but both as individual, i.e., solo dancers. An addi-

tional meaning of this kind of use of the word *orcheomai* can also be found in patristic texts referring to dance, which will be discussed later on (Zimmermann 2007: 28–30).

The second concept, χορεια or χορος, appears in late antique literary works and is slightly more relevant to this discussion. *Choros* differed from *orcheomai* primarily in that it signified collective circular dance practices. These dances could be either profane or sacred in nature, but they were always accompanied by the singing of the dancers. The distinction between ορχεομαι and χορος was formed and especially pronounced during early Christianity (Zimmermann 2007: 28–30).

The term ορχεομαι might have been translated into classical Latin as *salire* ("to jump", "jump", "to dance"), but it is the term χορος that provides a direct transfer of both the word and its meaning to Latin, i.e., *chorus*.[2] The Latin *chorus* is translated into Old High German as *chor* and then into Slovenian as kôr. The primary meaning of the earlier Greek and Latin words was related to a group of people dancing and singing at the same time. Later, the singing becomes a separate entity and coincides semantically with today's word "*choir*" (Internet source 1). Furthermore, if we look at the etymology of the word *oro* or *horo*, we will come to understand that it originally refers to the Latin *chorus*.[3] As we can see, the term χορος has, through various derivations of the word as well as movement practices, been preserved all the way to the New Age.

A key element in the development of the concept of *choros* existed not only on the level of group dance practices as opposed to individual ones (which we can trace through the development and later translations of the term *orcheomai*), but also in circumambulation. Irrespective of the usages and semantic variants that have developed over time, *choros* and the Latin loan word *chorus* both contained an element of group circular (dance) movement, which does not refer only to the movement of each individual dancer around their axis, but also the movement of a group of dancers along a certain circular or serpentine path around one or more common focal points.[4] Circularity is indeed one of the key dimensions for understanding the cosmogonic principles revealed to us through the use of vocabulary and related dance (and other) practices.

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2 For further translation of the aforementioned terms in other medieval European languages, their semantic transfers and semantic development, consult the paper by Julia Zimmermann (2007: 29–48).

3 For etymological links between the dancing *chorea* and the musical *chorus*, and subsequent derivations in the languages of former Yugoslavia, consult Hrovatin (1959).

4 Etymology might be useful in this case as well. The Slovenian expression *kolo* (which is also used in slavic languages) is a Latin-based expression for "a type of dance during which a large spinning circle is formed." (Internet source 2)

PYTHAGORAS, PLATO AND PROCLUS, OR THE UNIVERSE WITHIN A GRAIN OF SAND

The symbolic meanings of circular movement vary greatly throughout history.[5] Understanding the Pythagorean-Platonic philosophy and the role of the circle within it is crucial for the diachronic viewpoint and dance culture in the European context. Reconstructing the Pythagorean philosophy without any primary written sources is extremely difficult due to the high syncretism of later philosophers, writers and interpreters. Despite that, however, we can conclude on the basis of earlier sources that in the 6th and 5th centuries BC, Pythagorean philosophy was the one that gave the cosmos a unified harmonious form. Pythagoras[6], whose teaching was adopted and further developed by Plato, established a unified principle of the functioning of the cosmos with the help of the principle of numbers. Numbers (Gr. *arithmos*) are a universal cosmic principle and determine everything in existence. All parts of the cosmos exist in numerically determinable proportions. In practice, this means that the distance between the stars in the sky, for example, is subject to some numerically determined ratio. The totality of these parts of the universe and the numerical ratios between them form a harmony (Gr. *armonia*) (Berghaus 1992: 44, Celenza 1999: 669–670). Harmony is therefore crucial for a functioning system whose operating principle is based on numbers or numerical units.

The cosmos cannot be perceived as fixed and static, but as a constantly moving system. Plato claims that the gods reduced chaos into cosmos by giving order to random movement and thereby uniting individual parts of the cosmos into a harmonious whole. Within that whole, the planets, with their movement in the sky, play the role of divine dancers who have their own inner life and their own mind. Their reason allows them to constantly move along their circular tracks without colliding with each other and, together, form the harmony of cosmic dance.

Such a heavenly dance not only enabled the stars to orbit but was also key to all events in nature. The Platonic philosophy claimed that time did not exist at the beginning of the creation of the universe and the world, but that the circulation of time was determined by the stars. With their permanent and repetitive circular paths, they controlled the comings of days and nights, seasons, years, etc. (Syston Carter 1987: 3–4), and in this way, the rotation of the stars was also responsible

5 Symbolic meanings of circular movement in European traditional culture were explored by Mirjam Mencej (2013a) and Jolanta Kowalska (1991).

6 As pointed out by Graham Post, some ideas that are nowadays simplistically attributed to the Pythagorean-Platonic line of thought are much older in origin, as they already existed in some Asian cultures. The Greeks only transferred and incorporated them into their own philosophy (2008: 267).

for the rotation of various natural cycles, such as the vegetation cycle. Man's existence in the cosmos was thus crucially dependent on his place within it.

The workings of the cosmos in Platonic thought can be explained on two interdependent levels: the macro- and microcosmic level. The macrocosm is made up of various microcosmic units. It is a system that contains various hierarchically subordinate subsystems of order, all of which are interdependent and connected. Microcosms are thus a smaller, analogous macrocosm. If on the one hand we have the stars, planets, moon and Earth with their circular motion and harmonious relationships, this macrocosmic representation is also transferred onto the micro level. At the microcosmic level, we can find reflections of the macrocosm in, for example, a country consisting of different families, all made up of individuals (Post 2008: 269). A well-functioning state provides a suitable environment for the life of families and consequently the harmony of the individual, and vice versa. Each individual, who must seek the harmony of soul and body in order to function properly, is part of a larger interdependent system, which – through him, his family, the country, etc. – is ultimately mirrored in the harmonious macrocosmic sphere. Put simply and metaphorically, Platonism with the concept of analogously connected cosmic units where microcosmic parts are hierarchically united in the macrocosm, finds within a grain of sand the reflection of the entire universe.

Plato furthered the Pythagorean line of thought; in turn, a century after his death, the Platonic philosophy was built upon by Plotinus[7], and thus began Neoplatonism. Plotinus also emphasised the hierarchical nature of the cosmos. In this philosophy, the cosmos is said to have its source and centre in the Christian God. The transcendence of God is said to manifest itself at all levels of the material world, but at the same time, it emphasises an individual's ability to communicate with Him through the immaterial world as part of an inner spiritual experience. God is at the centre of the cosmos and everything both stems from him and leads back to him (Syston Carter 1987: 5).

Plotinus' idea is based on the opposition between the unity and diversity of all parts of the cosmos. Dance played an important role in this logic. Group dancing, with dancers holding hands, is a symbol of unity. Harmony is an inherent part of every individual or individual dancer. As an individual, each participant of the dance contributes their part, but at the same time, their movement must still coincide with the music and the gesticulation, rhythmic marching, etc., of their fellow dancers. With their circular dance, the dancer embodies the cosmic movement of the stars. Since they are themselves a small part of the microcosm,

7 Plotinus' teacher Ammonius Saccas (3rd century) is considered one of the pioneers of Neoplatonism, but relatively little is known about his philosophic principles.

they imitate the circular movement of the stars by dancing in a circle and thus directly embodying the universal interconnectedness of the cosmos. Plotinus' understanding of dance is that the dancer, who moves their limbs from one position to another, must adjust their entire body to each position. The body is oriented towards some final goal, so individual limbs and each of their individual movements are not important; only the movement of the body in its entirety, aimed at this common goal, counts. The dance of the body is both a metaphor and a reflection of the movement of cosmic elements. The cosmic dance of the planets and celestial spheres works in the same way. Individual subordinate microcosms harmoniously follow hierarchically higher units of the cosmos, just as individual limbs follow the movement of the body (Syston Carter 1987: 5–6). In dance, the analogy between the cosmos and the body achieves perfection.

Dance held important symbolic meaning for the Greeks (and other societies): it embodied the harmony of society and the world, so it was necessary to know how to perform it. Despite that, Plato did not write about it directly. As noted by Graham Pont, this is probably one of the reasons why philosophers and researchers of dance culture did not pay attention to Plato's attitudes towards it (2008: 268). While so far, not a lot of attention has been paid to dance in the context of Platonism, this philosophy can now be of great assistance in explaining some dance-related and other historical phenomenon. The understanding of dance in Platonism will be explained using the ancient Greek concept of art, which was in itself a kind of embodiment of cosmogony.

Ancient mathematical art consisted of four categories. The first and most basic, from which everything else is derived, was arithmetic. It studied numbers as metaphysical units. It concerned itself with the smallest parts of the cosmos and its subsystems. Combining numbers or individual cosmic parts into larger units was subjected to laws. These laws were studied by another mathematical art – geometry. The third art was astronomy (also cosmology), dedicated to the study of the movement of celestial bodies. The fourth mathematical art – music (Gr. *mousike*) – was crucial for dance. *Mousike* was not only the art of music in the modern sense of the word, but a discipline that was inextricably linked to dance. The art of *mousike* also included singing, writing poetry, declamation and instrumental music.

Mousike reflected the proportions of the celestial spheres. The study of music was not the study of individual types of music, but of mathematical laws within it, determined on the basis of the movement of the celestial spheres (Pont 2008: 268–272). Mathematics was the fundamental principle of art, and an educated Greek was expected to know the laws of both music and dance. Music and dance combined with developments in science helped the ancient Greeks search for a harmonious union of the body and soul (2008: 247). With this purpose in

mind, the muses gave people rhythm in music. Rhythm was not only there as irrational satisfaction, but mainly because people could use it to fix the disharmony in their souls and bodies and synchronise it with the harmony of the cosmos (Berghaus 1992: 47).

Since, according to the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy, the harmonious body reflected the cosmic movement of the celestial bodies, it is important for the understanding of the dance culture of many later centuries to know how this philosophy was also transferred to the Christian environment. When the harmony of the movement of the celestial spheres (as interpreted by *mousike*) is transferred to the body and consequently the soul, dance becomes an activity that uses mathematics to enable humans to communicate with the centre of the cosmos: the gods and, later on, a single, Catholic God. Harmony in both rhythm and circulation plays a key role in this. Platonic ideas became the basis for the development of certain phenomena and thus fundamentally influenced their perception and manifestation. Dancing was just one of them.

DANCE AT THE DAWN OF CHRISTIANITY

The relationship between the Catholic Church and dancing is often very stereotypical. Throughout history, we can find many documents which are proof of the regulation of dance activities or, in some circumstances, even the ban on dancing. It is safe to say that from the very beginning, dance was on the one hand a part of liturgical ceremonies and on the other, a very problematic matter. The relationship of (early) Christianity to dance is an area of dance culture that is still extremely poorly researched. It is a complex interdisciplinary topic that will require a critical re-evaluation of existing insights, the refutation of many oversimplified ideas and stereotypes about the Church's attitudes towards dance, and discussing many concepts that remain a mystery. It will also be necessary to look past some of the anti-Church discourses created throughout history (e.g., from the time of the French Revolution) which had a strong influence on the later understanding of the Church's attitudes towards dance (Rohmann 2013: 129, 196–197, 205).[8]

Despite the many ambiguities and the relatively small number of sources about dance from the early Christian period, we can safely claim that Neoplatonic

8 The fact that the attitudes of the Church towards dance remain poorly researched (especially from a theological point of view) and that the research of dance is still a relatively young and marginalised discipline, is pointed out by Laura Hellstein in her paper *Dance in the Early Church: Sources and Restrictions* (2007). For further information on the subject of early liturgy and dance, consult Kinghardt 2005.

philosophy[9] was crucial for the perception and understanding of dance in that period. Due to Plato's Academy, this philosophy was transferred into one of the main orientations of the Hellenistic school of thought, which directly influenced the transfer of ideas to the Roman environment. As a key author and founder of the Neoplatonic School, Plotinus (along with Proclus and Iamblichus), transferred Neoplatonism into the world of early Christianity. Despite the fact that it was the Aristotelian system that was accepted into the Church[10] as official doctrine, the Pythagorean-Platonic principles of unity and harmony were thoroughly incorporated into Christian theology. The syncretism of Pythagorean, Platonic, Neoplatonic and Church ideology was later used in works by Ambrose, Augustine[11], Boethius and Dionysius the Aeropagite, crucially contributing to the fact that the Pythagorean principles survived (more or less unchanged) throughout the Middle Ages (Berghaus 1992: 48).[12]

The ideas about the workings of the cosmos, passed down through centuries, enabled the continuity of ideas that were then integrated into Christianity and influenced the understanding of dance. However, the new phenomenon of Christianity also had its own concepts pertaining to religious practices, some of which only existed for a relatively short time. When it comes to dancing, we are faced with two questions: how the first Christians danced and where or in what kind of space? The answers remain decidedly unclear.

How the first Christians congregated and in what way the first religious services were held is not known. Christianity was persecuted at the time, so there are not many sources that describe the original religious practices. There are only vague descriptions of the worship service and the role of dance within it up until the 2nd or the middle of the 3rd century. If we consult the scarce sources, we can conclude that it took the form of (evening) meals. The first Christians gathered for worship sometime in the afternoon or towards the evening and organised a joint feast. The meal ended with liturgy and prayer during which they served wine, which they did not drink before this moment. When each of

9 With the understanding that future answers to current questions might change the view of the history of dance culture, this paper is based on the knowledge and insights that were available and accessible to me at the time of writing. I am aware of the possibility that in the future, due to current lack of research into dance culture (especially in the Church environment), some of the statements will need to be reviewed, corrected or even determined to be incorrect.

10 I must draw attention to the fact that this text frequently refers to the Church, by which – unless otherwise stated – I mean the Catholic Church. However, as the text deals with various phenomena across a rather expansive span of history, it must be taken into account that many sections (including heretical and other movements) existed within this Church. At many points in history, it was extremely discordant.

11 For more on Augustine and his attitudes towards dance, consult Mayer: s. p.

12 For a more detailed explanation as to why Platonism was interesting for early Christianity and about the role of reason and the cognitive apparatus of the human within it, consult Macy 1992.

the worshippers took a sip of the wine, probably in silence, the second, more social part of the gathering began: the wine was mixed with water and served to the worshippers, signalling the beginning of a more relaxed gathering or even a party.[13] Sources state that this was the part of the liturgy in which the participants organised games of skill, posed riddles, sang, recited poetry, read, played pantomime. This gathering was often characterised simply by conversing at the table for the purposes of education, but in all of this, dancing should not be overlooked. (Klinghardt 2005: 12–14) Assumptions about the role of dance in Christian liturgy can be made on the basis of partial descriptions and the performed hymns. These hymns (which are the better documented entity), the spaces in which we can conclude these dances were performed and some sources about dances that were known at about the same time indirectly point to the fact that liturgical dance was likely similar to the present-day structure of circle dances or certain types of *kolo* (a Slovenian expression for a type of chain dance), where the dancers join hands and move rhythmically. It should be noted here that such a dance (*choros*) could only include individual elements of body movement, which at the time were understood to be a dance in themselves. Such dance elements included individual dance steps or body movements, body posture, facial expression, rhythmic hand movements and other body gestures. All these movements, be they independent or interconnected, formed a dance which – and this is crucial – was performed in combination with singing or recitation of hymns. In doing so, early Christians could perform *choros* in two groups that responded antiphonally to each other by dancing and singing. Even more often, the group had a leader who sang or prayed while the others responded to him in what we can characterise as a responsorium (Klinghardt 2005: 12–14, see also McGowan 2014: 111–134).[14]

The assumption that the first liturgical dances comprised of both singing and dancing (where an individual led the dance and the singing and had the others respond to him) can also be made on the basis of the Gospel of John, created among the Christian sects of the 2nd century. It is an important text for the history of dance culture, as it is often quoted by researchers due to its direct description of Jesus and the dancing apostles. In these writings, Christ reveals to his disciples the mysteries of God through a circle dance, thereby making it the medium of transcendence. He orders them to form a circle and hold hands

13 The term party must not be understood in the contemporary meaning of the word, as it denoted socialising, worshipping God, education and other amusing and free-time activities at the same time. While some of the activities are nowadays understood to be fun and relaxing, they were at the time performed in the context of liturgy.

14 Similar conclusions have been drawn by E. K. Chambers (1903), who searched for parallels of such leaders of dance and singing not only among the Greek, but among Celtic and Teutonic religious leaders as well.

while he himself stands in the middle, where he sings a hymn in honour of God and his disciples must answer his prompts with "amen" (Rohmann 2013: 128–129, Klinghardt 2005: 18–19, Zimmermann 2007: 97).[15]

The spatial experience of dance depended, at least in early Christianity, on where Christians gathered and on the idea of what the Christian community was supposed to be. The modern idea of a church as a stone building, a holy temple, did not exist then. Temples belonged to other, non-Christian religions, which is why early Christians neither had nor were allowed to use larger places of worship. The first Christians understood the church as a spiritual community that unites people in the common purpose of worshipping God. In their mind, the church was not a physical building, but primarily a spiritual concept, a gathering place for like-minded people. It did not have the roles that the church assumed later: a spiritual temple in a physical form. For this reason, these spaces often sprung up spontaneously or were more or less randomly determined. In smaller communities, they might have existed in private houses. We can conclude that these spaces were closed and, as can be understood from the preserved texts from the beginning of the 3rd century, usually also barred or locked (Klinghardt 2005: 16). It was only around the 8th century that the notion of a spiritual space of Christian gathering began to be associated with the physical space of "stone" or built churches. It is important to understand that sometime within this period, the idea takes shape of the church as a microcosmic reflection of heaven in this world, representing the macrocosm of God. The church becomes a place of contact between this world and the otherworld (Rohmann 2013: 131). We can assume that the dances of the first Christians took place in smaller closed spaces, which would, in their own way, determine the performance of the dance. As Louis Backman notes, the dance of the first Christians was actually a dance that came out of a pre-Christian environment and was thus only integrated into Christian rituals (1952: 13). Carl Andersen also notes how strongly early Christian communities were tied to pre-Christian customs in their practices. Authors of as late as the 2nd century suggest that Christians do not differ from non-Christians in anything, not in terms of origin or in terms of dress, appearance, etc. (2009: 91–92). On the basis of an admittedly small number of sources (and indirectly also by applying the dance-etymology-based comparative

15 The apocryphal Gospel of John is one of the most important texts in the history of dance as it caused a dispute between theological orthodoxy and gnostic sections. Dance was perceived in two ways: for some, it was literal, for some metaphorical – where it was not the the body, but the soul that moved. The focal point of this dance is Jesus – the God in the centre whom everything revolves around while He gives meaning to the existence of everything. That the dispute was extensive and important is indicated by the fact that the text was a subject of discussion during the Council of Nicaea in 787 (Rohmann 2013: 128).

method to existing materials[16]) we can conclude that this also applied to the dance imaginary and practices that were integrated into everyday life and liturgy.

The practices transferred from the pre-Christian to the Christian environment were accompanied by an imaginary which had to partially adapt to the new circumstances. One of these slightly modified ideas related to dance was the idea of the aforementioned circulation of celestial bodies, which were associated in pre-Christian tradition with various deities and supernatural beings. These beings maintained order in the cosmos via circular movement. In people's imaginations, they dwelled on the celestial bodies and guided them through the sky on their circular paths. There was no place for old gods in Christianity, so replacing gods with angels was necessary for the transition to a Christian environment. This reinterpretation of the role is quite logical, as belief in angels was widespread both within the Jewish and the new Christian environment. These beings occur both in the Old and New Testament and are presented in the Bible as part of the Kingdom of Heaven where they worship and glorify God. They played an important role in the construction of people's attitude towards dance, as people were supposed to imitate them during the liturgy with their own circular movement. They are also described in the Bible as numerous beings who replaced the many former deities and supernatural beings of pre-Christian origin without much difficulty. Angels thus assumed an important role in the circular dance of the stars and the establishment of cosmogonic principles in Christianity (Syston Carter 1987: 3, 7–8).

It is significant that angels were also recognised as divine beings by Jewish people, despite the fact that they are at no point described as dancing creatures in the Bible. Based on the use of dance vocabulary and etymology, we can conclude that Judaism significantly influenced the development of early Christian attitudes towards dance (ibid.). In this environment, dance was perceived as a medium through which believers could make contact with God, for which Judaism and later Christianity relied on various texts from the Old Testament.[17] One of the most important, and later in the history of dance culture one of the most cited biblical quotations was David's dance in front of the Ark of the Covenant.

16 For more on this, consult Syston Carter 1987.

17 More extensive writing on the topic of the dance practices of the ancient world (as well as Jewish cultures and references in the Bible) was authored by Oesterley. Oesterley's work was first printed in 1923 and then reprinted in 2022. Although he is considered an important author and is cited by many researchers, Laura Hellstein (2007) rightly points out that a certain amount of caution should be employed while reading his works, as it repeatedly shows a rather hegemonic attitude towards other communities and is thus at times epistemologically questionable. Nevertheless, the text is important for dance culture as it relies on many historical sources and it is in the role of a source of ethnographic data that I also employ it in some parts of this paper.

> When those carrying the ark of the Lord advanced six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf. David was dancing[18] with all his might before the Lord wearing a linen ephod.
>
> (2 Samuel 6: 13-14; Christian Standard Bible, internet source 10)

Dance was transferred into Christianity on the basis of Platonic philosophy combined with Judeo-Greek practices and was often perceived as and performed with positive connotations. In early Christian communities and in centuries later, it was associated with joy, celebration and glorification of God. In the 4th century, Bishop Basil of Caesarea wondered: "Who can be happier and more blessed than those who dance the *chorus* like angels?" (Tronca 2016: 53–54). At that time, people understood dance as a direct reflection of the celestial dance of the angels, who endlessly rejoice and dwell within God. Dancing formed a community that rejoiced in the worshipping of God and a community that was a reflection of God's order in the broadest sense. If the church in its physical form became a reflection of God's space and order, the centre of the sacred on Earth and a way of being in contact with Him, then dance reflected the activity of celestial beings. The angelic circling around the Centre was holy, and the human dance in the context of the sacred was its approximation.

On the basis of pre-Christian traditions, Christianity enabled dance to enter the sphere of transcendence, which had important consequences for the understanding of the social organisation of society as well. Through Platonism with its mathematical principles, high art was directly linked to the spiritual sphere. An individual could not achieve the ideals of art and consequently the spiritual without learning. If one did not master the prescribed and – in one way or another – predetermined norm (Gr. *nomos*), one could not achieve harmony with other dancers. In its own way, the *nomos* was considered a regulation and thus also the basis of the social order. Dance could therefore be understood as a way of maintaining social control over people. If an individual followed *nomos* and was able to perform the *chorea*, they were physically harmonious and, according to the principles of the micro- and macrocosmic structure, contributed to social harmony. If an individual was unable to do so or did not know how, they could belong neither to Plato's ideal state nor to the dance spaces of the Christian community, where harmony reigned (Tronca 2016: 54). Discipline and harmony of the body were the basis for the smooth functioning of the individual and his place in society. The individual had to be part of the system of the micro-

18 The Slovenian term *rajati* that is used in the translation is semantically similar to the (in the Middle Ages) more commonly used verb *tanzen*. It is most likely derived from the Old High German verb *rihan*. Semantically, it is linked to the term *aufreien*: to line up, sort. We can assume that the word *reien* had a double meaning and could also denote a specific poem or a type of stanza that appears in court literature and was performed while dancing. Insufficient sources exist to prove the latter claim (Zimmermann 2007: 39–48).

and macrocosm, where they coexisted with other (including heavenly) beings. Reflected onto the dance of the people, the dance of the angels became a kind of choreography of the social order, and rhythm and circulation were its foundations. These foundations later appeared in endless variations, contexts and meanings and still do in present day. They are the foundations without which we cannot understand neither the pre-modern nor the modern perception of dance.

Our understanding is that the spirituality of the group dance was directly reflected in the social order. Dance represented the spiritual mathematics of the social order, and any deviation was perceived as immoral and a literal embodiment of the antithesis of the cosmic or God's order. Dance played a key role both in Platonic philosophy and in Christianity, as the inability of the individual body to move in a standardised, controlled and consequently harmonious way with other bodies was perceived as immoral, deviant and depraved. Later on, in the Middle Ages, with the development of semantic values of gestures and body movements, this had many consequences (Schmitt 2000).

THE BIRTH OF *CHORUS ANGELICUS*

By observing the development of an idea in which circulation is understood from a diachronic point of view as a cosmogonic principle and a medium for placing the individual and their communication between worlds, we will find that liturgy was not the only place in which ideas of the Platonic *chorus* came alive in practice. When analysing the spread of ideas about *choros*, one of the most important factors to consider is the persecution of Christians and the resulting cult of martyrs. Within a sacred context, circle dances like the *choros* and the cult of martyrs were strongly intertwined.

Illegal until the 4th century, the development of Christianity took a giant leap forward in 313 after the Edict of Milan. That was when the tolerance edict made Christianity equal to other religions of the Roman Empire and allowed the early Christians to stop practicing their religion illegally. Before that, Christians were persecuted and cults of the martyrs who gave their lives for their faith were quickly established within the Christian community.

In the Christian imaginary of the time, fire had the role of a purifier, so it burned and enveloped the edges of the Kingdom of Heaven. All who entered this place had to pass through it to be properly cleansed in anticipation of the moment when they would stand before God. According to Christian belief, the martyr was re-baptised and cleansed of their sins with the blood they had shed for their faith, so they did not have to go through purification by fire; their soul had al-

ready been prepared for paradise through torture and death. Immediately after death, the angels thus brought the martyrs directly to Heaven and to the throne of God (Backman 1952: 39–41).

Because of their proximity to God, the martyrs quickly assumed an important role in the minds of early Christians. They became the source of God on Earth. Christians would worship them at their graves, which became a kind of sacred locations. These graves were gathering places at first, gradually became smaller shelters, and eventually (especially after the end of the persecution) were turned into churches and cathedrals (ibid.).

The cult of the dead and especially the cult of martyrs are important in Christianity because they both function as remembrance rituals. Very early on, Christians began to perform various rituals in connection with the dead, mainly linked to pre-Christian traditions. At the graves of the martyrs, they held feasts, drank, sang, played games and, above all, danced. The Church had two options in this respect. It could suppress this and put a definitive end to such practices (even those adapted from other environments), or it could try to limit this practice by incorporating it into a new Christian context. Because of bad reactions to its bans and regulations, it decided to adopt a long-term strategy of amalgamating pre-Christian content into Christian rituals. This allowed for a "gentle" Christianisation of pre-Christian cults (Zimmermann 2007: 58–60), which in itself – as we can conclude from various sources – did not mean that the Church had no concerns about performing activities at the graves of martyrs. It has been repeatedly pointed out that in practice and in the everyday lives of people, the veneration of martyrs and the entertainment associated with it could go well beyond the limits of the desired and the permissible. Such worship was getting out of control. Sources indicate that these worship services could be accompanied by various obscenity-filled parties and the lewd behaviour of the worshippers, so the events could turn into actual drunken orgies (Backman 1952: 41, Arcangeli 1992: 56–57).

With the appearance of martyrs, the ancient Greek idea of the celestial dance of the planets inhabited by the gods, replaced by angels in Christianity, took on new dimensions. This idea had already been transferred to Christian literature in the 2nd century and several different symbolic meanings were thereby transferred to Christian symbolism. As the cult of the martyrs spread, so did the idea of the celestial dance of the blessed. It was the martyrs, who in their suffering came directly before God, that had a special place in this dance and were therefore, like the angels, in direct contact with God.

Along with the cult of the martyrs, the assumptions about their remains also spread relatively quickly. Relics were sacred to Christians and were said to have supernatural powers. The findings of Mozes Noda indicate that the cult of the martyrs and the veneration of relics developed in three phases. The first phase comprised the early period, in which the development of ideas about martyrs began in the first place. The second phase consisted of increasing the number of churches where people could perform liturgical ceremonies. The third phase is a combination of the first two. It was a phase during which relics began to spread across a broader space and were transferred to an ever-increasing number of consecrated churches (2014: 57).[19] The spread of relics and the continuing spread of Christianity also enabled the distribution of some basic ideas for the development of the dance culture of that time and place.

Transferring relics was often linked to various festivities accompanied by processions and dancing. Dance in particular, as an essential part of various ceremonies and liturgical rites, characterised Christian rituals throughout the Middle Ages. It continued to reflect the Greek idea of the heavenly circular dance, with God taking over the role of the centre of the universe. In the theocentric interpretation of the cosmos, God is the centre of everything, while angels and other beings circle around him. The *chorus angelicu*s was born in the Christian imaginary, singing the glory of God and dancing in his honour. People imagined this as a choir of angels singing hymns to God and dancing around Him. Dancing on the graves of martyrs, in their shrines or during the transfer of relics became a dance similar to that of angels. With the help of the cult of martyrs and by using dance in liturgy, worshippers could imitate divine joy and thus make contact with God.

The idea of the cosmic order where God is above all and at the same time the central point of creation was developed by Dionysius the Aeropagite in particular. The Greek philosopher and theologian from the 5th and 6th centuries, whose life we know relatively little about, developed the hierarchy of angels. On the basis of Platonism, he developed a model for understanding the nine choirs of angels, which are hierarchically arranged and rise towards God. Like angels, other living beings also have their own hierarchy. This hierarchy represents the path of the soul, one that circulates and through its mystical progression achieves

19 One of the first ceremonial transfers of relics is described by Ambrose of Milan in 386 and concerns the transfer of the remains of St. Gervasius and St. Protasius to a church which was then consecrated (Noda 2014: 57). Tronca points to an earlier source which describes the custom of Christians dancing at the graces of martyrs in the presence of relics. The text is attributed to an anonymous author and was written somewhere in the East, most likely between 363 and 365 AD. This ritual was performed in honour of St. Polyeuctus and was accompanied by a sermon in which they said: "How shall we know the love that he had for God? We shall dance for him our ordinary dances." (2016: 57)

the union or unification with God. Both the text and the author are of great importance, despite the latter being accused of platonising rather than Christianising. Dionysius is also the author who laid the foundations for medieval mystical theology in which dance, based on the descriptions of St. Paul and his visions of the celestial dance, played a rather important role. His words began to be translated into Latin as early as in the first half of the 9th century, which further encouraged the spread of ideas about the choir of angels in the heavenly hierarchy. His ideas flourished after being adopted and expanded upon by the Renaissance humanists Marcilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, Florentine authors who, at the court of the Medici, developed the philosophy of unity and universal harmony from which the aesthetic and artistic practice of Italian humanism is derived (Internet source 3, Berghaus 1992: 49–52, Syston Carter 1989: 3, 9). According to this philosophy, (liturgical) dance was an activity that – by way of analogy with the angelic hierarchy – put man in his God-ordained place within God's creation. Dance was a way of achieving direct contact of man with God, angels, saints and other deceased, while at the same time it also determined their hierarchical place. The reason for the Church's frequent bans on dancing while at the same time sometimes performing or at least tolerating it, lies partly in the transgressive function that dance held for the worshipper.

If liturgy was tasked with the salvation of people and during Mass, the holy God was embodied through transubstantiation, then the worshippers believed that angels dancing around God was something that took place during liturgical rites, directly among the people. This idea was especially encouraged by the quickly developing mystical theology. The mystical experience of liturgy was encouraged by the representation of the choir of angels as an example of heavenly worship (Schmitt 2000: 138). People believed that angels were physically present during worship as well, singing and dancing, but they themselves cannot see and hear them because of their imperfect sinful bodies. This conclusion was reached on the basis of the texts of Dionysius the Aeropagite, which describe the church as a reflection of the heavenly order and hierarchy. What the angels do in heaven, believers should also do on Earth, at least during liturgy. The dancing of the people around the altar during liturgy was understood to be a dance shared with the angels who were in the immediate presence of God. Because humans are imperfect and subject to sin, they cannot see or otherwise perceive these divine and perfect beings (Backman 1952: 20–22).[20]

The priest as the central figure of the liturgy assumed a symbolic role. In addition to performing liturgy or as part of it, he could also lead the worshippers in dance. People assumed Christ (and sometimes also Mary) to be the first

20 More information on liturgical dances based on circling around the altar can be found in Backman's text in the chapter *The Fathers of the Church and the Religious Dance* (1952: 20–87).

or lead dancers (German: *Vortänzer/Vortänzerin*) in the chain, so by analogy, a priest or a bishop could also perform this role among people. This is indicated by, among other things, a possible interpretation for an earlier designation for bishops. In addition to the Latin designation *episcopus*, the designation *praesul* was also in use. Eschmann translates this expression as "the one who dances first" or "the one who leads the dance" and it is translated into German as *Vorspringer*[21] (Demary 1987: 63, Backman 1952: 49, Böhme 1886: 15, Eschmann 1864: 110–111). There are some etymological dilemmas regarding the term *praesul*, and we should not ignore Gregor Rohmann's claims that Dionysius the Aeropagite already understood dance in a liturgical context as a metaphor for meditative-contemplative practices that people did not perform with the body, but only in the spirit. This is also how he interprets the concept of the bishop, who is otherwise the centre of the spiritual dance in the church. According to him, the bishop was supposed to dance and even lead the dance, but only in spirit (Rohmann 2013: 126–127).[22] Theoretical and theological opinions on whether dance is intended for physical movement or contemplation may have been more or less contradictory throughout history, but the iconographic depictions of Christ (and in rarer cases of Mary) show that well into the Middle Ages, people still perceived and depicted them as celestial dancers. Their role was to lead a dance of angels or saints (while also playing an instrument) or to use the medium of dance to introduce themselves to pure souls (Salmen 1980).[23] This perception still complements the idea of the *chorus angelicus,* which, after its early Middle Ages forms, got new wind with the rise of the medieval mystical

21 The Slovenian term *skakati* (German: *springen*, English: *to jump*) has a very broad meaning in medieval German. Despite the fact that the terms *tanzen* ("to dance") and *reien* ("to dance") were already known at the time (along with an extensive series of neologisms that described dance and dance-related concepts of movement), it was the verb *springen* that was used more often. To denote the dancer (e.g., in the biblical description of the dance of Salome before Herod), the derivative *Springerina* also appears in medieval High German (Zimmermann 2007: 32–48).

22 On the basis of researched practices, some of which will be discussed in the following chapters, we can conclude that there were differences between various theoretical views, philosophical traditions and often relatively narrow or even unfavourable interpretations of dance in a liturgical context and (para-)liturgy, which also contained various forms of movement and/or dance. The perceptions of what dance was in the first place differed as well.

23 It should be noted at this point that modern treatments of Christ as a dancer use the term *Spielmann*. A simplified and somewhat misleading modern translation of this word is "musician" (in the modern sense of the word). In Old High German, the word *Spielmann* had a very broad meaning. It was related in meaning to the Latin *saltare* and *saltator* (meaning "to dance") and *ludus/ludere* (a game that can be related to dancing), and in the German of the same historical period, the term *Spielmann* can be found in connection with the words *hupfen*, *sich tumeln, kampfen* etc. The analysis of the use of the vocabulary shows that the meaning of the word *Spielmann*, in addition to the performer of music, also denoted a dancer and/or even performers of various forms of performing activities, e.g., a man who performs illusionist tricks (Zimmermann 2007: 136–140). The term *Spielmann* is thus directly linked to the performing of dance rituals at the time in question.

tradition. These literary and staged mystical experiences of the angelic dance, as described by, for example, Hildegard of Bingen or Mechtild of Magdeburg, provided the idea of the angelic dancing choir with even more meaning. The *chorus angelicus* is often depicted using motifs of an infinitely large number of dancing beings (angels, blessed ones, saints, etc.) who circle, dance or perform various circumambulation, while at the same time they are accompanied by music of indescribable beauty. The crucial role in this chorus of dancers is often assumed by Christ himself, who leads them (usually in the right dance direction). This dance takes place in heaven, which is presented as a garden of God's infinite love (Zimmermann 2007: 95–106).

The form of the dance and the way it was performed were also transferred from early Christianity to the liturgy of the Middle Ages. The role of Christ as the leader of the dance, i.e., the aforementioned first or lead dancer, was performed by bishops, deacons or priests. This is indicated not only by the etymology and iconography of Christ and Mary, but also by various attested practices. A telling event that took place between 1170 and 1172 serves as an example. A priest in the countryside around Reims led a circular ritual dance one Sunday in the presence of the clergy and the laity. He forgot himself and violated priestly propriety in relation to women, so the students who were present mocked him. This angered him so much that he broke some windows and doors in the house where the students lived and then excommunicated them from the Christian community. When this was brought to the attention of Pope Alexander III, he intervened and protected the students. What is telling, however, is the clear indication that dance rituals were well-established among the clergy. The Pope's actions were not aimed at the pastor because of the dance he performed, but because of the excessive force and punishment inflicted on the students (Mews 2009: 536–537).[24]

24 The concept of a leader of a chain of dancers or a first dancer, which is translated in German as *Vortänzer* or in the feminine form *Vortänzerin*, was preserved in the secular, and partly also sacred, environment throughout the Middle Ages and at least until the 20th century. We can assume this on the basis of a series of testimonies that have been preserved and that confirm the existence of a dance leader who performs his specific role in a ritual context. The role of the pre-dancer in modern times was not the same as the early Christian roles of the bishops, but the principle of the person leading the dance was preserved, if adapted, over time. Balthasar Hacquet, among others, reports seeing first dancers in various rituals in Slovenia. Hacquet mentions that the first dancer (pronounced *Vortänzerin*) at weddings among the inhabitants of the Gail Valley (South Carinthia, Austria), where the concept appears regularly, has a different hairstyle from the other wedding guests (1801: 16). We can also read about first dancers in Carniola, Slovenia, where Lauren writes in 1840 that they are chosen for patronage celebrations. Such a *Vortänzer* is called a *rajnoz*, and his dancing partner a *rajonka* (Lauren 1840: 49). The completely secular role of dance leaders and its correlations could probably also be traced to the historically much younger phenomenon of dance masters who taught dance, set its rules and also led the dance at dance events.

Based on (pre-)Christian philosophical concepts and rituals, dance as a form of worshiping God was then also transferred from the graves of the martyrs to the church liturgy. It changed over time and various forms of dance rituals arose in Europe (tied to the worship of God or coming into contact with angels and other beings, e.g., dead ancestors). We must not, however, overlook the fact that the basic (still Platonic in nature) idea of a group circular dance containing the cosmogonic principle was preserved.[25] Through the cosmogonic principles of the circulation of the stars, later replaced by angels, the individual could be placed within the wider structure of the material and spiritual worlds. As early as in antiquity and especially during the Middle Ages, the Church began to criticise dance and attempted to interpret it as a metaphor for the dance of the soul and not the body, but it was not successful in preventing dancing. Because of medieval mysticism, dance even became one of the media for experiencing the afterlife. In other terms, dance became the medium through which people communicated with God (and other beings) by themselves. This kind of communication, left entirely to the laity, caused concern among the clergy, as it allowed the people themselves to symbolically take possession of sacred spaces like churches and graveyards.[26] Dancing did indeed, even outside the context of liturgy, allow the people to bypass the clergy and establish new relationships between the living and the dead, between people and the divine, between the physical and the spiritual (Schmitt 2000: 99–100). In this respect, dancing enabled a person to achieve exactly what the Church wanted: contact with God. The problem was that the clergy was poised to lose its role as intermediary and its leading position in some types of such communication, so the dance of humans and angels became the main frontline on which the Church fought to maintain its monopoly as intermediary.

The question arises as to what these (para)liturgical dances of the Christians of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages were like, and how individuals or dancers moved together. It is almost impossible to provide this question with an answer, seeing as we only have some indirect information to help us reach a conclusion about the structure of the dance. Based on the use of vocabulary and indirect descriptions, we can assume that these dances were performed in

25 Some key examples will be explored in more detail later on in the paper.

26 Graveyards were often a place for dancing. There are a number of sources that describe dance rituals related to graveyards and the dead. Some of these practices can also be discerned from still, or at least until recently existing dances related to death or the dead (Backman 1952: 41–43, 140, Ramovš 1996: 205, 209, etc.). From Charlemagne on, the church and the authorities have tried to place cemeteries around or near churches. It was the Josephine reforms of the Habsburg monarchy that first introduced the concept of a pious attitude towards the dead as we know it today. That was also the time when the state introduced regulations for a suitable hygienic burial. Before that, the graveyard was a public space where many daily activities took place: fairs, people's meetings, legal matters, livestock grazing, games and entertainment, dancing, etc. (Habinc 2000: 24–28, Makarovič 1995: 143–148, Rutar 1882: 66).

a bouncy manner, often with a three-step structure. In descriptions, the frequently used Latin term *tripudirae*, which would today most fittingly be translated as "three-step dance", seems to confirm this. The dancers, who could also hold hands, performed various serpentine turns or danced in a circle.

There is a question more important than that of structure: dance has certainly changed over time as far as its movement structure is concerned, but has its semantic meaning also changed? To paraphrase, were the conceptual dimensions of dance as understood in pre-Christian tradition and in Pythagorean-Platonic philosophy preserved throughout the Middle Ages? Did the Platonic principle in dance, based on the harmony of movement and manifested, among other things, in the appearance of the *chorus angelicus*, at least partially survive the Middle Ages? Some written sources from the Middle Ages can provide the answer. Sermons might prove to be crucial sources for understanding certain folk practices, as their authors repeatedly refer to people's actions or comment on some of their activities. Various derivations of Platonic ideas appear in several medieval texts, but few authors wrote specifically about dance. The most important authors for the understanding of the transmission of Platonic ideas in the dance culture of the Middle Ages are three preachers and intellectuals from the 11th and 12th centuries, whose reflections on Platonism and its Christian syncretism are the best known: Bishop Sicard from Cremona, the Parisian theologian Jean Beleth and their predecessor, Honorius Augustodunensis.

MERGING HERITAGE – FROM ANTIQUITY TO CHRISTIANITY

In late antiquity and especially in the Middle Ages, Christianisation brought about various strategies and techniques for attempting to convert individuals (and more often entire communities) to Christianity. As a result, Christianity faced numerous pre- and non-Christian traditions that had to either be suppressed or given a new, Christian guise. The strategy of Christianisation was the so-called *Interpretatio Christiana*, with which pre-Christian customs and habits, imaginaries, religious and other rituals, calendars, objects and their use were adapted to the new Christian context and a new, Christian interpretation. Christian syncretism thus found itself in a situation where the external form of a cultural phenomenon was often incorporated into a Christian context, while its primary purpose was adapted or changed (see e.g., Eberlein 2006: [s. p.]). Music and dance were common practices of pre-Christian communities and the new Christian Church was forced to confront them. Early Christianity in particular relied on the existing, primarily Jewish musical tradition (McGowan

2014: 114). Similarly, fresh Christian converts[27] across Europe introduced dance into the newly construed Christian worship service and thus linked the Church with paganism (Klinghardt 2005: 10–11). Christian syncretism made dance in liturgy possible. Several theologians dealt with the meaning and interpretation of dance in a sacred context, and at least three authors of the High Middle Ages (who we perceive today as having exhibited a broader understanding of dance at that time) wrote about it somewhat more extensively.

Honorius Augustodunensis (1080–1154) was the predecessor of Bishop Sicard of Cremona (1155–1215) and the French theologian Jean Beleth (1135–1182). There is relatively little else known about him. We know that he died in 1151 and that he travelled around Europe and worked for a time in Bavaria, among other places. He is known for his work *Gemma animae* ("Gem of the Soul"): a liturgical manual that was extremely popular and widespread in the 12th century. With it, Honorius Augustodunensis interpreted and legitimised the practices of liturgical dances that the Christians adopted from the pagans. In his text, he studies various symbolic meanings of liturgical practices and in this way connects ancient tradition with the Christian message.[28]

If the pagans worshiped the gods with dance, they did so because dance represented the movement of the cosmic spheres and the heavenly planets. As Honorius Augustodunensis explains, the circumambulation of the altar symbolised the familiar idea of the celestial angels dancing around God. The symbolism of the circular movement does not end here. According to Honorius, the dancers in the liturgy – with their hands clasped while dancing – illustrated the complexity and intertwining of the four basic elements; the singing illustrated the echo of the harmony of the planets; the gesticulation of the body was a symbol for the movement of the zodiac signs; claps and kicks symbolised the roaring of thunder (Rohmann 2013: 173–174).

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27 In this context, I deliberately use the word *convert*, as it is etymologically connected with the Latin *conversio* or *converto* (Eng. to turn, to change). The etymological data suggests a strongly rooted idea of the Church as a community of dancers. At first, the word was used to denote the daily turning or orbiting of the stars around the Earth. It does not start being used in the context of changing one's religion until the 2nd century. From the early stages on, the Church was tied to the notion of passing from an earthly communion to the sphere of the eternally dancing blessed in heaven (Rohmann 2013: 128–129).

28 It must be pointed out that all the above-mentioned authors influenced the growing interest in the issue of pre-Christian practices and their Christian interpretation. The *Gemma animae* of Honorius Augustodunensis and *De ecclesiasticis officiis* by Jean Beleth are considered to be the bases on which Bishop Sicard of Cremona built his work *Mitralis de Officio*. The first two works, and especially Sicard's text (published around 1200), reached broad audiences and had a tremendous influence on the theological and other discourses touching on the interpretation of pre-Christian practices in the context of their amalgamation, adoption and changes. Most importantly, they also point to the fact that an increased interest in so-called pagan themes existed at this time (Mews 2009: 512).

Those were not the only symbolic meanings of the movement in liturgy known in the Middle Ages. Dancing and processions also had a part to play.[29] In the past, both processions and dance had several forms and purposes. The two phenomena have complemented each other throughout history and have often been impossible to unambiguously separate. Dancing was often an integral part of the processions that could take place both inside and outside the church. The data implies that the participants could partake in the procession by dancing and it could be accompanied by music or singing. They could also stop to dance during the procession itself, or they could stop at certain junctions where the dancers performed for the observers. Processions were often accompanied by both music and singing, and we know that they were also associated with the performance of various dramatic content (parts of which could also include dance) (e.g., Reynolds 2000).

Processions tended to be an independent phenomenon (and were not always linked to church liturgy alone, we also encounter them in other contexts), but we cannot understand them developmentally without a direct connection to dance and vice versa. The dance, which might in the context of liturgy consist only of dance moves in the procession or of entire dance figures, cannot semantically be separated from the processional event.

Such procession rounds were gradually developed into a varied semantic image. In addition to the previously mentioned symbolic meanings, for Honorius, circling around the altar also had the meaning of the unity of people and, due to possible repetition, of infinity. The people using dance for circling the altar in various ways also symbolised the passage of the blessed and the chosen into eternal life.[30] Explanations such as those given by Honorius Augustodunensis had a key influence on the fact that dance rituals remained present in liturgical ceremonies. In the 13th century, a series of other allegorical meanings of gestures and dance was founded on these explanations and, importantly, sources describing various circumambulatory and other dance and liturgical rituals in churches began to multiply. Such varied symbolism is probably the result of an increasingly powerful medieval mystical theology, in which we can still trace the old ancient idea of planetary determinism which manifests itself in the prescribed forms of the quest for cosmic harmony, and which in Christianity translates itself into the idea of the *chorus angelicus* (see also Zimmermann 2007: 103–105).

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29 This text focuses on processions as part of the Catholic liturgy alone. Historically, there are many other processions, typically performed in political, military and other contexts.

30 At this point, I refer to Rudolf Suntrup's 1978 monograph titled *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in lateinischen und deutschen Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts*. Suntrup points towards a series of different semantic meanings of individual gestures, movements and other components of liturgical practices of the period in question. He writes about processions and circumambulation in the church on page 187 and between pages 245 and 255 but does not mention dancing specifically.

Bishop Sicard of Cremona wrote about the Easter liturgy in his work *Mitralis de Officio*, probably composed sometime between 1191 and 1205. He warned that the period around Easter brings Christians the so-called December freedom.[31] This freedom seemed to be enjoyed by everyone, even the clergy, as he writes of bishops playing ball games[32] and performing circular dances.

Sicard is of importance mainly because he is quite open to the idea that it is necessary to explain to Christians why a certain (ritual) action is appropriate and another is not, and not merely command them to (not) observe it. He mostly uses explanations that link the Christian rituals of that time with their previous, pre-Christian forms of worshipping gods, thus directly connecting Christian liturgical practices with the yet unknown and preserved imaginary assumed to be of a pre-Christian origin. Sicard thus directly connects Christian liturgical practices with what was apparently still a familiar and preserved imaginary, attributed to a pre-Christian environment. This way, he meaningfully introduced the role and meaning of rituals to the people of his time. It is precisely the integration of the pre-Christian imaginary into Christianity that is the key to understanding many of the adopted practices. In his analysis of Sicard's texts, Constant J. Mews notes that this can be observed in the perception of dance, ball games and labyrinths. There are at least three areas that are linked in one way or another to the pre-Christian logic of circular movements and were practiced as early as in Sicard's time, as well as much later (Mews 2009).

Because of Honorius Augustodunensis, we already know that we are dealing with the integration of pre-Christian ideas about circular motion into the Christian environment. An almost identical idea can be discerned from Sicard's text, which states:

> Know that the pagans invented round dances [emphasis mine] in order to worship the gods with voice and serve them with their entire body; with this they wanted to depict mystery in their own way. By circling, they illustrated the circling of the

31 "December freedom" denotes events and activities which were otherwise forbidden, like those occurring during the former Roman December saturnalia, where slaves could speak freely (even to their masters), prisoners were released, shepherds, tradesmen and servants were allowed to party with their masters, etc. Sicard points out that a similar practice is performed on Christian Easter (Mews 2009: 512–513). We must not overlook the claims of Niko Kuret that the remnants of various processions or celebrations from December to spring can also be observed in Slovenia. What was known in the Roman Empire as December celebrations of *brumalia*, *consualia* and *saturnalia*, and as unihibited New Year's celebrations (*Kalendae Januariae*), was preserved in Slovenia and beyond in the form of carnival processions and an inversion of the social roles of that time. The New Year's holiday with its processions of masked individuals was the ancient Roman version of "Shrovetide" (Kuret 1998a: 15).

32 A ball game called *pila* (*ludum chorea vel pilae*) is referred to here. It is a very important game for this discussion, one related to circular movement and dance, and one that shall be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

> firmament; by holding hands they indicated the connection of the elements; with the gestures of the bodies, the movement of the signs and planets; with the melodies of the singers they indicated the harmony of the planets; with the clapping of hands and stomping of feet the roar of thunder; but what these people performed for their idols, the worshipers of the one God converted to His glory.
> (Mews according to Sicard 2009: 512–513)

In his writing, Sicard often referenced the works of Jean Beleth and partly copied from them. Unlike him, he did not write much about dance itself. It was Beleth who devoted more space to this topic. This 12th century French theologian distinguished himself with his work *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*. He advocated for the approach that the Christian imaginary be interpreted with the pre-Christian one, but that great pains must needs be taken to avoid misinterpretations or abuses. According to him, people should be able to understand what they see, hear, sing, read and do. He was not instantly critical of the activities that took place between Christmas and the Epiphany. He writes that it was during this time that the feast of fools[33] was celebrated and that on these festive days, dance was performed within churches on at least four occasions. For these dances, said to have been performed by the clergy and the laity alike, he uses the Latin verb *tripudio*. He notes that it is a rather old tradition that is not precisely prescribed, so everyone performs it in their own way and not always on the same day; sometimes, it was considered sacred by some, but not by others (Mews 2009: 527–539). Here, too, it is clear that Beleth does not try to conceal the fact that some traditions had been adopted and later simply given a Christian context. He points out the rituals performed in celebration of the summer solstice on the feast of John the Baptist. The celebration was linked to various forms of burning old things (highlighting the burning of old bones[34] and impure objects) and

33 The feast of fools is a period of "freedom" in which criticism or even a temporary overturn of the existing social order is expressed in various forms. As a rule, such holidays were linked to activities such as making jokes or mocking representatives of authority, celebrations with dance and food, often various forms of masking, etc.

34 According to Beleth, the bones were to be burned because the bones of John the Baptist were also burned on that day in the city of Sebaste (Mews 2009: 534). It is not necessary to point out that this is clearly a Christian version of a pre-Christian ritual. For more on bones, summer bonfire dancing, maenads, omophagy and the motifs in the oral tradition of Carinthia, consult Simetinger 2014a: 79–82.

also required that the younger men make torches, light them and walk (or dance) in processions through the fields.[35]

Similarly, in some areas, burning bundles were carried around. The celebration of St. John the Baptist also consisted of various circular movements and dances[36] which were supposed to illustrate a spinning wheel or the celestial path of the Sun which begins to wane at this time of the year and heralds the arrival of new seasons. Beleth again uses a Christian interpretation, closely linked to biblical words, in which John the Baptist predicts the coming of the "true light", Jesus Christ. It is John the Baptist and Jesus Christ that now occupy the former role of the stars in bringing about new seasons. With the words "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30; Christian Standard Bible), he announces the coming of Christ at the winter solstice (ibid.) and thus insists on adhering to the old planetary determinism as understood by the ancient Greeks; that of Plato and the stars that carry time, seasons, etc.

Honorius, Beleth and Sicard all wrote about various elements of liturgy, but at the same time shared an opinion about the amalgamation of an older, already established and existing tradition with the Christian imaginary, set and interpreted through biblical frameworks. Without a doubt, their writing exposes one of the central dilemmas of the Church at that time: the question of symbolic hegemony over the interpretation of dance or movements. This question became more and more pressing from the 13th century onwards. One of the most important medieval popes, Innocent III, was consecrated in 1198 (1198–1216). While he is not considered to be a pope with an especially long pontificate, he achieved much during his seventeen years of reign. He reformed several areas of papal authority. He was particularly successful in regulating secular power, as he had a remarkable gift for balancing the various interests of European rulers and nobility. He organised the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (the most important of

35 Parallels with this type of circumambulation, which is tied to the movement of the Sun, can also be seen in the Easter circumambulation performed in Carinthia (now in Austria and Slovenia). Georg Graber reports of an unusual form of the torch dance: "When the Easter fire is lit, the men light their torches and go on their way. The path through each village is clearly defined, moving from one cross to another or to a small village church. As they walk up the hill, they throw their torches in great arcs onto the slopes of the steep mountain meadows, and leap screeching after them. They might rotate at maximum speed around their axis, with torches in a horizontal direction, holding their hands away from their bodies to make a large wheel of fire appear. In the fields, they perform unusual dances with simple spins and turns. Singing and praying, the column moves to the next Easter fire, into which the remains of the torches are thrown. Farmers like to see dancing in their fields, even though it is a time of sowing, because this is supposed to ensure fertility. During the dance, elderly people walk across the fields and pray for a good harvest" (1934: 258). Graber also mentions that if two such processions met, they formed various geometric figures such as a cross, a star, etc. (Ibid.).

36 The most common expression that denotes this form of dancing and most often appears in this context is *tripudium* – three-part or. three-step dance.

the Lateran Councils, also called the Great Council) and started a renewal of the Church on a spiritual level as well. He was always considered a pope focused on battling against heresy (he fought the Cathars) but is also credited with key contributions to the reformation of spiritual life in the Church (Internet source 4).

In the time of Sicard of Cremona, Innocent III issued a series of regulations in connection with the clergy and liturgy.[37] In 1203, for example, he decreed that priests were not allowed to participate in secular dances, while at the same time also touched upon dances related to church spaces or graveyards. "Priests are expressly forbidden from allowing dancing (*choreae*) to take place in churches, graveyards and processions" (Mews 2009: 541). In addition to outlining a general spiritual renewal, the regulations of Innocent III touched upon dance culture as well.

DANCE AND REGULATION, OR ONLY THE RIGHT KEY OPENS THE GATES OF HEAVEN

The attitude of the Church towards dance has been a rather complex topic from the very beginning and remains one on which cultural history has not yet had the final say on. Theological principles, social and moral expectations on people, the role of the individual within all this and their placement in a wider cultural and historical context – these are just some of the topics that have caused opinions on the appropriateness of dance (especially in a church context) to vary greatly. Dance is far from simply being a ritual of movement, but has, throughout history, always been crucially connected to a wider cultural context. This was the reason why the Church often could not agree on a unified stance regarding this phenomenon. Very early on, dance emerged as a medium that sparked controversy. The analysis of patristic and other texts points to three key reasons why the (early) Church began to oppose dance as a matter of principle in the first place.

Given that some Christians performed Jewish rituals and even frequented synagogues and adopted their practices, dance was one of the links with the religion's pre-Christian roots that the early Church wanted to break. The church had to establish itself in an environment where hegemony was held by Jewish and other religious sects. Because of the competitiveness of the Christian Church with other religions, dance became a vessel of anti-Semitism very early on (Zimmermann 2007: 64–65).

37 Innocent III demanded that priests live a reformed life. In addition to the aforementioned, he forbade priests from living with women (with the exception of mothers or sisters), entering disreputable houses (unaccompanied by a friend or another priest), dressing strangely, preaching anywhere but in a church, giving communion to women who had given birth without having performed the ritual of purification and confession, etc. (Pennington s. a., Mews 2009: 541).

Additionally, dancing often led to other forms of behaviour that were unacceptable to the Church and was therefore rejected by theologians. The importance of women, their "tendency" to sin and to deceive men (made even more potent in dance), is something that sources specifically highlight. As St. Ephrem states:[38] "God is where psalms are sung and repentance is expressed in spirit. But where there is dancing and clapping of hands, there is the blindness of men and the corruption of women; there angels mourn, but the devil rejoices and celebrates" (Klinghardt according to St. Ephrem 2004–2005: 10). The regulation of behavioural patterns related to sexual and other practices is another in a series of reasons for the Church's opposition to dance in both sacred and secular settings.

It is crucial, however, to look at the broader picture, without which we cannot hope to understand the extent of the Church's struggle with dance. By reforming religion and moral standards to be in line with Christian principles, the Church also hoped to create and establish a different social order. All this must be perceived as an extensive and complex program that the early Christian Church wanted to implement and that, at the same time, strongly influenced its attitudes towards dance (Zimmermann 2007: 64–65).

Carl Andersen makes a similar observation: the Church in the pre-Constantine era was in a rather unenviable position. On the one hand, it was in conflict with the Roman state, and on the other, it had to disentangle itself from pre-Christian practices and imaginaries. In the period before Constantine, dance was not yet a central topic for theologians and Christian apologists to concern themselves with. It gained significantly more traction in the years after Constantine. That was when it proved to be a concept full of adopted rituals that the Church wanted to distance itself from. It achieved this by opposing, regulating and philosophically interpreting their meaning (Andersen 1961: 225–228).[39]

During the time of Constantine, Christians were becoming an increasingly important political factor that the elite had to take into account more and more frequently. Following the conversion of non-Christians to Christianity, the early Church was inadvertently introduced to non-Christian elements and adopted them despite many concerns and objections both at the time and later on. In practice, pre- and non-Christian phenomena were adopted despite reservations. Due to the ever-increasing number of Christians, non-Christian (religious) practices gradually began to recede into the private sphere. In the public sphere,

38 St. Ephrem the Syrian is a 4th century saint who is recognised by the Church as an ecclesiastical teacher.

39 Andersen states that the adopted practices were tied to various non-Christian rituals of healing, magic and burial; non-Christian temples were taken and turned into Christian ones; similarly, the adopted forms of processions received a new Christian interpretation and were placed within a Christian framework. (1961: 225–226)

Christian or Christianised forms assumed hegemony. According to Carl Andersen, what occurred was a crystallisation of pagan elements incorporated by Catholic rituals, which is especially evident in the case of pagan processions. It was a question of hegemony over the interpretation of ritual activities and the placement of individual phenomena into a new Christian context (ibid.).

Within this, dance played a specific role, as it was often included in various, not only religious, but also political, military and other rituals. Conflicting opinions on dance existed in Roman times as well; even they (at least on some normative levels) weren't always tolerant in their attitudes towards dance and did not always look upon it favourably. Cicero, for example, criticises dance and associates it with drunkenness, madness, even effeminacy. His words are well known and were often repeated by Christian critics of dance: "Nobody dances sober unless he is insane." According to Roman critics, dancing in this way this did not befit a respectable person. It was Cicero and the authors of similar critical texts that had considerable influence on the later patristic criticism of dance (Rohmann 2013: 106–107, Arcangeli 1992: 56–57). Paradoxically, opposition to dance became something that some Christians and non-Christians in a certain period had in common, but the fact that the Church's attitude towards dance was, despite everything, much more complex and that it often used it, tolerated it or even encouraged it in various forms, must not be overlooked. The example of dance clearly depicts the complex multifaceted nature of a situation in which it might have been opposed on a theological level but was often performed in practice even so.

Over time, the reasons for the Church's principled dislike of dance were built upon, developed and, in part, changed. In some periods, the Church's prohibitions and regulations were more strictly enforced than in others, but regardless of this, one can claim that the tendency to regulate dance began relatively early in the history of the Church and persisted for several centuries. Often, these prohibitions and regulations were only intended for people within their own church structures.[40] Dance was discussed in the light of regulation and opposition at

40 In opposing dance and dance-related activities, the Church often only wanted to discipline the people within the ranks of priests or religious officials. There are many examples of this from the period of the Middle Ages. In 1227, a decree from Trier read: "We forbid monks and nuns from dancing." (Salmen 1999: 28) In a similar manner, an inscription from the council in Magdeburg in 1403 says: "We do not allow drinking or feasting in monasteries during the ordination or reception of new nuns or at any other time." (Ibid.)
In 1432, the following ban was also read in Strasbourg: "We expressly forbid dancing for every woman in any of the monasteries in our diocese, especially in public, as well as in men's rooms, called pubs, during meetings of the city council and on various holidays related to swordplay and engagements. A prioress of a monastery who dances publicly in taverns or in the town hall shall immediately be excommunicated; any subordinates shall be excommunicated immediately after the pronouncement of the sentence and the expiry of a one-month suspension." (Ibid.)

various councils: first in Laodicea (343–381), then in Toledo (389), and also in Auxerre (578), Rome (826), Avignon (1209), Trier (1227), Magdeburg (1403), Dubrovnik (1425), Strasbourg (1432), Cologne (1617), etc. (Salmen 1999: 27, Zimmermann 2007: 52–53). At the dawn of the New Age, the regulation of dance was gradually transferred from church authorities to secular ones and it was the police[41] that began to enforce it.

That dance is a neuralgic tenet of ecclesiology is undoubtedly proven by the continuous production of various church regulations of the subject. An overview suggests that around 220 documents dealing with dance[42] were produced in the Church between the 5th and 18th centuries. Unfortunately, there exists no systematic analysis of the content of these documents. Only a systematic insight would complete the hitherto often inaccurate and oversimplified idea of the church's attitude to dance. To be able to form a more accurate picture, we would need answers to the questions of who and when issued such regulations; what did they refer to (in terms of time, place, form of dance); with what authority and on the basis of what were they issued; what was the penalty for breaking it; in what context dance appeared in these documents; which other things were prohibited by such texts, etc. One of the more comprehensive analyses in this field was published by Gregor Rohmann, who points out that the attitude of the Church towards dance is often a reflection of many later anti-Church discourses (e.g., from the Enlightenment period). A significant conclusion Rohmann reaches is that the Church did not completely prohibit dancing in sacred spaces, but wanted to be able to regulate the use of bodily expressiveness in a religious context. Until the 16th century, the goal was not stylisation and disciplining the body, but regulating its movement in the church (2013: 185–186, 196–197).

The Church failed to establish a unified stance with regard to dance, despite the fact that all sections of it answered to the same authorities. Dance was a controversial subject, and attitudes towards it varied considerably by region, time and situation. The documents pertaining to regulation indicate an inconsis-

41 One of the oldest known sources that refers to the regulation of dancing in Slovenia is the 1525 Police Ordinance of Carniola. It also refers to dancing within a church context, as it prohibits dancing at *Prima Missa* celebrations (*Prima Missa* or *First Mass* denotes the occasion where a newly ordained priest presides at Mass for the first time). "At *Prima Missa* consecrations, it is prohibited for anyone to play dance music, nor are any similar frivolities allowed" (Police Ordinance 1525: f50). The police ordinance mentions the phrase *gaistlichen hohzeiten*, which I translate as "*Prima Missa* ordination". For the sake of clarity, I will cite the text in the original as well: "*Nyemand mehr dann der zu der malzeit geladen ist vnd ob er will die anzahl gelts vie obestet reichen vnd vereren. Dazu soll auf solichen gaistlichen hohzeiten nyemand zu tanzen spielln noch dergleiche leichtuerttichkeit gestatt.*" (Ibid.)

42 That this is a rather astonishingly high number is evidenced by the fact that within the same period, a similar number of documents, about 260, was produced in the Church and dealt with ecclesiastical legislation (Rohmann 2013: 172).

tent attitude to dance, but not an absolute ban on dancing (on church premises). An a priori prohibition of dance existed in two cases only: with some (not all!) church fathers and critics of dance and with authors of moralistic criticism of dance from the period between the 15th and 17th centuries, less often with some bishops a little later on. Straight-out prohibitions were not common among the majority but were the result of the opinion of a minority of church representatives (Rohmann 2013: 186–187).

On the other hand, it is important to emphasise that this ambiguous situation did not mean that the Church allowed dance per se, but rather that activities of the sort were understood as part of an effort to control and regulate it. Several examples speak in favour of this reading.

An 11th century legend about an abbot from the monastery of St. Fides Concquesa explains how the pilgrims wanted to honour the saint with their (peasant) music and dance. The abbot insisted that the church be closed at night, as he would not allow the pilgrims to worship then. The saint performed a miracle and opened the tightly locked door herself, allowing the pilgrims to enter and worship. This simple story reflects the idea of a correct and a wrong form of dance and music in the church. The music and dance of the peasants were apparently not in accordance (at least not to a sufficient extent) with the rules of the higher forms of music of the Middle Ages, which was required by the Church for the worship of God. Only the intervention of the saint made it possible to understand that it is not the form of the music itself, but the intent of the worshipers that is of greater importance (Rohmann 2013: 192–195).

In the aforementioned case, it is the issue of the correctness of the form of the performed (para)liturgical ritual that stands out. Ignorant people could inadvertently violate the liturgy and sacredness of the space with dance and music.[43] A similar example can be found in a well-known collection of songs appropriate for a church space and the dance that accompanied them: the Llibre Vermell collection from Montserrat, Spain, written around 1399. Its unknown author wrote that the purpose of the collection is to demonstrate which songs and dances are suitable: "For pilgrims want to sing and dance in the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Montserrat during the night, as well as during the day. Songs which are inappropriate and lack piety should not be sung in the church,

43 It is important to draw attention to an important and very extensive topic that raises the question of the relationship between the prescribed liturgy and various "folk" practices. In the process, both ecclesiastical and "folk" (ritual) practices were adopted, created and built upon. The syncretism of the latter was present throughout history and still exists today; as an example, we can cite the baptism of must to turn it into wine (which occurs on St. Martin's Day on November 11), the baptism of freshmen in colleges and secondary schools, etc.

which is why they are also recorded here. Songs should be used modestly, so that they disturb no one immersed in prayer and contemplation."[44]

During the High and Late Middle Ages (at least among educated people), the concepts of dancing and singing were still based on the idea of high art as a transgressive activity that encroaches into the realm of the otherworld. The art of dance and music therefore reflected a kind of social hierarchy, with predominantly church-educated people undoubtedly forming the social elite, placed there by way of the knowledge that illuminated their path to God. The dancing of people lower on the social scale, who were not (fully) familiar with the rules of the *artes liberales*, was not perceived as opposing God or God's order, but as the indolence of a man whose lack of knowledge prevents him from understanding the correct way of worshipping God. The codification of movement, singing and acting was crucial for a more successful transgression towards God, which is precisely why church representatives did not outrightly suppress dance but chose to regulate it. The example of dance and, in relation, music, indicates that the church's attitude towards it is essentially a question of class affiliation as a condition for acquiring education, which resembles Plato's earlier beliefs as to how art works.

The physical practices through which people entered into contact with the Holy were extremely important. While they were a medium of transcendence that had been established for a long time, they also did not necessarily always follow the principles of art as a representation of God-given order entering the chaos of the everyday world of sinful people. In addition to the political and other reasons shaping the ecclesiastical attitude to dance, the idea of why and how the body should communicate with God through movement featured in this equation as well. In the Middle Ages especially, the meaning of movement and bodily gestures acquired additional dimensions which directly affected and touched upon the matter of communication both with other people and with God.

THE SYMBOLIC EFFICACY OF GESTURE AND MOVEMENT

It is only possible to understand the regulation of dance and movement in medieval Europe if we also understand the then prevailing idea of the connection

44 The original text is recorded in Latin: "Quia interdum peregrini quando vigilant in ecclesia Beate Marie de Monte Serrato volunt cantare et trepudiare, et etiam in platea de die, et ibi non debeant nisi honestas ac devotas cantilenas cantare, idcirco superius et inferius alique sunt scripts. Et de hoc uti debent honeste et parce, ne perturbent perseverantes in orationibus et devotis contemplationibus." (Internet source 7)

between body and soul. The concept of the soul is not only linked to Christianity but was important in the European Middle Ages in general. In Christian culture, the body is not autonomous, but is inseparably bound to and interdependent with the soul. The body and the soul represent two complementary principles: the body the external, the soul the internal one. What happens on the inside is also reflected on the outside, and vice versa. If the soul is sinful, that is reflected on the body, and any physical defect testifies to flaws in the soul. Movement is part of this cognitive system. Just like the body, the soul also functions in a reciprocal relationship, which is why Tertullian uses the metaphor of the body as a hinge around which the soul revolves (Schmitt 2000).

In this context, dance and body movement in general take on a new dimension. In the Middle Ages, entire systems for evaluating and understanding these movements were developed precisely on the basis of body movement. Movement, especially gesticulation, transmitted information about the individual's inner self, which is how one could evaluate the more or less appropriate level of harmony between their body and soul, and, consequently, their inclination towards good or evil. The level of harmony of the expected movements became the medium for evaluating an individual's relationship with people and God (ibid.).

The gesture as a reflection of the soul had a very important function in Christian society. Based on the movement of the body alone, people could make crucial and even fateful assumptions about an individual. If it proved necessary, for example, men who wanted to enter the priesthood were sometimes refused because their movement was deemed unsuitable. As a result, an extensive codification of the body's movement systems developed during this time, as well as practicing strict discipline over the body and its movement, which was (especially in clerical and monastic circles) very precisely defined. Gestures even became a means of recognising class and social hierarchy, which is how the corpora of gestures for various social groups (knights, clergy, monks, etc.) were formed. Each of them cultivated an attitude that "befits the particular order" (Schmitt 2000, see also Goheen 1990), which is how it finds its place in God's hierarchy and operates within a cosmic order. The movement of bodies becomes the mathematical principle according to which social structuring functions.

In their nature, individual gestures and body movements were much more than just communication. In the Middle Ages, they also took on the dimension of the so-called symbolic efficacy: through transubstantiation, for example, the movement of the hands or the body changed the bread and wine used in the Eucharist into the body and blood of Christ. Similarly, in baptism, it cleanses man of original sin. These gestures and movements were still commonly known in the Middle Ages. Inherited pre-Christian beliefs point to a variety of gestures with symbolic efficacy, some of which originate from pre-Christian beliefs. An exam-

ple of one such is the case of hiccups, where people helped each other by holding each other's thumbs. Similarly, if you were leaving home and stumbled on the way, returning and knocking on your doorstep was said to ensure the success of the journey ahead (Schmitt 2000). This type of movement, which intervenes in certain contexts in the sphere of the supernatural to regulate the happenings of this world, is still known today. Some other examples of these systems of gestures include the practice of knocking on wood (widespread even today) with which an individual desires to protect himself from something negative or to invoke luck.

Gestures, and consequently the body, became crucial for understanding not only movement, but that "something more" that gestures could contain. Movement was not only a muscle contraction; it had not only semantic effects, but tangible results in a person's life. In some circumstances, the movement added value to a message, or even became the message itself. It reinforced the information and could add to it. It became involved in systems of recognition and sanctioning. The body was something that could be judged at all levels of life, as it reflected the appropriateness of everyday activities such as work, speech, preaching, performing, and, last but not least, dancing. The body reflected the soul and the soul resonated in the body. Assessing how appropriate physical activities were was based on the pursuit of the so-called right measure, from which the well-known concept of the golden mean developed as early as in the Middle Ages. The latter was rarely obligatory for the assessment of physical movement, but, at the same time, it often determined and codified individual activities and any acceptable deviations thereof. The appropriateness of the movement of the body and its gesticulations was therefore only partially determined, and, from the 12th century onwards, often judged within the context of individual physical circumstances. This period also represents the beginning of the search for right measure or moderation, in Latin referred to as *modestia*. Knowing and respecting modesty enabled the integration of the body and its movement – and thus also of dance – into the spheres of cosmic harmony (Rohmann 2015: 59).

In the Middle Ages, *chorus*,[45] which was still present in liturgy, united the principle of body and spirit, the external and internal. Not only did the dance itself exhibit outward movement and seek harmony with the music and other dancers; inspired by the Holy spirit, it also enabled God to enter the soul. In early Christianity, via imitating the *chorus angelicus,* dancing was an intense form of prayer. The more in harmony the dancers were while dancing, the more intense their prayer. As Klinghardt quotes the writer Petronius: "If we come together

45 I still use the term *chorus* to denote singing in combination with a dance based on rhythmic circular movement. The analysis of ecclesiastic criticism of dance shows that even its critics perceived dance as a physical, external principle, while singing was attributed to the soul or the internal principle (Klinghardt 2005: 30).

in words, we shall be able to reach the stars, as it is the case that a shared plea achieves the goal faster"[46] (Klinghardt 2005: 28). Here, however, we must understand that the point worship was not only to convey prayers, but also to continue moving closer to God. That is how the community could help the individual experience contact with the divine.

Pleas, prayers, hymns and songs, all of which connected the community through dance and music, were already part of the ancient Jewish tradition as *therapeute.* This allowed direct contact with God, a kind of being possessed (not by demons, but by joy) and existing in body and soul in God's grace, in infinite harmony. Christians were familiar with this ritual as well. For them, it was a state of withdrawal where χαρα (Gr. *chara*) reigned – a form of happiness and rejoicing (in God) that allowed for detachment, revelation and a kind of ecstasy (for more, see Hellsten 2016: 58–61, Tronca 2016: 55, Klinghardt 2005: 23–28).

In this respect, dancing as an ecstatic ritual was did not clash with the teachings of the Church. Appropriate movement had specific consequences, experienced in direct communication with God. This is an important cognitive moment in dance, as it can lead to "experiences outside oneself", which, regardless of the collectiveness of the ritual, are deeply individual and in this sense independent of others. Such practices can lead to paradoxical situations which at least partly explain the ambivalent attitude of the Church towards dance. Ecstatic dancing became a way of enabling intense communication with God, which fit within the framework of the Church's teaching and its guidelines. At the same time and for the same reason, it faced the clergy with the threat of losing their monopoly over this type of communication and over the control of sacred spaces where dance was performed. This is noted in the analysis by Jean-Claude Schmitt, who claims that the Church was afraid that lay people and "savages" would take possession of the sacred spaces of the church and graveyards (2000: 99–100). With the spread of ecstatic dance practices, the Church could – at least in some part – lose its role as intermediary. In this regard, movement had not only semantic, but very concrete dimensions too; so concrete in fact, that they interfered with social hierarchy itself: an ignorant farmer could directly communicate with God without the guidance of a socially superior priest. Art, therefore, understood movement not only as a form of specific codification, but as a direct reflection of the social order. Through the right form and measure (*modestia*), dance directly enabled contact with both God Most High and, simultaneously, the deepest of experiences of the divine. The mystical tradition of the Middle Ages, arguing for

46 Since this is a translation of the original Latin into German (and subsequently into English) and with a view to avoid errors in the translation, the German version that was consulted while writing the text is quoted here: "Wir werden sogar die Sterne erreichen, wenn unsere Worte vereint sind, denn es heißt, dass vereinigte Bitten schneller ihr Ziel erreichen." (Klinghardt 2005: 28)

a person becoming part of the choir of angels and identifying with the Eucharist, only strengthened such perceptions of dance.[47] Rhythm and dance, which at its core followed a circular movement, were part of harmony as understood by Platonism and as possessed by muses according to ancient Greek tradition. These muses later endowed people with rhythm precisely so that they could use it to enter the sphere of harmony and the divine. Harmony and circulation in dance always adhered to the old idea of the circulation of the stars and became two Christian qualities that fundamentally shaped the form and perception of dance. Over time and on the basis of these qualities, a series of rituals developed in combination with other Christian, pre-Christian and non-Christian cults, all of which helped shape and develop forms of worship and ideas about dance. This part of human ritual activity is distinctly heterogeneous both in time and space and has an extremely varied number of manifestations. These are activities embedded into time and space, the latter being interspersed with symbolic meanings and their consequences for humans. The next chapter explores some examples that will help understand the concepts of circumambulation, rhythm, rituals and dance over time.

47 The pinnacle of identification with the Eucharist, Incarnation or the Crucifixion can be traced to some saints who received the stigmata. Stigmata are what makes their recipient embody the Crucified. Schmitt comments on the depiction of the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi: "*Imitati Christi* does not occur on a mirrored level, but is a perfect equalisation, a true incarnation in the strongest sense of the word as interpreted by Christianity. The stigmata, therefore, are not a sign that was imprinted on the saint's body from the outside, but an eruption of flesh and blood from inside the *transfigured body* of Saint Francis, thus transformed into a living Eucharist." (Schmitt 2000: 352) Through all the principles of worship and movement, his body not only sought the way to God, but became a part of Him. In this respect, it is not just trying to find your way to Him that is the ideal, but also becoming part of God.

CIRCLE, STONE AND BODY

BALL GAMES – PLAYING WITH THE SUN

Various pre-Christian ideas are often crucial for the historical understanding and positioning of dance and dance-related activities. If we consider the idea that the imaginary of dance in the church context was created under the strong influence of Pythagorean-Platonic philosophy and on its ideas about the circular movement of the planets and cosmic spheres, we can conclude that the Sun must also have had an important role to play. The Sun as a source of light had a vast number of symbolic values in a number of cultures, and Christianity is no exception. The Sun, waxing and waning as the year progresses, was associated by Christians in the Middle Ages with Christ, John the Baptist and a number of other phenomena, as well as some dances and games known at the time.

Until recently, the solar cycle was an important part of people's perceptions of the functioning of the cosmos. In the predominantly agricultural environment relying on vegetation cycles, people's existence depended on it. A series of different customs and traditions developed over time that were, in one way or another, connected to the cult of the Sun and/or fire.[48] This also applies to (para)liturgical dance. An example of the singing of hymns and likely also a dance connected with the Sun was recorded in Rome. It was performed there at least until the 11th century, when it was still customary in Rome for worshippers to wait on the steps in front of the church of St. Peter before dawn and wait for the Sun to rise, singing praises to the resurrected Creator. When the Sun rose at last, they blew it a kiss (Backman 1952: 24–25, Ehrenreich 2008). Françoise Syston Carter claims this dance is a fusion of pagan and Christian ideas; Christian angels perform the Greek *chorea* around Christ. This interpretation makes a connection between Apollo and Christ, two gods semantically linked to the Sun, light, music and dance. (1987: 8–9)

The idea of the Sun as a source of light (and associated with divinity and dance) can also be observed elsewhere. Although perhaps less so in Slovenia,

48 Here, I purposefully only touch upon some selected dances related to the cult of the Sun in the Catholic liturgy, and do not address a range of other related (ritual) practices.

large parts of Europe were familiar with dancing with a ball, though it should be pointed out that this dance was part of a broader historical context and at least partially differs from the concepts we are familiar with today. This example will demonstrate that dance and games (in the modern sense of the word) are closely intertwined and cannot be strictly separated into unrelated categories. In the past, categories such as dance, acrobatics, theatre and other forms of games, fencing and such, were complementary in meaning and content. One such example are ball dances, which require that we re-examine the conceptualisation of dance in the Middle Ages.

The first available data on dancing with a ball (*Ludum choreae uel pilae*) dates back to the 13th century and leads to the conclusion that it had been known for at least a century beforehand. Guillaume Durand (1230–1296), a bishop in the Diocese of Mende in France, described a dance with a ball called the *pelota* and argued that the more dignified choice would be not to perform it. On the basis of various letters, descriptions and notes, even court proceedings created between the 13th and 16th centuries, we can roughly reconstruct what this game and dance looked like. The *pelota*[49] seems to best be documented at the cathedral in Auxerre, France, which – despite the fact that it appeared in a similar form in other places as well – is also the reason why it is being discussed here.[50]

The *pelota* was usually danced at Easter or Christmas. All the important citizens and other spectators gathered for the event that started sometime in the afternoon (around 2 p.m.) in the nave of the church, in the place where a labyrinth was depicted on the floor. The canon entered the nave and brought with him the ball, which was apparently relatively large and had to be carried with both hands. He ceremoniously handed the ball over to the dean, who, at least for a time in history, was probably ceremonially dressed and adorned. He also held the ball to his chest with both hands at first, but then only grabbed it with his left hand and began to dance to the rhythm of the hymn *Victimi Paschali laudes*, which he sang while doing so. The others held hands and danced a three-step dance (*tripudio*).[51] An organ player could accompany the dancers, as this made it easier for the dancing and singing to remain synchronised. A very important part of the dance was the passing of the ball between the leader

49 The terminology is not definitively agreed upon, so the variant *pilot* or *ludus pilae* also appears in sources.

50 Julia Zimmermann reports that the *pelota* in the form an Easter dance performed on specially designed floor slabs was also known in Amiens (2007: 105). Craig Wright also makes reconstructions of them them in Sens and Chartres (2001: 145–151).

51 The symbolic dimensions of this dance are discussed in the chapter *The labyrinth – a link between art and morality*, as it is easier to understand the concept if we first consider the semantic dimension of the labyrinth in which the dance took place.

of the dance and the other dancers. It is likely that the leader stood in the middle of the circle and passed the ball to one or more dancers at the same time.[52]

After the dance was over, a feast followed in the common room, attended by all important people. There, they were served food, but they were moderate with the consumption of wine – their glasses were filled only once or twice. During the feast, someone would read a homily (either sitting on a chair or from the pulpit) until the great bell called everyone to evening prayer. After that, they went back into the labyrinth (Wright 2001: 139–151, Mead 1912: 91–100, Knowles 2009: 177–178).

Similar to Auxerre, the *pelota* was also known in Narbonne in southern France. Unlike in Auxerre, however, the *pelota* in Narbonne was known as a secular party. Archives from the 13th century record that on Easter Monday, when the bells rung, the entire "conventus" gathered at the archbishop's palace. Meals were served, followed by a ball game led by the archbishop. If the archbishop was absent, the prefect led this game in his stead (Mead 1912: 100–101, Backman 1952: 66–68).

For further comparison, we can cite even slightly older reports about a ball game that was played in Naples, where it was called *percula*. The *percula* is mentioned in the 9th century in connection with the legend of St. Pomponius. When St. Pomponius was the bishop of Naples between 508 and 536, the devil in the form of a wild boar was said to have ravaged and destroyed a large part of the city. Mary was supposed to help expel him, so St. Pomponius consecrated the church in her name. From then on, a *percula* was to be held every year in honour of this event. The similarity of this game or dance to the one in Auxerre is not clear, as the sources are extremely scarce. We can only say with certainty that it was practiced as a form of religious activity. Although we cannot make an exact comparison between the *percula* to the *pelota*, Mead's comparative analysis helps us to compare it to other ball games and dances in Europe. There is a number of ethnographic data that indicate certain correlations between ball games in the context of church holidays and premises. This data is geographically and temporally scattered, but nevertheless important in the search for possible parallels, not easily traceable meanings, and their development and spread.

Ball games and dances were performed in Europe between winter and spring, i.e., during holidays such as Shrove Tuesday, Easter and Christmas. One of them

52 Most likely, the dancers danced along the path of the labyrinth, but due to the ambiguous Latin term *circa Daedalum*, which the author of the text used to describe the dance, this is not entirely certain; it is also possible to interpret the term as dancing around the labyrinth (Wright 2001: 139–140).

was performed in the former district of Landsberg on the Varta.[53] There, on Easter night, they played a game called *wise ball*, which ended with a dance in honour of the Easter bell (Mead 1912: 102–104).

Before sunrise on Easter, a ball game was played next to the church in some districts in larger cities (e.g., in the Köpenick district in Berlin), during which a newly married couple was separated from the others and, among other things, had to pass the ball to each other over the roof of the church entrance or the church itself. The ball symbolised the rising Easter sun and the newly resurrected Christ.

In German-speaking countries in the Middle Ages, a similar version of this was known as the Easter dance of the Sun. Before sunrise, people jumped into the air three times, believing that by jumping they would honour and encourage the sunrise (Böhme 1886: 211).

These kinds of dances or dance games were even more common in Germany and England. Especially worth noting is the Easter game from the Oldenburg district of Ganderkesee[54] and Westphalia – it was played by the fire and often before dawn. When they had finished playing with the ball, they went to the tavern, where they continued by playing the game of *Klumpsack* (also *Plumpsack*) (Mead 1912: 105–106).[55]

Klumpsack is a version of the game commonly known as *the rotten egg* (which also appears in many variants involving dance). In this particular version, the role of the ball was assumed by a knotted handkerchief, which was either used to hit the players standing in the circle on the back or to be handed to each other during the chase.[56] In Slovenia and beyond, the most well-known version of *rotten egg* generally no longer had any connection to dance. Similarities with dance or circumambulation could only be observed in the circular run performed by the players during the game. Ethnographic data from the Austrian Carinthia, however, leads us to believe that at least in some known versions, the game was still

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53 This is a district that belonged to the former Prussian province of Brandenburg.

54 Mead uses the name Ganderkesen here. It should be noted that this is probably an error, and that thename of the town from the Oldenburg district is correctly spelled Ganderkesee.

55 For a more extensive overview of the parallels between ball games and their symbolic meanings, as well as the role of people, their sex, and the meanings of wedding rituals, consult G. R. S. Mead (1912).

56 That the ball and the handkerchief had a similar role can also be inferred from the text
Dreh dich nicht um,
Denn der Plumpsack geht um!
Wer sich umdreht oder lacht
Kriegt den Buckel blau gemacht.
("Don't turn around, because the Plumpsack is circling! Whoever turns around or laughs gets hit on the back!") One of the Slovenian versions of the text reads: "I carry a rotten egg and I won't give it to anyone, but whoever turns around gets hit on the back!"

performed with dance. Information about this comes from Borovlje/Ferlach, where the dance form of the Rotten Egg game was known even after the Second World War. The dancers held hands in a circle and slowly danced a waltz to the right. A predetermined dancer walked around them in the opposite direction and threw a handkerchief behind the back of one of the dancers in the circle. When the second dancer picked this this handkerchief up, they had to run after the dancer who had placed it behind them try to catch them. If they managed to catch them, the one originally carrying the handkerchief had to sit in the middle of the circle and be the rotten egg as punishment. However, if the first dancer managed to run around the circle into the place of the second and join the circle, their roles were reversed. The dancer who was the rotten egg in the middle of the circle remained there until replaced by another (F. R.[57] 132012).

In order to conclusively prove any semantic transfers and connections, it is necessary to consider the sources in an appropriate temporal and historical context. The main problem is usually that the sources are relatively limited and therefore there can always be a certain degree of doubt about their correct interpretation. If we assume the hypothesis about the semantic connection between the ball and the handkerchief, dance, the Sun and Christian rituals to be true, then we can observe an interesting example in Slovenia as well. Studies and ethnographic data show that, similarly to elsewhere, dancing and playing were part of the Easter celebration in Metlika. The so called *Metlika rituals*[58] were performed on Easter Monday on the lawn near the church of St. Martin just outside Metlika. The rituals consisted of multiple parts: they started with a circle dance from Metlika, during which they sang various different songs while dancing in a circle. The dance itself also consisted of several parts: dancing in a circle, followed by the female leader of the dance (so-called *vojarinka*) making the line of dancers form the spiral shape of a cochlea and then return to a circle, and concluded by the dancers passing through a "door" – holding hands, all the dancers passed under the raised arms of the last couple in the circle.

The Metlika circle dance was followed by a game called *rešetce* ("little sieve"), in which dancers from one group move into the other while dancing, and this was in turn followed by the game *Al' je kaj trden ta vaš must* ("Is your bridge strong?"). The

57 F. R. stands for *field recording*.

58 The term *Metlika rituals* was not used among the locals, but was coined by France Marolt, who was researching dance culture in White Carniola in the 1930s and published the findings in the second volume of *Slovenian Ethnological Studies* under the title *Three rituals from White Carniola* (1936). At that time, Marolt set the order of dances and games and partially adapted them. Since this is a long-established and consequently partially folklorised version of performing the Metlika rituals, I will adhere to it in this text. Both the games and the dance will only be shown schematically; for more detailed descriptions of all versions and additional literature, consult Ramovš 1995.

next game, called *robčeci*[59] (handkerchiefs), is also of particular importance for this discussion. There are several versions of this game, but they all have one thing in common: they are all a form of *the rotten egg*. As with the German versions of the game, here too we can find a rolled or knotted handkerchief or scarf instead of the ball. This handkerchief was used to catch each other or pass it to another dances, like in all of the previously mentioned versions of ball or handkerchief games in Europe. At the end, the boys formed a *turn* ("tower"). Four or six boys who were previously part of the circle dance held hands and formed the foundation of the tower. The other boys climbed onto their shoulders and were carried from the meadow where the rituals were taking place to the town square (Ramovš 1995: 7–11, 31–57).

Jolanta Kowalska draws attention to another connection between dance and the church, using the example of Easter celebrations. In addition to Slovenia, parts of Serbia and Macedonia were also known to form the *turn*. There, they made a *turn* up to three "stories" high: the dancers at the bottom formed a circle called the *stub*, above them, the others formed the *sprat*, and the top was formed by a single dancer called the *blasiniač*.

This construction moved around in a circle while the *blasiniač* said prayers. It took place on Easter in the courtyard in front of the church. Like in Serbia and Macedonia, such a dance was also performed in Ukraine, where it was called the *cerkovcha*. In Bulgaria, however, they danced the *chambaria* dance, a female version of this dance that was performed in the spring. Similar dances with two- or three-story constructions made up of dancers have also been recorded elsewhere, e.g., in the Caucasus (Kowalska 1991: 98–101).

Ball games (with dance) at Easter (partly also at Christmas and other holidays) are shown by data to have been present in various parts of Europe during a specific historical period. That the ball symbolically represented the Sun[60] is supported by

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59 One of these versions was called *glóbire* in Predgrad.

60 It should be noted that the ball used for dancing around the labyrinth in the *pelota* may have other, complementary meanings. The meaning of the ball refers to the original legend of people being rescued from the labyrinth. According to legend, Theseus, who saved his people from the minotaur living the labyrinth, had two balls – one was made of resin, the other was a ball of thread. Christ, who is associated with the sun, has a dual nature too – human and divine. Each of Theseus' balls symbolizes one of them. The first of the two balls possessed by Christ represents immaculateness made flesh, which entered hell after the crucifixion. This is how Christ defeated the devil: he opposed the basic principles of hell, where sin reigns, thus taking away its power and saving righteous souls. The second of the two balls represents divinity, which could lead people from hell to heaven along the complicated path seen in the labyrinth (Reed Doob 1990: 126). Similarly, Mews adds that the meaning of the ball is tied to the lump of resin that Theseus stuffed into the minotaur's mouth to defeat him. With this, good overcame evil and the sun chased away the darkness. The other meaning refers to the ball of thread; each thread symbolises a thread of God the Creator and is attached to the heavenly bodies with the purpose of rotating and creating heavenly harmony (2009: 521). More details on this topic follow in the chapter *The labyrinth - a link between art and morality*.

some of the previously mentioned ethnographic data. In a circle, people moved around the central object or a spot with a particular meaning (Chambers 1903: 127–129).[61] Mead pointed out that even in the *pelota*, the ball had to have had a certain (sacred) function, since the ball used in this game was kept exclusively for this dance and prohibited from being used for other purposes (1912: 94). Chambers and Backman went one step further in their explanation and link this circular movement or dance with the circular movement of the Sun. They hypothesised that when dancing, people behaved in the same way as the Sun, which is how they explain the then-established belief that whoever woke up early enough on Easter saw the Sun dance (Chambers 1903: 127–129, Backman 1952: 68). Wright also interprets the *pelota* in a similar way. The ball is supposed to represent the rising Sun which dances on the horizon on Easter morning. From early Christianity onwards, Christ was perceived as the Sun of justice (*Sol justitiae*) and the Sun of resurrection (*Sol ressurectionis*). Both due to the circular movement through the labyrinth (which also symbolised the movement of the celestial spheres and planetary orbits) and due to the return of the Sun or Christ, the *pelota* symbolises cosmic harmony. The Sun or Christ, functioning as a hero who overcame darkness or evil, returns to his rightful place in the sky or in heaven (2001: 142).

Ethnographic data on the connection between the ball and the sun points to the continuity of movement, objects and semantics, but also to the changes within time and space. Handkerchiefs, meant to represent a ball, are only symbolically associated with the meaning of the ball, and the semantic connection with the sun no longer exists in people's consciousness at all. The example of Easter celebrations involving dance shows a kind of continuity and discontinuity at the same time. A principle considered sacred could very well be secular at the same time.

Regardless of the role of the ball or the handkerchief, we can still trace the basic parameters of the antique *choros* in the newer versions of Easter dances and games: circular movement (observed in dance and games), group dances, the singing or recitation of rhythmic texts that accompanies all the aforementioned examples, and the modified cosmogonic principles concealed within their connection with the movement of the Sun. These examples can be used to show how dance shifted from sacred practices to the secular environment and at the same time preserved some of the basic elements of the ancient *choros*.

61 Chambers establishes a symbolic connection between all the round, spinning, and burning objects used during the celebration of Easter (1903: 127–129).

THE LABYRINTH – A LINK BETWEEN ART AND MORALITY

Careful reading of the sources on *pelota* at least partially suggests another old circumambulatory ritual. Not only was movement within the game circular – sources also claim that the *pelota* was performed in churches where there was a labyrinth on the floor.[62] Labyrinths can only be understood as a fusion of ancient and medieval culture or rather, of the pre-Christian and Christian imaginary.

The history of labyrinths is rich and long, which is why labyrinths carry a bunch of symbolic meanings. While they can sometimes be contradictory, they can, at the same time, be referenced both in the context of good (*in bono*) and bad (*in mala*).

Judging by archaeological excavations from the Hellenistic and Roman eras alone, up until Late Antiquity, labyrinths were only found in houses and not in temples or other sacred buildings. It was only in the Renaissance, which modelled itself heavily on antiquity, that labyrinths in the secular environment reappeared indoors (in civil houses or private residences). It was different on church premises. The oldest known remains of Christian labyrinths are located in the church of St. Reparatus in Orléansville (today El Asnam in Algeria), consecrated in 324. The remains of a similar labyrinth can also be found in the Algerian town of Tigzirt. The design of such labyrinths was linked to the Roman tradition of designing predominantly square mosaic labyrinths.

The oldest remains of church labyrinths present us with the question of their meaning and origin. To understand the symbolic meanings of the labyrinth, and especially the connection between labyrinths and dance, we must first shed light on labyrinths in a mythological context. The mythological basis can be traced back to Ovid's Metamorphoses (similarities can also be found in the works of Plutarch and Virgil) in which he himself relied on the writings of Homer and Hesiod. The myth describes the mighty king Minos, who lived in Knossos on Crete, and whose wife fell in love with a bull as part of the revenge of the god Poseidon. They conceived a child who was a creature half-bull, half-man called a minotaur. An oracle at Delphi advised Minos to build a labyrinth and hide the monster there. The king entrusted this task to Daedalus,[63] who then designed the

62 At the beginning of this chapter, it is necessary to point out that the history of labyrinths is long and extensive, as it goes back far into antiquity. Over centuries, they were surrounded by many varied symbolic dimensions, attributed to them by the people that used them. The purpose of this text is not to review the existing knowledge about labyrinths or to analyse or typologise it. It is merely to spend some time considering those labyrinths that relate to dance or similar rituals in the medieval church tradition, and at the same time reflect older, pre-Christian ideas and cosmogonic principles (in other words, help to contextualise their manifestation in history).

63 The term *Daedalum* also appears as a synonym for labyrinth, after its designer Daedalus.

first labyrinth. The Minotaur was a flesh-eating monster to which young men and women had to be sacrificed. The hero Theseus promised to kill the monster and succeeded in this largely due to the help of Minos's daughter Ariadne, who fell in love with him. She gave him a ball of thread and a lump of resin. In the fight with the minotaur, Theseus stuffed the resin into the monster's mouth so that it could not eat him, and then successfully killed it. He had tied Ariadne's thread to the entrance of the labyrinth when he walked into it and with its help, could find his way back out of the maze after the fight with the minotaur. His salvation of his people inspired the subsequent celebration, dancing and partying (Reed Doob 1990: 126, Mews 2009: 516–517, Wright 2001: 7–8).

It is not only the creation of the first labyrinth that has become a myth; several explanations for the connection between the dance and the labyrinth can also be found in mythology. Dancing in connection with movement through the labyrinth or as an imitation of this movement had consequences later in history as well, and the pilgrim swirl could be considered a case study of this kind of dance.

Homer's Iliad, written around 700 BC, contains the first explanation of how dance is connected to the labyrinth. It describes the dance floor that Daedalus prepared for Ariadne next to the labyrinth in Crete, the place where Ariadne taught Theseus the dance of life and death. This dance, with its winding and twisting structure, allegedly symbolises the movement along the path in the labyrinth. Homer also depicted this dance on the shield of Achilles, the hero of the Trojan War. It shows a series of husbands and wives holding hands, forming the shape of the labyrinth into which Theseus is ushered. The leader moves forward until he reaches the central point, where he turns and goes back in the opposite direction. At this moment, the dancers at the end of the dance chain move forward, while the dancers at the beginning move in the opposite direction (they are going backwards). With these serpentine turns, the dancers personify the pattern of a labyrinth with its parallel circular paths that the individual entering the maze must brave. The female dancers wear garlands of flowers in their hair, and the men wear daggers with golden handles (Wright 2001: 129–130).

If the described example is, in essence, Theseus's initiation into the labyrinth, sources produced only a few centuries after Homer offer a second interpretation for the connection between dance and the labyrinth. References to dance and the labyrinth appear in the narratives of mythographers who describe Theseus killing the minotaur, saving the people, and then taking his Athenian companions to Delos, where they celebrated his victory with dance and song. This dance is referred to as the crane dance, cranes being said to perform complex flight patterns as they fly and circle through the air. Craig Wright makes an important observation which should not be overlooked: he warns that the original meaning may have been lost in translation and that we have interpreted it incorrectly.

What is translated as *crane dance* could have a simpler explanation in Greek as a dance of rotations, turns and twists, which is supposed to illustrate the paths in a labyrinth. Such dances are said to have been performed during Easter in some parts of France until the beginning of the 20th century (2001: 130–132, 320).

There is a third connection between dance and labyrinths to be made. The basis for this is the Trojan ride, a choreography on horseback that is said to have been performed for the first time in Sicily by the descendants of the Greek mythological hero and warrior Aeneas. This dance was supposedly the conclusion of the funeral games performed in honour of fallen heroes. The young descendants of Troy rode out and performed complex sequences of manoeuvres on their horses that mirrored the pattern of the labyrinth of Crete. Later, in the Roman age, such riding was encouraged by the emperors Augustus and Nero (Wright 2001: 130–132, 320).

The connection between dance and labyrinths is undoubtedly a question that requires some historical observation, but there are several things even more relevant to this discussion. Chief among them is the transfer of the tradition of labyrinths to the wider European context (especially to the church context) and the consequences this had for the development of church architecture and space. This transfer is also important for other dance-related phenomena and for the general development of dance culture and its semantic dimensions.

It remains unclear whether the mythical labyrinth in Knossos ever really existed or if it is merely a literary construct. The fact remains that to this day, we know of no material remains potentially belonging to it. That does not mean that labyrinths were not actually built in the ancient world. Pliny the Elder was a great admirer and the one who found a place for them in art as well. Pliny was studied and summarised by the church teacher Isidore of Seville, who discussed labyrinths in his extensive work *Etymologiae*. He understood them as public facilities like circuses, amphitheatres, towers, etc. It was Isidor of Seville who was a key contributor to the development of labyrinths in the European church context (Reed Doob 1990: 103–123).

Between the 5th and 12th centuries (when labyrinths reappeared in European churches) there exists a big gap in the history of their construction in Europe. During this period, the idea of labyrinths was transferred from houses to manuscripts. Monks depicted them in books, calendars, astrological charts, encyclopaedias, chronicles, world histories, etc. Seventy-four depictions of labyrinths in approximately sixty medieval manuscripts have survived to this day. Most of these labyrinths only had one path that led to the centre and back, although there are some exceptions with several such paths. Labyrinths eventually assumed the role of helping with interpreting texts or symbolising the passage of time. Gradually, however, they were in turn transferred

from scriptoriums to the building of churches, where they were an important part of church furnishings for the next several centuries (Wright 2001: 16–27).

The famous Chartres type of labyrinth, which is round (in exceptions octahedral in shape) and considered one of the most famous labyrinths, was invented somewhere around the year 900. It differs from its predecessors, still used at the time, in that it had chambers blocking the paths arranged in such a way as to form the image of a cross. They were built mainly in the 12th and 13th centuries and were widespread mainly in Italy and France. The Italian versions were likely slightly smaller than the French ones.[64] Their antiquarian depictions show that Theseus and the minotaur were painted in the centre of them (Mews 2009: 517, Wright 2001: 20–27).

With the development of Christianity, another important shift took place in the Middle Ages: the Christian idea of labyrinths developed. Via the *Interpretatio Christiana*, Theseus in the labyrinth became Christ and the Minotaur took on the meaning of Satan. From then on, Ariadne's thread was the thread of life which led a person along a narrow winding path through the labyrinth of life to salvation. It is also at this time that the labyrinth generally became a metaphor for a person's journey through life, where he is surrounded by a series of sins and mistakes. Christianisation and sanctification reached their peak in the 14th century. This is a period when labyrinths were also surrounded by a series of other symbolic dimensions. During this time, the labyrinth became a symbol of jokes[65] and a symbol of hell,[66] similarly acquired the symbolic meaning of the sinfulness of this world,[67] and was also symbolically associated with the army or soldiers[68] (Wright 2001: 74–92).

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64 There are no sources about labyrinths in churches in Slovenia, but we can assume that this tradition was not widespread in our country. The reason for this might lie structure of the dioceses at that time: they were significantly smaller, financially weaker and could not build such large churches as, for example, in France. As a result, there was neither space nor money to make labyrinths (I would like to thank Gorazd Makarovič for this information and explanation; personal communication 29/03/2020).

65 The idea of the purgatory as a place of final purification before entering paradise developed in the Middle Ages. The semantic connection between the labyrinth and jokes originates from the central point of the labyrinth, a depiction of the minotaur or Satan, who – like sin – had to be defeated in order for the individual to be ready to enter heaven.

66 The symbolic meaning of the labyrinth as hell refers to the journey that Christ embarked on after his death. He went to hell, killed death and redeemed souls. Similarly, the path through the labyrinth to its centre was symbolically embarked on by the priest, who then destroyed the evil there and all returned as Christ's chosen ones. In some rituals, the priest made a symbolic journey to the center of the labyrinth and destroyed evil there, and returned to the chosen ones as the Christ Triumphant.

67 This meaning is based on the idea of a winding path where you can inadvertently very quickly set foot on the wrong path and lose sight of your destination. Such a path represented the path of human life, full of sin and deception which condemn the soul.

68 This meaning refers to the struggle of Christ against Satan and originates from the depictions in the centres of the labyrinths. The Christian army is thus united in fighting evil, and each individual is God's soldier.

In addition to considering it at the semantic level, the labyrinth must also be understood within a practical, physical dimension as a place of movement. Several types of such movement exist, from walking to crawling on knees,[69] and – last but not least – dancing. It is dance specifically that opens up additional symbolic meanings for labyrinths. If, for a moment, we return to the *pelota* dance game, we will find that it is not entirely clear from the descriptions whether it is a dance around the labyrinth or along the paths outlined in it. Understanding its meaning also depends on how and on what path the dance in the labyrinth took place. Penelope Reed Doob outlines two possible interpretations of labyrinth dances.

The first refers to the reversal of roles that occurred during Easter in some areas in the Middle Ages (see also Mews 2009). This reversal inverted the social order, which meant that one's social inferior or subordinate could, in one way or another, criticise, mock, or otherwise address the existing social hierarchy. Various rituals were developed in relation to this, such as the naming of a child bishop. It is also possible to understand this as representing God's labourers on Earth who temporarily function in a completely opposite role. If the canon followed the path of the labyrinth to the centre, he symbolised the minotaur. The other dancers, who followed him and then found their way back, symbolised Christ's deliverance from the clutches of the devil.

If we perceive dance as a symbol of Christ's journey to the underworld, where he defeated the devil/minotaur and returned resurrected, then the other dancers in the labyrinth symbolised the harmony and circulation of the celestial spheres. On a symbolic level, dance was supposed to embody the moment of the (re)making of creation, the moment when God, with harmonious movement, made the cosmos out of chaos. This interpretation is also consistent with the understanding and importance of the music or singing that were performed at the same time. In the logic of that time, music represented the harmony of the celestial spheres, which regulated the (dance) movement of man within the labyrinth as well (Reed Doob 1990: 126, also Mews 2009: 521).

Tessa Morrison provides a similar explanation of the concentric directions of movement through circular labyrinths. Basing her theory in Platonism, she claims that the firmament and celestial bodies had different directions of rotation and paths in the sky. Due to Earth's rotation and its circulation within the heliocentric system, an optical effect is created for the observer on Earth, who can sometimes see the paths of some planets retrogradely (in essence, the planets seem to circulate in different directions). For Earthlings, the movement of the planets and stars flows (somewhat simplified) from right to left (i.e., from east

69 Crawling on knees was usually performed simultaneously with prayer (often the rosary) (see Morrison 2003: 2, Mews 2009: 521).

to west), from left to right (i.e., from west to east), or is static at the point where the planet rotates in place. The dancers move in a similar way through the Chartres-type labyrinth. Their paths lead them through the labyrinth from left to right and vice versa, all the way to the centre, where at a certain point they turn around and travel back. The dancers travel through the orbits of the labyrinth corridors and symbolically embody the paths of the stars and the Earth, or – in the Christian tradition – angels circling around God (Morrison 2003: 4, see also Wright 2001: 142).

Figure 1: *Floor plan of the stone floor labyrinth from Chartres Cathedral (by Jan Šimnovec, 2021).*

There are records of various other astronomical elements in the interpretation of labyrinths,[70] which coincide with the Pythagorean-Platonic model of understanding the world, based on the universal numerical principle and planetary de-

70 There are many assumptions about the role of astrological elements in the labyrinths. The Labyrinth of Chartres is assumed to have been determined on the basis of a scheme derived from the relationship between the height of the southern tower (called the lunar tower) and the height of the northern tower (called the solar tower). Others associate the position of the labyrinth with the position of the North Star, usually associated with the zodiacal sign of Virgo. Similarly, it seems that the east-west axis of the labyrinth is positioned in such a way that at the summer solstice, the rays of the rising sun fall upon it. Such unscientific theories are often unfounded, so there are also arguments that do not speak in their favour. The northern solar tower in Chartres, for example, was built 300 years after the church had already acquired a labyrinth. The labyrinth in Amiens is of the same type as the one in Chartres, but the sun cannot shine on it from the east to the west, as the architectural features of the church prevent it from doing so. More such arguments could be presented, but it must be said that despite some arguments to be made in favour of this, these labyrinths were not facilities for tracking the sun, as was the case, for example, at the labyrinth at Stonehenge in Great Britain. Similarly, it can be argued that despite their association with constellations, they did not have the function of tracking the seasons, although it is true in certain parts of the year, like in early spring during Easter, they were used significantly more often than usual for ritual purposes (Wright 2001: 119–121).

terminism. The labyrinth was often complementary to the altar as the centre of the church, which was placed along the sun's east-west axis; if the altar represented the eastern point, the labyrinth was the western one. The symbolism of these two cardinal directions is crucial. The eastern side represented a place of new life and new fire, while the western side was tied to the falling and setting sun. The west carried the symbolism of death and decay, and it is worth noting that the word occident comes from the Latin word *occidere*, which means "to fall", "to die" or "to be killed". The symbolism of cardinal directions thus very clearly indicates the planetary determination of the believer's movement in the church. The labyrinth, which the individual had to find a way out of by dancing, walking, kneeling or otherwise, represented the path of purification that led them from death in the west to a new life in the eastern part of the church, at the altar. This is also indicated by the medieval liturgical mystery, held at Easter in Ireland, England, France, Germany and Italy, and based on east-to-west movement. On Easter morning, the bishop, priest or abbot went through the church towards the west, to the chapel that served as a representation of limbo. Only one light was lit there, symbolising the Saviour. The bishop arrived there accompanied by the angels (represented by choir singers) and knocked on the door. Opening the door, he led a procession of the redeemed, represented by adult priests who joyfully sang a hymn, out of the dark chapel. Sometimes, the redeemed held palm branches of victory. In some churches of Europe, the priests, who represented the redeemed, danced all the way to Paradise, represented by the altar. In France, however, the dance took place later, in the afternoon, and the dance was performed around the labyrinth (Wright 2001: 18–20, 84).

The labyrinth joins two levels of our understanding of astronomy and its connection with human movement. The worshippers embodied the paths of the stars by following the paths in the labyrinth on the one hand, by traveling through the semantic map of the church space on the other. Furthermore, the labyrinth demonstrates a fundamental postulate founded by Platonism. With its artful appearance alone, the labyrinth demonstrates the power of establishing order in the otherwise omnipresent chaos. As an artistic creation, it is an ordered space that functions according to a predetermined principle. It is art that establishes the hegemony of relationships and regulates chaos. Human creativity and taking into account the cosmic or divine principles make order emerge from disorder. That which, due to their complex design, appears to be vague and chaotic in depictions of labyrinths is actually the incarnation of a wider cosmic and/or divine order and wisdom. At this junction, art and morality meet. When an individual enters the rooms of the labyrinth, it gives them only a vague idea of the space they are in. For them, the labyrinth is a place of confusion and its corridors are deceptive. At the same time, the individual is part of a wider system, larger than they alone, in which they are forced to look for a way out or – on a moral level –

the path to salvation. This is how the labyrinth is inseparably intertwined on an artistic and a moral level and represents the image of divine and human creativity. The same could be said of dance. This activity, which was part of what transpired in labyrinths, was symbolically connected to them in some way. During the time when labyrinths in churches were being designed, dance, a type of free art (the so-called *artes liberales*), was subject to clear musical rules which regulated sound according to mathematical principles. All movement was limited and carefully constructed, which is how it was also perceived and assessed. The medieval *modestia* set the boundaries between permitted and non-permitted, correct and incorrect, and acceptable and unacceptable movement. Order in movement communicates the balance between the soul and the body and, consequently, between the dancers' bodies and the music. Both dance and the labyrinth, one through movement and the other through the construct(ing) of space, create instances of order in chaos. Both body and space become order.

In fact, we can also observe a parallel between the principle of arranging space within a labyrinth and the principle of arranging sound in music. The different lengths of the paths in a labyrinth and the relationships between the tones in music reflect the harmony of the celestial spheres. Christianity has named this harmony God's plan, of which man is a part. Something that sound and space have in common is the moving body, which can, at any point, take the wrong turn in the labyrinth and get lost, just as it can turn from the right spiritual path in life and condemn the soul. A body that moves properly reflects its harmony with God's providence and finds its way to heaven. The correlating sound and space are connected by a disciplined and balanced body – a body which is simultaneously a user and a creator of said space and music.

THE AMBULATORY – PATHS OF STARS CARVED IN STONE

The labyrinth, which reflected the cosmic arrangement and thus also dictated certain forms of movement, is the result of architecture and the perception of space. In addition to journeys through the labyrinth, certain movement practices also required the arrangement of space to enable collective circular movements around the churches. The concept of circular movement was introduced into church design in the Middle Ages by not only depicting labyrinths but adapting entire floor plans and subsequently the use of church space. The paths of the stars and their circulation through the celestial spheres were thus captured in the design of the stone structures of the churches.

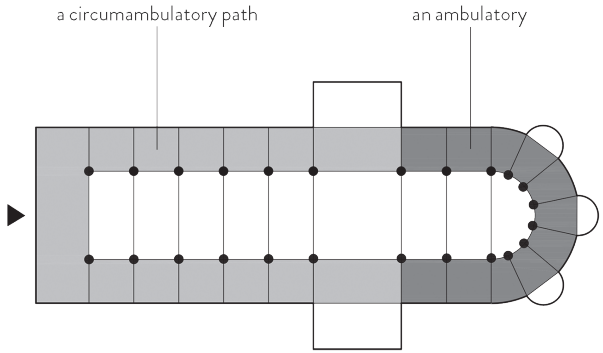

FIGURE 2: *Sketch of a church with an ambulatory and a circumambulatory path (by Jan Šimnovec, 2021).*

The ambulatory was a space purposely designed as a circular path in the church and developed from Carolingian outer crypts. Crypts were rooms designed below ground level and were created to protect and venerate the remains of saints and their objects, or as their tombs. The rooms in the crypts were sacred. They existed all over Europe up until the 11th century and were mainly used in relation with various funeral rites or the veneration of relics. One of the key roles of the crypts was enabling pilgrims to circle the grave or the holy remains. Gradually, these crypts expanded, altars started being placed in them, and the first temples and later churches were built above them. The first crypts appeared in Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries. In the Carolingian era, people were also familiar with outer crypts, which were built outside the main church space. They were connected to the church by various vaulted passageways and corridors (Heywood 2003a). Crypts from the Romanesque era also helped the development of the ambulatory. The former crypt corridors, which ran on the outside of the church apse, began to be integrated into the interior, so that a circular arched walking path was built around the church. Ambulatories were widespread mainly in Central and Western Europe, and especially in France. In addition to circling the central point of the church, their purpose was to make it possible to reach all the side altars in the church or in the apses, arranged radially to the ambulatory.[71] Most of the ambulatories survived until the end of the Middle Ages (Heywood 2003b).[72] We must not overlook the fact that the ambulatory as a place for walking or strolling was also used on other church premises, and not only in the churches proper. They can often be found in monasteries in the form of

71 For an example that (at least partially) answers the question of the furnishing of the side chapels of the ambulatory, consult Beaven 1992.

72 Several forms of ambulatories were known throughout Europe. M. F. Hearn (1971) writes about the square ambulatory, which stands out due to its floor plan and was unknown west of the Rhine.

dedicated corridors (see, for example, Bales 1984). Although there is no data on ambulatories in Slovenia, the Koper Regional Museum keeps ornamented panels, assumed to be the remains of such an ambulatory in the Slovene Littoral.[73]

The design of church spaces was dependent on one of its central purposes: to highlight and support the liturgy.[74] Over time and after various reforms, the structure of the liturgy changed, so the space needed for its implementation also changed. In addition to changes in style, some changes in room design occurred in architecture due to other functional purposes, such as acoustics. The singing of the Gregorian chant was so important at the time that the understanding of construction and engineering in church architecture reached its maximum heights, in part also thanks to the studying of acoustics. The church, as a holy place in a profane environment, had to "embody" the highest possible form of harmony at all levels so that it could represent a place the believers came to in order to find their way to God and find harmony between their mortal body and immortal soul. Pilgrimages to holy places, usually associated with important relics, were a significant part of this.

The number of pilgrims in an increasingly Christian Europe rose significantly in the 9th and 10th centuries, leading also to an increase in the number of pilgrimage churches. The spatial needs of believers who used the church with its auxiliary facilities also changed as a result. In response to this, the church space was transformed by adding a greater number of side chapels and altars, side naves, etc. A similar thing happened in churches with a larger number of monks (e.g., in Cluny). The abbey in Cluny had the largest church in Europe in the 12th century, and due to the ever-increasing number of people it had to shelter, be they pilgrims or monks living there, they were forced to rebuild or add to it several times. One of the things they built was an ambulatory created to enable the circumambulation of a large number of visitors. Another example of the development of sacral architecture is the church of St. Martin in Tours, which was a popular pilgrims' way in the Middle Ages. In addition to the main nave, it was the side naves, the transept and the ambulatory that allowed for a larger number of pilgrims to lead the procession and circle the path around the central

73 I would like to thank Gorazd Makarovič for this piece of information (personal communication 29/03/2020).

74 Church premises were far from having a purely liturgical role. The example of the Aachen Cathedral, also the location of Charlemagne's throne, demonstrates that the representation of the ruler was also very important. With the help of sacral architecture, other important people of the time asserted and represented themselves. This role was complemented by a messaging function: people received different messages by using these spaces, best seen in the visual arts (paintings, frescoes, mosaics, statues, etc.). When it comes to church premises, we must not overlook their political function. Sacral architecture reflects many other functions and ideas of its time (see Doig 2008 for more on this).

point of the church – the altar. While the visitors made their way through the ambulatory, the monks were able to pray undisturbed in the choir in the presbytery (Doig 2008: 158–161).[75]

In Europe, there were many churches with an ambulatory where circular processions were performed, but they were especially widespread in parts of France, and partly also in Germany and Spain. The main purpose of the ambulatory was, of course, to encircle the central, holiest part of the church space. A believer could join an ambulatory designed in this way anywhere and leave it at any time (for example, at the side door and not only at the main entrance to the church). This had practical value, especially during the time when there was a larger number of believers in the church. This type of circumambulation was performed not only by believers, but on various occasions also by priests and monks[76] (e.g., Beaven 1992).

Circumambulation largely took place as different forms of processions performed in several ways on various occasions. The path people took was often circular. Given that the processions had very different functions and symbolic meanings, they did not necessarily always take place in the church or the ambulatory. Even in the Middle Ages, some processions started from a church and later returned either back to it or even to another church. Sometimes they were conducted only by the congregation, at other times by a priest with a smaller entourage, or by everyone.[77] Throughout the Middle Ages, a wide range of forms and semantic meanings related to processions and other (ritual) circumambulation within the Christian imaginary were developed. The different processional routes, the actions people performed, and the movement and gestures of the priest and the congregation thus acquired a symbolic dimension in addition to the liturgical one. Sometimes, as noted by J. C. Schmitt, it even achieved symbolic efficacy (Suntrup 1978: 245–254, Schmitt 2000).

Processional rounds could be accompanied by music. It was not unusual for the procession to take place in combination with both singing and instrumental mu-

75 Ambulatories often feature radially arranged side altars or chapels whose function is not entirely clear. They might have stored some secondary relics to complement the main relic(s) in a church, or they could simply have been used to satisfy the need for a greater number of altars in churches. There is no definitive evidence for either explanation (Doig 2008: 162).

76 Other circumambulatory practices in the liturgy have been recorded but will not be discussed in the context of collective (dance) practices in this paper. Some of them can be found in Rudolf Suntrup's work *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in latainischen und deutschen Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts* (1978).

77 Processions are an extremely complex cultural and historical phenomenon. In this paper, a special section is dedicated to them in the following sub-chapter, which will be devoted only to a certain type of processions. Otherwise, the analysis would significantly exceed the intended scope of this text.

sical and some more or less rhythmic movement of the body. We must remember that this was a time when dancing was still very much present in churches. On the basis of sources and recorded medieval processions, we can conclude that dance was also a part of processions: the participants of the processions could perform various dance steps during the rounds. Ambulatories can be explained, at least in part, as forms of ritual dance halls. At this time, the concept of procession and dance cannot clearly be disentangled. What used to be (liturgical) dancing around a central point of the sacred location (churches, crypts, martyr's graves, etc.) became part of the circular path of the ambulatory. Here, too, it turned out that dance as a collective circular practice was still present in all its diversity, regardless of the fact that it took place in a set of completely different cultural and historical circumstances than those at the time of Pythagoras and Plato. The basic form of the Greek *choros* was reiterated in only slightly modified form and content.

AROUND THE ALTAR

Not everyone could afford ambulatories like those in large European dioceses, priding themselves on churches which were magnificent architectural achievements of their time. Over time, other alternative forms of church space design were developed for a similar purpose. We can conclude from some of the ritual rounds still preserved today that they were familiar with various related forms of circumambulation in other parts of Europe as well, including in Slovenia. It is difficult to make retrograde conclusions, so we need to be very careful. Nevertheless, it is possible to comparatively discern certain correlations between the circumambulations which (from a diachronic point of view) developed from making rounds around relics and were also embedded in the architecture of their time, and thus in the design and perception of space. Regardless of the fact that contexts and meanings of individual circular movements or related rituals have changed, we can still trace the archetypal principle of the rotation of the stars founded by Platonism, and which later came to life in various ritual forms. Such ritual circumambulation was often tied to various forms of offerings to God, which is why they were, as a rule, complemented by various votive objects.

One of the forms of altar worship that is still in practice today is linked to the believers' giving of gifts to the church called offering or (in Slovene dialect) *ofer*. Different parishes have different traditions, but it is still common in some places for the worshippers to – once a month and/or on major holidays, especially patronage celebrations – move from the nave and circle the main altar before leaving the church at the end of mass. On their circular route, they leave a gift for the church on the altar.

The very term used for the offering, *ofer*[78] or *šenkunga*,[79] indicates that the money or objects are directly intended for God[80] (Ložar-Podlogar 2007). Votive images represent a special type of such gifts. These are objects (sometimes made of wood or metal, although more often of wax[81] and other materials) that helped the individual to communicate with and surrender to God. Votives are individualised objects that personify the worshipper, a certain part of the body or something else relating to them, which connects it symbolically and associatively with making a request or giving thanks to God. In terms of their development, they originate from pre-Christian religious practices of gift-giving (Kuret 1998b: 201–202). Crucially, these objects are also connected to the altar rounds in the Christian context; the believer prays, repeatedly moving on his knees, asking God, Mary or a saint to answer a prayer (for healing, a happy journey, no accidents at work, etc.) Similarly, such altar rounds can also be performed to give thanks or to fulfil a vow; the believer gives thanks for prayers answered, instances of luck in unfortunate circumstances, etc. (Dugac 2000, Makarovič 2007).

In this respect, coming into contact with the most divine is manifested by the materialisation of the believer's object, which symbolises their sacrifice and devotion to God; at the same time, circumambulation is a key part of the ritual. Circling around the altar represents a form of intense contemplative practice which is also reflected in the architectural design of the altars. Churches in Slovenia might not have ambulatories, but instead they have passageways behind altars that serve a similar purpose. They were especially popular in pilgrimage churches, one such being the church of St. Vid at Brezje, the home of Leopold Layer's depiction of Mary Help of Christians. During a renovation, they simply walled up the side chapel of the former old church to create a circumambulatory path full of votive images, along which worshipers move kneeling.

An example of this particularly intense contemplation achieved by circling around the altar can also be seen on the pilgrims' way to the church of St. Rok on Petrakovo Brdo near Duga Resa in Croatia, made especially interesting because we can still

78 The term *ofer* comes from the German word *Opfer* – sacrifice, offering.

79 The term *šenkunga* comes from the German word *Schenkung* – "offering", "gift". A small gift of money made from cattle trading could be donated to a servant or a child who took the cattle to pasture in the morning. I would like to thank Mateja Habinc for this information (personal communication 19/09/2021).

80 I must also mention the wedding ritual known in some parts of Carinthia. The so called *pobiranje na roke* (*taking-by-hand*) meant the bride and groom were ritually presented with gifts from the wedding party in the church. After the wedding ceremony, the wedding party went around the altar and, congratulating them, handed money over to the newlyweds, who were standing in the presbytery. Today, this practice is quite rare, as the gift is given to the newlyweds upon their arrival, but if they practice this ritual during the wedding ceremony, it may happen that the individual has to present them with a gift twice. Such behaviour is understood to be less appropriate.

81 Using beeswax as a material for votive images was not accidental – it was considered an important gift for the church, as they needed wax to ensure a year-long supply of candles to be lit.

observe the remnants of medieval Catholic mysticism based on ancient planetary determinism. According to mystical tradition, the soul could leave the body and see how the blessed fared in the afterlife, which is why it was necessary to practice deep contemplation in order for the soul to rise to God and overcome the separation of Earth from Heaven. Circling the point of holiness and, by crawling on one's knees showing deep humility and devotion to God, connects man on a symbolic level with the angels constantly circling God. For a pilgrim to St. Rok, contemplation was also crucial. An eloquent name for the act of moving around the altar on one's knees (indicating the direct link between man and the holy in the afterlife) exists among the locals: *vidit svetog Rok* ("to see St. Rok") (Dugac 2000: 103).

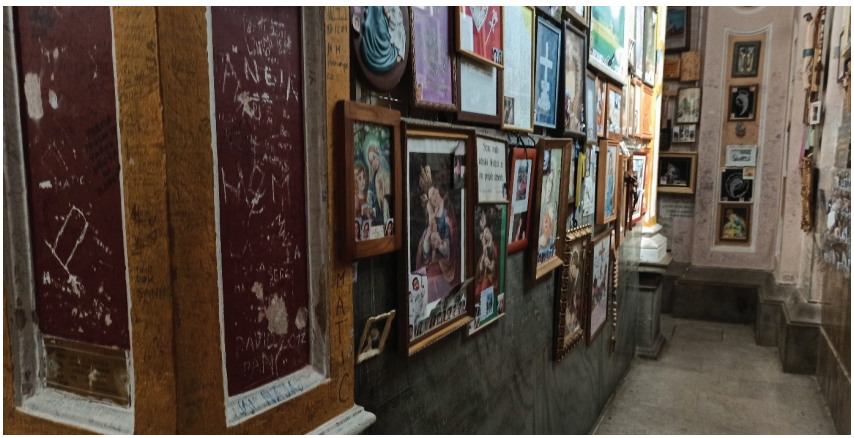

FIGURE 3: *The circumambulatory path and gifts of thanks at the altar of Mary Mother of God at Brezje (private archive of Tomaž Simetinger, photographed by T. Simetinger, 2020).*

Finding God was the universal goal of religious Christians, reflected also in the organisation of mental space maps and the design of the space in which people moved. The aforementioned architecture seems to be the result of understanding this kind of movement. The embodiment of ideas about dance, circular movement and processions brought about the need for types of space that initially took the form of circular paths around crypts and churches, and later of ambulatories and altar circumambulatory paths. This space, designed according to current needs of the time, enabled the believer to come into vertical contact with the world of the blessed in God, so random forms of prayer were deemed unsuitable. People of the Middle Ages adhered to the still predominant idea of seeking contact with God through, most often, group circular movements and rhythmic patterns of music or text. In the past, processions combined all these elements. Since they have changed considerably over time, today's general perception of

them often deviates considerably from their former historical meaning and appearance. Historical processional movements are key to understanding the connections between today's lines of couples in processions and former dance forms, which could, among other things, develop into such lines as well. An example of a procession with dance is the still existing hopping procession of Echternach.

PROCESSIONS AND DANCE – A LEAP TO ECHTERNACH

Processions are a very extensive and complex historical phenomenon both in Christianity and in other, non-Christian settings. They are extremely diverse in both form and function, having been used for military, political, sacral, performative and other (ritual) purposes from antiquity on. Today, they are usually part of liturgical ceremonies, which are themselves the fruit of a long process of development. The distinct choreography of the bodies involved in the movement of the procession has been composed over the centuries. A very important concept is the disciplining of the participants, which gradually established itself in the Middle Ages (especially from the High Middle Ages onwards). That is when significant shift in thought occurred and the procession became a chain of people, increasingly distancing itself from elements of dance. Before that, it was the other way around: processions were often inseparably linked to the performance of dance. The chapter will study the case of one of the few still preserved dance-related processions: the hopping procession of Echternach.

With the rise of Christianity, as previously mentioned, the early Christians drew heavily from the Jewish tradition when it came to processions as well. They were performed in combination with various forms of circular dances. Backman and Oesterley in fact assume that the early forms of Christian processions were closely related to some circular dances or with rotation, and that we should look for their model in the Old Testament. Processional dances of this type could also be a part of funeral rituals (Backman 1952: 9–12, Oesterley 2002: 35–37).

Dancing in processions, strongly linked to the idea of the angelic choir (*chorus angelicus*) whose main task was to sing praises to the Creator, shifted from an early Christian context into literature and the preaching tradition. The Christian imaginary of the departure of the soul to the other world also contained the concept of a procession of angels, circling the sky while dancing, and accompanying the soul into the embrace of God's love. Such descriptions can be found in medieval spiritual mistic literature, which describes the joy of angels and blessed souls (Zimmermann 2007: 110). The very same idea – angels receiving the soul

on its way to the afterlife – also appears in contemporary Christian funeral rites, in which the priest still calls for the angels to arrive and take the deceased into their care. The ritual is still in use today and is linked to circular movement, but the idea behind it is quite old. We should probably look for its origin with Dionysius the Aeropagite, mentioned several times in this text. Dionysius' Heavenly Hierarchy and his teaching, key to the whole of medieval Christian mysticism, assumed that each being in harmonic (co)existence has its own hierarchically assigned place in the universe. As hierarchically higher beings circling around God, angels have the task of caring for and helping hierarchically lower beings, like humans, in their progressive path to God, both in this world and in the next (Syston Carter 1987: 9–11, see also Pont 2008: 269).

If the Jewish tradition and the idea about the angelic choir and its function affected the organisation of processions, then the question arises how these processions came to be associated with dance. To answer it, we need to examine some medieval vocabulary and its practical use in the context of dance and processions. During this period, processions often appear in connection with dance. The Latin vocabulary suggests two basic terms that characterise this area of dance: the previously discussed *chorus/chorea/chorizare* and *tripudium/tripudiare*, which also appears in the context of dance. The connection is important because the analysis of the use of these two word groups shows that people did not see a clear dividing line between sacred and secular dance.[82] Another thing they both have in common is their association with both dance and the description of processional rituals. If the *chorus* is semantically linked to the group dance of angels or people, the *tripudium* has an equally important semantic value for the liturgy. The term *tripudium* refers to the triadic structure of leg movement and thus symbolically recalls the triadic structure of the cosmos, which consists of three spheres. They move in one direction, stop and then move back. There are various other semantic dimensions to be added to this term. The triadic structure of the leg movements is also linked to the idea of the sun/Sun. They believed that just as Christ spent three days and nights in the underworld between his death and resurrection, the Sun holds still for three days at its turning points (at the equinox) and makes three leaps in honour of Christ[83] (Rohmann 2013: 179). The *tripudium* thus reflects a cosmological, even mythological idea of the Sun. It is not to be glossed over, however, that it is semantically associated with joy and happiness (see also Backman 1952: 13) and as such, it reflected the duality both

82 Unlike the aforementioned word groups with their two semantic fields, a clear dividing line between sacred and profane dance appears in the use of the words *saltatio/saltare/salire*, *dansatio/dansare* and *ballatio/ballare*. The use of these word groups and their semantic field are strongly associated with profane dance (Rohmann 2013: 179–180).

83 Some versions of these performances are linked to the feast of John the Baptist, which is celebrated at the time of the summer solstice.

of dance as a reflection of cosmology and of Christian theology. On a purely physical level, where we can observe at least the basic structure of the steps of the movers, it is important that this is a term related to dance movement rituals that were performed in a sacred context but were also tied to the ecstatic experience of movement (Rohmann 2013: 176). It is those practices that the Church was actually afraid of and that were one of the key factors leading to the disciplining of the body and its expressiveness in the church context.

The processions were not only tied to (not) performing dance steps, but also to their forms or implementation practices, routes they were performed on, their purpose, etc. Their symbolic meaning depended to a large extent on these factors.[84] Processions were gradually developed during which people in the church or in its surroundings could walk in columns, in pairs or in a line one after the other, all the while walking, dancing, playing, singing, praying or reciting various texts. Sometimes such processions only occurred in the form of groups of people following each other around the various designated spots they had to visit. There could be a priest in their midst or they could be led without one. Less often, processions were performed only by the priests and a small entourage. The spread of processions and their popularity was also significantly influenced by the dynamics of the development of pilgrimage.

The number of processions increased over centuries in correlation with the increasing number of pilgrimage churches and pilgrimages. The majority of processions are recorded from approximately the 13th century onwards, which also created an ever-increasing need for their regulation. Due to the large number of processions and all the circumstances in which they took place, church authorities in particular were afraid that they would stray too far from Christian norms and become an opportunity for intemperance and licentiousness. This resulted in more and more regulations being introduced, applying to movement as well (Zimmermann 2007: 105–106). Earlier processions were closely tied to dancing, but in the late Middle Ages, church authorities had the tendency to only allow moderate movement. Church representatives thus began to express mistrust especially towards those dances performed by lay people in the context of church rituals (see e.g., Schmitt 2000: 97–100). The concept of disciplined processions, as we still know them today in the Western Catholic context, began to emerge at this time. These processions were made up of a group of people (often lined up in pairs or

84 The symbolism of processions was extremely varied. On the one hand, the processional rounds could represent salvation and the journey of the chosen people into the promised land. If the procession led from one church to another, the arriving at another church could symbolise a military campaign and the conquest of a fortress. Due to the use and blessing of water, the Easter processions were perceived as a symbol of baptism and the faith the believers must proclaim, or as Christ's journey at resurrection. There are also a number of other symbolic meanings. For more on this, consult Suntrup 1976: 245–254.

in a chain and possibly separated according to their sex) who followed the priest in his peaceful choreography of walking, singing and praying. The disappearing of processions and removing of dance from the church context was a centuries-long process that took place differently in different temporal and spatial contexts. Dance was often a part of the processions in one way or another. The sources indicate that it was even part of the individual stations of the procession, where it stopped and gave the participants an opportunity to dance or just watch others doing so. Such processions (where dancing was part of the event) occurred at least until the 18th century.[85] The report of the Spanish King Philip III discusses how he and the Queen attended the Corpus Christi procession in the 1600s.

> The Queen also joined the procession with all her ladies in waiting, each bearing a burning candle of white wax. It was done with much calmness and majesty and with much music. There were some dances which greatly cheered the feast.
> (Noone 1998: 114)

In 1598, a solemn procession was organised in honour of four boxes of relics that had been transferred another church. San Jeronimo writes:

> A very solemn procession was made with many torches, with a number of religious dressed in many copes and other rich ornaments, with many dances, motets, villancicos, and charming concepts, all in praise of saints and holy relics, with much polyphony with very elegant voices and so tuned that truly it was a living portrait of paradise.
> (Noone 1998: 96)

The presence of dance in processions and the success the Church had in removing dance from the liturgy varied from place to place. The persecution of dancing in processions was sometimes joined by secular authorities. In 1778, Archduke Clement Wenceslaus[86] of Trier removed music and dance from the prayer procession in Prüm, and even planned to move the procession itself to another day of the year. As a remnant of the old dance processional route, which consisted of ritual communions at individual holy points along the route, people performed it by themselves until the 20th century. The testimony of Maria Hillesheim from Prüm sheds light on the course of this circumambulation:

> The morning after the Ascension, people from Prüm and the surrounding villages walk around in randomly formed groups. With a loud prayer in honour of St. Willibrord, nine circles are made around the "Wendelinushüschen" [probably an auxiliary church building, A/N]; the first three directly around the chapel, then three around it at a slightly greater distance, and then three around the entire hill on which the chapel stands. During the prayer, they move along the Hillstrasse past the square.

85 It should be noted that in this case, local or regional traditions were very heterogeneous and that, seeing as there is no systematic research on the subject, it is impossible to give a completely accurate assessment of when and where they actually appeared in Europe.

86 He is the son of the Polish king Augustus III, Archduke and Bishop Clemens Wenceslaus of Saxony.

> Near the Johaentges shop, they circle the area three times, then do the same in front of the town hall (where the old parish church used to stand), and again the same in the area in front of the parish church. In the church, they then circle the altar three times and the main nave three more times. At 10 o'clock, there is a celebration in the church.
>
> (Meisen 1951: 165–166)

Processions were quite heterogeneous over time, as was the dance associated with them, which even influenced the development of liturgical dance. Figures of movement performed as a choreography in front of the cross, relics, saints' paintings, at individual stations of the procession, etc., were various bows, turns, forward and backward movements or zooming in and out from a certain point, among others. These figures then often passed even into exclusively church dances, which could be part of rituals and have, in some places, been preserved. Such an example is the dance of the choirboys[87] from the Seville Cathedral, which is still performed today (Rohmann 2013: 205, Backman 1952: 77–86).

The notion of processions moving in a circle was not only connected with some physical rituals of the Middle Ages but was also linked to the spiritual literature of the Middle Ages. In the texts of an anonymous preacher from 13th century Germany, we can already see the idea that dancing is part of the path that leads the dead to Heaven. The dead person sets out on their way to the heavenly throne, to a kind of paradise of abundance, accompanied by the singing and dancing of virgins and the music of angels. The performance adheres to the idea that the soul of the deceased is escorted to heaven in a solemn procession (Zimmermann 2007: 110).

The 13th century is also the period when Europe experienced an increase in the number of processions. Various texts by clerics mention processions mainly in connection with the celebration of the feasts of St. Mary and the Feast of Corpus Christi, occasionally also processions connected with weddings. Unfortunately, any information about the movement structures, the choreography of these processions, is rarely provided. It is certain, however, that this was the period in which the Church began to understand the dangers of dancing and an undisciplined body. The fear of the non-Christian nature of the processions involving dance movement of the believers gradually spread. The dancing body of the participants in a procession was subjected to a growing number of restrictions aimed at ensuring an acceptable, calmer movement of the Christian (Zimmermann 2007: 105–106).

Despite the pressure from the authorities and the processes of disciplining the bod-

87 It is a dance that boys perform in front of the main altar and has existed since the 15th century. Boys up to ten years of age who participated also had to be good singers, as they sang while dancing. They wore special uniforms. The dance and the number of dancers changed over time.

ies of believers which allowed for less and less room for dance movement, a procession was preserved which is still performed today and involves dance consisting of jumps: the hopping procession of Echternach, Luxembourg. Within it, we can observe some particularly interesting remains of medieval dances directly linked to procession rounds. The history of this still extremely popular and recognisable procession is quite long. We have documents that indicate it was performed as early as the 15th century, though some believe that it has probably existed for much longer. Mainly, it is famous for what is nowadays considered a somewhat unusual form of moving around the room: the participants, who stand in rows and hold on to handkerchiefs, perform the so-called pilgrim's step, which involves hopping left and right while moving forward. Today, the procession is recognised by UNESCO as intangible heritage.

Historically, the beginnings of the procession are linked to the veneration of St. Willibrord. Relatively little is known about the earlier period of this saint's life aside from the fact that the man lived in England in the second half of the 7th century. England was already a predominantly Christian country at that time, but it did not yet have an organised operative structure with clearly defined rules of worship, institutions, etc. He studied in monasteries in Ireland and went to Christianise the then pagan Frisia in 690. He kept touch with England throughout his life. He received the strong support of Pippin II for the beginning of his mission. He chose Utrecht as his seat and was appointed Archbishop of Frisia by the Pope during his second and last visit to Rome. Crucially, Willibrord founded a monastery in Echternach. On November 10, 739, just three days after his death, his remains were transferred to the monastery as per his request (Hen 1997: 41–43). They remain there as relics. In 2017, some of these relics were presented to the County Carlow as a gift. Willibrord was the first to successfully Christianise this county and it is also where started his journey to Frisia from. Due to his activity, St. Willibrord is counted among one of the most important European saints (Mulligan 2018: 49).

The procession in honour of St. Willibrord is mainly known as a procession attended by an extremely large number of people, the reason for that being the so-called *Pilgerschritt* (pilgrim's step, characterised by moving forward by hopping left and right). A report from 1880 provides a detailed description of the events: around nine thousand believers are said to have gathered in and around the church on Whit Monday. The opening ceremony, which takes place in the morning in the church, begins with the singing of the *Veni creator* hymn by dozens of priests at the same time. As they set out on the procession route, the band starts playing

and performs the well-known tune *Adam he had seven sons*.[88] The congregation holds hands or, more often, handkerchiefs. Five to eight of them line up, forming a long chain of dancers one after another. The participants then jump in rhythm and move forward. The dance move was described in 1886 as follows: "[T]hey first jump three steps forward, and then two steps backward, forming an unusual dance movement." (C. O'C. E. 1886: 258)

Today, the accompanying music is mostly connected to various orchestras, especially brass bands. In the past, it was much less limited. Each group was supposed to bring their own musical line-up, or they could hire random musicians they encountered on the way to Echternach. Violins, clarinets, drums and many other instruments could be heard in such ensembles. Bagpipes were also often included. Since each ensemble played in a fast tempo and each in their own tonality, the onlookers could simultaneously hear as many as three groups of musicians at the same time, so it all sounded very out of tune (C. O'C. E. 1886: 259).

The dance in the procession changed over time, but we must not neglect the fact that it was linked to health-related concepts. We know patients dancing for their health attended this procession or, if they could no longer do it themselves, even hired younger locals to dance in their stead (C. O'C. E. 1886: 259). Once again, this demonstrates the old connection of the concept of a healthy body, which is also achieved via coordinated movements that lead to the harmony of the physical body with a higher force that helps the body heal.

The case of processions shows a unique historical leap from the concept of dance to ritual walking, made by disciplining and regulating the body. Looking at this from a historical perspective, we began to see an image take form in which the older ideological bases and their development are concealed within these practices. The case of the unique relic that is the hopping procession of Echternach points towards some older dances or processional rituals which will help to facilitate the understanding of modern (para)liturgies.

88 We can assume with a great deal of certainty that this is a version of a tune that existed in Slovenia as a type dance music known as *Abraham 'ma sedem sinov* (Abraham has seven sons). The *Abraham 'ma sedem sinov* dance is performed in a chain that makes serpentine turns and can also be performed to include an improvised gesticulation game. In the text, I provide the title of the tune in English, since that was how it was written down by the author. Backman names it *Jubelmelodie zur Echternacher Springprozession* (Backman 1952: 120).

SACRED SPACES, THE BODY AND DANCE

THE CHURCH, GRAVEYARDS, COURTYARDS AND ATRIUMS – DANCE BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

Dance and music could influence the state of rapture in which the individual (without mediation or supervision) was able to function in the sphere of transcendence and achieve it by bypassing Church authority. The form of the official church liturgy kept changing throughout the Middle Ages and gradually developed into the ritual we know today. Paraliturgical practices (which might also include dance) became of secondary importance and contributed to the complex question of the relationship between the sacred and the profane.

Sacredness is a layered concept; it combines the challenge of creating space and the understanding of temporal cycles and their related rituals. All three levels are interdependent, complementary and related to the concept of transcendence, blurring the line between the physical world and the otherworld. Sacredness is an area separate unto itself and is thus in a unique relationship with the profane. As further examples will show, the sacred space should be perceived to exist on a much broader scale than only within the confines of the church building. It is a place of arbitrariness, constantly being formed and regenerated through time and performing rituals. Processional circumambulation, cyclically (usually at patronage celebrations) occurring within a specific community, is an example of such formation of regeneration.

The actual dance predominantly took place in churches or their immediate vicinities. The church space which we today perceive as sacred and towards which we consequently exhibit a pious attitude, also had considerable other roles in the past. These spaces were not only intended for the worship of God, but were also used for other, nowadays considered impious activity. It was not unusual (especially on some pilgrimages) for the churches to be a place to sleep, eat, celebrate, sing, have sex, perform various legal acts, trade, play, talk, etc. The church and its surroundings were a public space, and the norms and laws regarding what was acceptable in them and what was not were constantly changing. In any case, they

were very different to what they are today (Mayes 2003: 53–65). In the context of the sacred, dance is a phenomenon where the boundaries between the sacred and the profane are not straightforward or definitively defined. Its role in defining them is still somewhat unclear. Dancing was an activity that was performed both in profane and sacred environments and it is this multi-functionality that can lend an insight into the intertwinement of these two opposing, yet complementary, worlds.

Worship of God and self-entertainment could go hand in hand, at least in some historical periods and in theocentric representations. The idea that one cannot have fun while praying is a relatively new concept. An example of a dance and party including the worship of God is to be found in the year 837, when the monks from Corvey received the relics of St. Vitus. People danced around the church all night and sang the *Kyrie eleison*. This kind of dance was acceptable to the clergy and entertaining for the people, as the revellers praised God while partying (Tronca 2016: 59–60).

In the 15th and 16th centuries, dancing was part of the Christmas celebration in the German city of Hof. In Wiedemann's handwritten city chronicle, he claims that at Christmas, the people "rocked Jesus", as they called the old custom. The organist played the tune *Resonet in laudibu*s, and the choir sang: "Joseph, my dear Joseph, help me rock the baby ..." Because they were composed in triple time, such songs lent themselves to dance, and it became customary for boys and girls to come dance around the altar and for the elders to join them. With a dance called *Pomwitzeltanz*, the locals rejoiced and commemorated the birth of Christ (Böhme 1886: 178, Richard 1861: 96). Heino Pfannenschmid also writes about Christmas dancing in churches in the 16th century. In Lower Bavaria, young men and women were said to have danced and artfully bounced around an image on the altar that was painted on wood and depicted Jesus as a child. During this dance, the performers sang Christmas carols, played the organ, and were accompanied by the elders clapping their hands. Similar dances were also recorded in then contemporary France, England and Spain (Pfannenschmid 1878: 490). In Saxony, there are records of Christmas dances around the altar until the end of the 18th century, when the secular authorities banned them. A specific form of Christmas dances was practiced in Franconia, where – while singing *Resonet and laudibus* – children were supposed to jump and clap in front of the congregation, showing joy at the birth of Jesus (Backman 1952: 128).

In the German-speaking world, however, dances were not only performed at Christmas. In 1617, two fairly popular wedding dances called *Lehenschwinken* and *Kronentanz* were banned in Cologne. These were extremely widespread forms of dance, variations of which were also known the Netherlands and Belgium and were also performed in churches. We can interpret from the Cologne ban that these dances included the bride and groom participating by tapping their feet, which was deemed inappropriate for the environment and the occasion. It is interesting that in some

places, on Easter or Walpurgis Night, this dance was preceded by an auction of dancers, who then had to dance with an assigned partner for the whole year. The very name of the dance, which comes from the German word *lehen* – "to give into possession" or "to lend" – refers to the "loaning" of dancers (Backman 1952: 128–129).

Sources about dancing in Italian churches are relatively rare, but we can still encounter them many times throughout history. Casanova mentions such a dance in one of his letters. In the Tuscan city of Cana, dances in churches were practiced until 1486. A century later they mention dances in churches in Ancona as well, practiced there until 1560, when they were banned. The ban had one exception: the dances could be performed on church premises during weddings. Backman attributes this to the fact that it was such a common and popular tradition that the authorities did not dare ban it. In 1609, a large-scale dance procession was held in the town of Loreto in the Ancona in honour of the canonisation of Ignatius of Loyola. A large crowd participated, including four groups of dancers representing the four parts of the world. They used costumes to represent America, Asia, Europe and Africa (Backman 1952: 91, 107–108).

Similar sources on dancing on church premises are also available from France. Dance processions were organised in Évreux during the celebration of St. Vitalis on April 28.[89] During the procession around the city, the participants collected green branches with which they then decorated the paintings when they returned to the church. The celebration continued for three days and included the participation of the clergy. In addition to games such as bowling, both ecclesiastical and profane dances were performed in the church during this time. Similar dance processions were performed in Châlons-sur-Marne on the occasion of the summer bonfire.

The description of a dance from the French city of Limoges is particularly telling. The relics of St. Martial were exhibited at the church first on special occasions like the visits of kings or princes, and then from 1526 generally once every seven years. This celebration took place on June 30 and July 1 and included the participants dancing a chain dance while the choir sang psalms. At the end of each verse was the chorus:

> Holy Mary, pray for us sinners,
> and I shall dance for you.
> (Backman 1952: 108–109)[90]

The construction of the sacred space interfered with the realm of the profane. In the medieval mental map, it was understood as a kind of crack in the pro-

89 Unfortunately, Backman does not specify exactly which time period the data refers to. They are most likely from the end of the Middle Ages or the beginning of the New Age.

90 I only provide a few examples of dance in a church context in this segment. Louis Backman writes about this more extensively in his chapter *Popular Church Dances* (1952: 95–131).

fane space that contained the source of the sacred and from which the divine emanated. It could only be designed through a precisely defined ritual. In the Catholic world of the Middle and New Ages, designing a sacred space was primarily linked to the consecration of a church, a rite of passage for the space, the building and any related objects that was performed in three parts. In the first, the bishop and his entourage walked around the church; this circumambulation charted, separated and limited the space of the future sacral.[91] This is how he removed the evil spirits residing there, banishing them by blessing and thus cleansing the space. The second stage of consecration consisted of an act of exorcism. This was followed by the third phase, which consisted of the introduction of relics and the anointing of the church walls and the altar. The final phase culminated in a communal Mass and Eucharist (Mayes 2003: 11–13).

Relics played an important role in the construction of the sacral. From the establishment of the cult of martyrs onwards, the remains of saints were considered a source of the divine. This source, which was considered the central point of sanctuaries, established the hierarchy of the sacred space both inside and outside the church. The altar area was more sacred than the presbytery. The latter, however, was more sacred than the nave. As an object, the church was the centre – the other (church) objects[92] and surrounding areas[93] contained only a certain amount of this sacred charge, which gradually decreased radially relative to the centre, the source of holiness (Mayes 2003: 17–18).

The physical space, which people perceived as more or less sacred and that also served as space for performing various rituals, was not designed on the basis of the horizontal radiation of the sacred into the profane alone. These spaces were also tied to vertical cosmic representations – either a tripartite structure of the cosmos, where the earth as a middle world was split between the lower and upper world, or one of the variations of this idea. One of these variations was advocated for by Hugo of Saint Victor, who conceived the cosmos as five metaphorical spatial levels: heaven, paradise, earth, limbo and hell. Each of these units had its own symbolic value. Earth is the middle world where good and evil coexist. Neither of these two overwhelms the other, as they do not appear on Earth in their purest and strongest forms (Mayes 2003: 4–5). In this interpretation, the Church occupies the role of *axis Mundi*, and the surrounding spaces also have a complementary function.

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91 For more on the symbolism of circumambulatory rituals, consult Mencej 2013b.

92 These buildings included monasteries with their auxiliary buildings, various houses of church representatives near the churches, other auxiliary church buildings, etc.

93 Graveyards or squares in the vicinity of churches are an example of this.

When it comes to dance culture and the construction of space, cemeteries were the first of these auxiliary spaces to play an important role, as dance combined and interfered with the ideas about the horizontal and vertical structure of the world. In practice, this was reflected in burial rites, which kept changing throughout history. In the burgeoning Christian Europe of the Middle Ages, cemeteries began to frequently occur in the vicinity of churches – people believed that in this way, the dead would journey on under the patronage and protection of the saints. This contributed to the establishment of various ideas about the symbolic and other dimensions of these locations. According to traditional beliefs, graves – like caves, sinkholes and other holes in the ground – became gateways for the dead to pass into the world of the living. Bringing death, disease, famine and general ruin, the dead were a threat to both people and sacred space. Different rituals, music and dance were used over and over again to establish the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead, and thus also the space of the sacred (see also Risteski 2001, Šmitek 1999). Some historical sources attest that dances and games were also performed when someone died. The so-called funeral dances and funeral games were performed in Slovenia too, at least until the late Middle Ages. We can read about this in the ban issued by Patriarch Bertrand at the synod in Oglej/Aquileia in 1338 or 1339, in which he instructs that "funeral dances and games are to be strictly forbidden to pious believers" (Matičetov 1948: 11). Despite the fact that authorities across Europe persecuted such dance practices until the 18th century, it is clear that they were not always successful. This can be concluded from, among other things, certain data on recent history. An example of such a funeral dance hails from Switzerland. A description mentioning such a dance was formed in the middle of the 19th century. It describes events with dance taking place at the feast after the burial, a custom that was thought to have almost been forgotten. In his work *Der grüne Heinrich*, Gottfried Keller claims that it was only performed in a single remaining town. After a joint meal, the people present would gather and go to the upper storey of the house (where the feast took place). A dance floor had been readied there. A violin, a bass and a clarinet played a slow march. The procession walked around the dance floor three times and then formed a circle. Seven couples left the circle to move into the middle of it, where they began to perform a difficult dance full of jumping, kneeling and intertwining, all while also clapping loudly. Other dances and partying followed (Internet source 10).[94] An example of a more modern remnant of these dance practices widespread in the Middle Ages is found in the Czech and Hungarian dance called *umrlec*. It is linked to various funeral rites which, in a broader context, were also important for the design of sacred spaces. One of the male dancers pretended to be a dead

94 I would like to thank Brigitte Bachman for this information (personal communication 29/10/2022).

man while the female dancers teasingly moved around him while singing songs. At the end of the song, one of the women kissed the dead man, who then jumped into the air and danced with her. Afterwards, the roles of men and women were reversed (Czerwinski 1862: 241–242). A similar form of this dance, *Judovska* (in English *the Jewish dance*), is also recorded in Slovenia, in Šalovci in Prekmurje. A male dancer lay on the dance floor and kept placing his outstretched legs one on top of the other. Accompanied by music, a female dancer walked around a male dancer, seemingly mourning him. When the tune moved into its faster section, the dancer quickly rose up and led the female dancer in a polka or a whirl dance (Ramovš 1996: 205, 209). Dance was one of the activities that helped shape and upkeep the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, between the spaces of the living and the dead, between different levels of the cosmos and, last but not least, between the cosmos and chaos.

Graveyards were part of a wider set of sacred spaces such as church yards, church vestibules, auxiliary buildings, sheds under bell towers and the like. The space in front of the church might have had symbolic value too, as it was (even well into the New Age) understood as a space that leads to the Centre, i.e., the central point from which the sacred radiates. This was the point that determined the layout of the surrounding space. The altar was a representation of the Ark of the Covenant (around which King David danced, according to the testimony in the Bible) and the church symbolised God's temple. Because of this, courtyards or church vestibules were sometimes called Paradise, which symbolised Heaven and, consequently, the path into the halls of the heavenly temple, to God. This understanding of church space is a reflection of the organisation of the heavenly landscape on Earth, in which the church building with the altar embodies God. We have data about the courtyard of the Aachen Cathedral, which played an important role both in broader European and Slovenian pilgrimage traditions. Aachen was a city in the path of a famous pilgrims' way. Relatively often, people from what were then Slovenian lands also made the journey there. How important it was can be deduced from the Yearbook of the Slovene Society, which is based on Valvasor's reports. In 1495, a benefice dedicated to Slovenia pilgrims was erected at the altar of St. Cyril and Methodius in Aachen. The right to appoint and the right of representation were held by the communities of Ljubljana and Kranj. In less than two centuries, eleven beneficiates served there before the benefice ceased to exist (Parapat 1870: 105). The pilgrims from this part of Europe who visited Aachen at that time could also witness the depiction of Heaven on Earth. In the courtyard in front of the Aachen Cathedral, called Paradise, (which still has an almost identical shape to the one it had in the Middle Ages) people from all over Europe gathered every year, and even more so every seven years during the exhibiting of the relics. Among other things, they performed various circular dances and moved towards the entrance of the church, which

represented the home of God in the heavenly temple. The church became a symbolic temple of God, its surroundings reflected heaven or paradise, and humans took on the role of angels. This is another example of how the idea of people dancing in the *chorus angelicus* persisted late into the New Age (Backman 1952: 160, author's personal field notes from Aachen 2017).

Figures 4 and 5: *The entrance to the Cathedral of Aachen with its courtyard, formerly called Paradise (private archives of Marija Klobčar, photographed by M. Klobčar, 2020).*

The bodily practices of people and the idea of the reflection of heaven on Earth do not in themselves constitute the sacred. The holy cannot function without simultaneous proper organisation of time. The constitution of the space is interdependent with the organisation of time in the community that designed this space, which is supported by the concentration of rituals that were practiced in these spaces at certain points in time throughout the calendar year. Festive periods are scattered throughout the profane periods of the year and are often tied to sacred and other rituals performed cyclically. Timewise, the sacred is linked to the profane throughout the year and vice versa, while the space is directly dependent on their relationship. An example of how a single physical space can represent a vague line and transition between the sacred and the profane is the celebration of patron saints and the role of dance in this. To make this clearer, it is necessary to provide an example of and analyse in more detail a patronage celebration known by various Slovenian local names: *žegnanje*, *semanji dan*, *lepa nedelja*, *opasilo*, etc. From a developmental point of view especially, it is a complex phenomenon that requires further explanation. The ethnographic data presented in the following paragraphs originates mainly from the Gailtal in Austrian Carinthia; the choice to use it was made deliberately, mainly for two reasons. The first is the relatively extensive historical documentation of the procedure of the celebration and the role of dance in it in the area in question, while the second is that the celebration remains relatively widespread and preserved in modern day as well. We must not disregard the fact, however, that variations of the two-part nature of these rituals were present throughout the rest of Europe.

The celebration of patron saints took on a new form at the end of the Middle Ages or at the beginning of the New Age at the latest. If, in the Middle Ages, it was traditional for the saint to be worshiped via various (para)liturgical rituals that also included dance, the two-part structure of celebrations as we know them today occurred, at the latest, sometime in the 16th century.[95] The first part consisted of liturgy, which includes Mass, processional rounds and more. The second part comprised of parties, dancing, food and drink, trade or fairs, visitations, etc. (Simetinger 2014b). The seemingly simple structure of the celebration shows the dichotomy of celebrating the sacred and celebrating the profane. It is of importance that at such moments in time, during celebrations, temporary spatial entities were established around the churches. During the holy time of the cel-

95 I would like to draw attention to the claims made by Vera Jung, who says that in the Middle Ages, this structure was already in the process of developing. In the 16th century, it was already fully established (2001: 124–130). The author is probably right, since the previous dating of the two-part (sacred-profane) structure of the ritual originates from preserved legal and other sources which reflect the existing and established situation at the time. The development of celebrations and the subsequent legal, economic, tax and other consequences were thus only the authorities' response to already established practices. For more on law and dance culture (also in the context of patron saint celebrations), consult Simetinger 2014b and 2015.

ebration, the area directly around the church (which otherwise could simply be a pasture, an empty space under a tree, a shed, a road next to the church, etc.) took on a ritual role and became a dance floor as well.

To exemplify, let us consider the concept of the first dance, which still exists as a ritual dance during the celebration of patron saints in the aforementioned Gailtal as well as elsewhere (Brkini, Karst, Trieste, etc.). This first dance, in Slovene also called *prvi rej*, *ta prbi*, etc., is meant for boys and girls who have reached the age of majority and are not yet married. With this dance, they are accepted into the ranks of adults and are given certain informal rights.[96] The first dance could be performed on a special dance floor somewhere near the church, but it was not a requirement. In 1871, Anton von Rauschenfels relied on the memories of old women from the Gailtal to describe a detailed example of the patron saint celebrations of Bistrica na Zilji/Feistritz an der Gail.[97] The *prvi rej* first took place under a spruce, but when it burned down in a fire in 1865, it was moved instead under the village lyme tree. The party and dancing took place after this in the local tavern (1871: 64).

Rauschenfels' example is far from the only one: the custom of creating temporary dance floors in the immediate vicinity of churches during celebrations has also been carried over into modern times. The text below is the field-acquired testimony of various interviewees from Grpič, a village that belongs to the parish of St. Lenart near Sedmi Studenci in today's Austrian Carinthia. They remember this type of patronage celebration to have taken place in the period between the two wars and in the decades after the Second World War.

> *The dance after Mass on Sunday morning by all those present gathering on the grass under the pear tree next to the church. First, they sang one or more songs, which was followed by dancing. The members of the konta[98] had the privilege of dancing first with*

96 Custom law was also important in dance culture. This is particularly evident in the relationship between the use of the dance floor and the graveyard. According to data from some parts of the Upper Carniola and the Mežica valley, men of legal age who were still unmarried gained the right to enter the dance floor if it was located in the same parish as the graveyard of their dead predecessors. The dance floor was where people searched for sexual and marriage partners, so it was indirectly linked to the potential intermarriage transactions of young couples who might have found themselves there. Due to the tendency towards endogamy in these communities and the associated controlling of dancers (potential brides and the objects of potential marriage transactions), a more or less strict regulation of the participants and their behaviour on the dance floor was implemented (Simetinger 2012).

97 That Anton von Rauschenfels' claims are true, and that this was an established practice, is confirmed by other, much older sources dating back to the 18th century. One such is the description and even depiction of the *prvi rej* by Julius Heinrich Gottlieb Schlegel (1798).

98 *Konta* is a Slovenian term denoting a men's community, formed of come-of-age unmarried men from specific towns or parishes.

their chosen partner. After that, the men from the konta left their dancers and went to stand in a group to one side of the stage, while the girls each went to get their brother, father or other male relative to dance with them. After that, everyone else present joined the dancing, and the last round was again taken over by the members of the konta and their partners. When the dance under the pear tree was over, they went to Mikič's inn, where they had erected a dance floor. The dancing in the inn started even before dinner was served.[99]

(F. R. 310712/1–3)

There exists more historical and contemporary ethnographic data about more or less permanent or temporary dance floors in the Gailtal. In some places in the Gailtal, the celebrations moved to the threshold of the church after Mass, more precisely to the shed under the bell tower, where the singing and the music began. A dance was held in Zmotiče/Sigmontitsch and Šentjob/Sankt Job (Gailtal, Austrian Carinthia) on Shrove Sunday[100] after morning mass and the blessing of the wine even in the middle of the 20th century. This dance was no longer part of the liturgical ceremony, but had its own structure, purpose, and a specific time and place where it was performed: on a bench in the vestibule of the church, where they made the first toast ("*hohlebvali*"). The *cehmaster* (guildmaster) cried out and greeted the priest first: "*Der Pfarer soll hochleben!*"[101] The others answered: "*Dreimal hoch!*"[102] A brief interlude by the musicians followed. They danced only a few beats of a polka or a waltz, and then, in the same way, made a toast to and danced for the *cehmaster*, *tancmaster*, the *konta*, the guests and finally the musicians. When the toasting and dancing ended, the dancers and musicians moved in a procession to the inn, where the party continued. As a rule, the *konta* was led by the *cehmaster* with his partner, followed immediately by the *tancmaster* with his and the rest of the members of the *konta*. The last in line was the youngest member of the *konta* with his partner. At the inn, the party and dancing began in earnest for everyone present, not only for the *konta* (F. R. 71212).

The *prvi rej* (and other similar forms of the first dance) is somewhat unusual in the logic of its nature. It seems anachronistic, as it is part of the liturgy but does not really belong to it. It is performed only on holy days, but is, at the same time, not part of the other profane activities performed during this time. This begs the question what made this dance so indefinable that it has

99 This was a conversation between five interlocutors who described the events together and often got the sequence of events mixed up. The text is a summary of their narratives, presented here as a quote.

100 In Sigmuntitsch, they organised the church fair on the Sunday closest to the Feast of St. Lawrence, which is celebrated on August 10.

101 English: "Long live the priest!"

102 English: "May he live long!"

remained somewhere between the profane and the sacred. The answer to this question is potentially interesting and can be reached in two ways. The first is linked to the question of why and how the role of dance in the Church changed so drastically that it began to renounce it, and the second to that of how much time must elapse from the birth of an idea to a theological premise being implemented into the lives of "ordinary" people.

The reason why dance was pushed away from the centre of the church to its immediate surroundings (from liturgy to (para)liturgy) dates back to Thomas Aquinas. This 13th-century scholastic changed dance culture significantly. He declared dance to be *adiaphoron* (Gr. ἀδιάφορα), something that carries the meaning of a non-essential part of religious practice in the Christian context. It became a phenomenon which was removed from the essential part of religious practices, but was simultaneously not forbidden. Since such a phenomenon is morally of a neutral nature, it is in itself neither good nor bad, which is how dance lost its meaning of embodying the cosmic order and was no longer that which gave man a place in the cosmic system at the centre of which God resided in the Christian tradition. Thus, it was banished from the sacred to the realm of the profane, and the body with its movement was no longer an inherent part of what makes transcendence possible. Movement was relegated to only being a more or less permanent structural form. The ontology of dance changed, so movement became an empty form of the body's expressiveness. The cosmogonic connection of dance was broken and the path to the aforementioned harmony no longer existed (Rohmann 2013: 224–225). By depriving the body of the possibility to directly achieve transcendence through dance, it became stunted. What followed was a long period of disciplining and regulating movement (especially in the church context). This theological shift in the interpretation of dance had tremendous implications for dance culture. The tradition of preaching in the late Middle Ages and the beginning of the New Age shows that dance was not only completely pushed out of the context of the sacred, but also began to be associated even more closely with sin. The repression of the body and corporeality, opposition to the sexual impulses awakened by dance, and the ecstatic potential of the body in dance begin to form the frontline of the prosecution of dance. These ideas, first expressed by the condemnation of dancing at the Council of Laodicea in the 4th century (and on many subsequent occasions), finally found their place and flourished in the New Age. That can also be attributed to the theological premises of Thomas Aquinas (see e.g., Andersen 1961). The breeding ground for the rise of bourgeois morality and its often negative attitude towards the body was prepared.

The theological shift in the interpretation of dance ultimately also had practical consequences. People began to wonder why dancing should be part of

an act of worship if it is not specially qualified to complement it. Labelled *adiaphoron*, dance and other related parts of worship rituals were not excluded, but neutralised. It was not, in the long run, effective for the Church to portray dance as something negative and face growing opposition from people who recognised it as a centuries-old practice of communication with and worship of God. It was much more practical to portray it as a neutral act which is associated not with transcendence, but with sinful activities. This formed the basis on which the moralistic preaching tradition of the 15th and 16th centuries developed; it began to emphasise its negative connotations or the sinfulness that dancing can lead you to. In its essence, dance was still entirely neutral, but had consequences that could be disastrous for the soul of a Christian.

The bridge between the neutral nature of dance and the sin that it could result in was built and the church space had to be redefined. Despite the effort the Church invested in ensuring people's pious behaviour – whatever that might have meant within a specific set of historical circumstances – the boundary between the sacred and the profane in vernacular bodily practices was never completely clear and straightforward. The process of rebuilding the body of a disciplined Christian within the sacred space of the church and also outside it was long and complicated. The implementation of these ideas led to the establishment of new dance venues, moved from the altar to areas outside the church where pre-existing rituals were probably performed; previous chapters discussed past dancing in graveyards, churchyards and other similar places. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the process of moving dance from the church to other spaces was long; reports indicate that people celebrated in ways different to what those of a devout Christian should be quite late into the New Age.

This is nicely illustrated at the beginning of the 16th century by Jacob Wimpheling's report on the events in Strasbourg Cathedral during the night vigil on the eve of the patron saint celebrations. In addition to the fact that the church was crammed full, people also ate, drank and partied there. As Wimpheling writes, this Christian ceremony resembled Bacchus' orgies more than anything else (Pfannenschmid 1878: 249–250). Criticism of such celebrations became widespread during this time. It came from both Catholic authors and the increasingly strong and influential Protestant ones as well. Other social mechanisms also entered into this discourse; not only ecclesiastical, but secular authorities were also involved in the regulation of dance and dance-related activities. In Europe as a whole and in the lands that are part of today's Slovenian-speaking population area, legal documents regulating the appropriateness of individual behaviour began to appear in the New Age (Simetinger 2014a, 2014b). Alison Steward notes that this is the beginning of reforming

and shaping the legislation, and consequently also the regulation of celebrations and events in the church space. This process continued all the way into the 18th century (Jung according to Steward 2001: 141). The question arises of whether such regulation of the church space actually bore fruit. The answer is multifaceted. In addition to the prohibition of dancing itself, there is also the norm of piety to consider - what belongs in a church environment and what does not? What was the meaning of a truly disciplined body that knelt, stood, made the sign of a cross, shook hands and performed various other gestures as part of a collective choreography? Which music is divine enough for the sacred confines of the Church, and which music does not reflect a connection with God? In Slovenia, relatively new reports contain very good examples of how the relationship between the sacred and the profane was ambiguous in practice well into the 19th century. On the one hand, there was the desired and prescribed normative ideal, and on the other, the problem of its implementation. In 1878, an unknown author wrote in the publication *Cerkveni glasbenik* (*Church Musician*):

> It has happened several times before – not only here, in our case – but elsewhere in Slovenia; right after the elevation of Corpus Christi, the organist played something completely improper – a štajeriš – a polka – a march – or some other secular tune. The lay fools and idiots liked it very much. That organist was highly praised for his abilities. In reality, it was a great dishonour that was done to God in such a holy place. This is where true piety erred and did not raise its heart to God. Carnal lust arose and desecrated the church – a holy place – with lewd music!
>
> (no author 1878: 49–50)

A similar view of what happened during Mass was expressed by Alban Stolco[103] in 1854:

> [S]ome sit on the steps of the choir or pass the time under the belfry (tower). They don't want to pray, they are too shy to sing; instead of a rosary (paternoster) they have a pipe, instead of prayer books a tobacco pouch in their pocket; – these are the young of the present time! – Do you hear who plays the organ? Is it our teacher? Surely not! Which tune is he playing now? Is it "sweet August's"[104] or a "morš"[105], is it for dancing or jumping ...
>
> (Stolco 1854: 28)

A kind of unique modern relic, still reflecting the direct link between the worship of God, Mother of God and dance, can be found on the well-known pilgrims' way frequented by distant Croatian believers and, among others, people

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103 Alban Isidor Stolz was a German theologian and popular author of the 19th century whose works were also translated into Slovenian. In those translations, his name was changed slightly.

104 A dance tune in triple time, popular in the 19th and 20th centuries.

105 *Morš* is a dialectal form of the word *march*, which can also denote music that was used when dancing or walking.

from Inner Carniola, Kočevje and White Carniola. It is, of course, the dance at the pilgrimage church on Sveta Gora above Prezid in Gorski Kotar, Croatia. At the church fair on August 15, there was dancing in honour of the Mother of God. After Mass, a dance floor was prepared and utilised on the stairs leading to the church. Considering that dances were performed there until recently, there are very few reports of it. One of the earlier ones can be found in *Novice* in 1860:

> Another famous pilgrims' way honouring the Mother of God is the one above Gerovo (Croatia, A/N). [...] I saw how the tired old crone danced in honour of the Mother of God while another little man played his accordion; there are other musicians on this pilgrims' way, who play like mad after Mass, when the young are all dancing and having fun. Is this not a remnant of pagan times, like many others? (Dragotin 1860: 219)

Figure 6: *A photograph from Sveta Gora in which a part of the shingle-covered dance floor can be seen on the right, a version of typically simple covered dance halls that appeared throughout the Alpine area from the 13th century onwards (Fink 1996: 21). Official documents regulating activity on such dance floors refer to them in German as* Tanzlaube *– "dance utes" (e. g. Joseph II. 1788: 278, Police Ordinance 1789). The photograph was taken around the time of the Second World War (private archives of the Palčava šiša ethnological collection).*[106]

106 I would like to thank Marko Smole for providing the photographs and other archived data.

Other reports of dances in honour of the Mother of God include an example provided by a local from Babno polje, Slovenia, who experienced it himself.[107] Frank Troha published his account in the publication *Slovensko-ameriški koledar* in 1932:

> On Žalostni vrh above Prezid, there is a small church of Our Lady of Sorrows, and around the church there is a nice flat and wide area. [...] Sveta Gora near Gerovo is an ancient pilgrims' way, a resort and a pilgrims' way at the same time. Pilgrims come up there for all kinds of purposes [...]. Pilgrimages to Sveta Gora are made by people from Rijeka and the Slovenian Littoral [...] Pilgrims from there do not vow to visit Sveta Gora to perform prayer rituals there, but instead to dance "one dance in honour of the Mother of God". Pilgrims from the Littoral come on foot. They carry food and clothing in backpacks and stay on Sveta Gora for a few days. Special stone hearths are placed near the church so that pilgrims can make coffee, tea and other food. After the church ceremonies, they move to the dance floor and the dance, truly unmatched, begins.
>
> It has happened that a zealous pilgrim fainted from too much dancing, collapsed and had to be carried aside. But she would not stay away, because it was all in honour of the Mother of God. As soon as she regained consciousness, she went back to the floor and continued to dance
>
> When other pilgrims watch the dance of the pilgrims from the Littoral, they too are mesmerised by the melody, so many a young couple forgets that they have come on a pilgrimage and move to the dance floor. Young people like to take part in the pilgrimage to Sveta Gora; there is opportunity for a lot of fun and entertainment.
>
> An old pilgrim once told me how the priest teased the dancing pilgrims from the Littoral. When they stopped dancing, he stepped on the dance floor and said to them:
>
> "You people are all too fast: faster-faster-faster-faster! God and St. Margaret dance beautifully and slowly." And he showed them the waltz. The pilgrims replied that they also know how to dance quickly, which is more pleasing to the Mother of God. In the end, they danced a waltz as the jovial pastor had demonstrated it.
>
> The most interesting thing occurs when the pilgrims from the Littoral go home. When they have strapped their belongings on their backs, they go downstairs once more and spin around the dance floor a few more times with the baskets on their backs, happy and satisfied that they have done a good job.
>
> We can see that the ancient pilgrims' ways are almost as frequented as they were years ago. There is something left of the ancestors in this nation, and it is kept as sacred, although everyone has their own way of interpreting it and their own reason for setting off on a pilgrimage. We each do it for our benefit or satisfaction, which fully fits its purpose.[108]
>
> (Troha 1932: 20–25)

One more activity must be mentioned in the context of celebrations. There were no holidays without (most often) eating together. As a rule, holidays were associated with larger amounts and a better quality of food and, of course, drink.

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107 Most likely, Dragotin's account in *Novice* was the basis for Fran Levstik's writing about the dances on Sveta Gora. In his essay *Doktor Bežanec v Tožbanji vasi*, he states that it is possible to worship God with a pious and appropriate form of dance (Levstik 2018).

108 I would like to thank Marija Makarovič for providing the article.

Vera Jung notes that because of the food element, patron saint celebrations were parallel to Shrovetide and carnival parties as known in the 16th century (2001: 124). Rohmann points out that it is likely no coincidence that there was usually (and often still is) an inn next to the church,[109] and that there is a possibility that the procession rounds during patron saint celebrations constituted a kind of wider space with direct links to the church. A simplified division of space into the sacred and the profane is thus extremely problematic (Rohmann 2013: 205).

Figure 7: *A photograph of a staircase leading to the church at Sveta Gora above Čaber, taken around the time of the First World War (private archives of the Palčava šiša ethnological collection)*

The Christians of the New Age were increasingly aware that the sacred space was not only an intervention of God in chaos, but that it shaped up to be something more than that. It acquired a new dimension, one inscribed in the body, and became more and more complex as it imposed certain restrictions on the body. The believer had to control their expressiveness as it became the limit of bodily

109 I must necessarily point out another non-accidental correlation between sacred space and economic consequences. Church buildings that stood in the vicinity of churches had a certain level of sanctity, so together with the church, they formed a unique ecosystem which had certain (legal) ramifications. Such an example can be found in Slovenia in the 17th-century provincial ordinances (e.g., in the provincial ordinance for Styria from 1660) which regulate the opening hours of taverns (Landhanduest 1660). These documents also attest to the right of *Bannmeile*, in which inns (besides certain other craft activities like blacksmithing, cloth-making or dress-making) had the right of monopoly within a radius of a mile or a half from the church. At the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the New Age, the owners of such inns were often priests or clergymen (Otorepec and Matić 1998: 71).

movement and impulses, the medium of pleasing God. A completely modern example of such a choreographed body, based on the long and eventful history of movement on church premises, are the pilgrimage practices on Sladka Gora (Slovenia) in the years just before the Second World War. Female pilgrims from Prekmurje (Beltinci and Črenšovci in Slovenia) were especially likely to perform a tribute to Mary upon entering the church, which was a reflection of folk piety[110] and a kind of choreography of greeting. The priest there had this to say of it:

> *As soon as they find themselves under the choir, they stare at the altar and quietly, dignifiedly enter. Everything was sung. There was singing. Those girls who wore garlands stopped some distance away, so that they had enough space. Let's say that around the altar, between the pews and all around the church, they had enough space to kneel or lie down on the floor. First, they stood and sang the antiphonal song Hail Mary. Standing. Then you said, "Let us kneel!" and they knelt down and sang a stanza again. I don't know during which stanza they then threw themselves on the floor. And there was a row of young bodies lying on the church floor and all of them were singing. Those who remained on the benches and on the sides must have been singing as well. All of it, how they humble themselves before Mary, was expressed in the song. No eye remained dry among those who watched and experienced it. Everyone was moved. It was very moving. And so they stayed for a while and sang the song to the end. When they finished singing, they stood up.*
> (GNI T 321B)

Such a greeting indicates a centuries-long process of understanding and designing sacred space. The sanctity of the space, as dictated by the discipline of the body, simultaneously redefined the profane space. The disciplined body communicated and interacted with other bodies and did not forget its specific codification of movement when it shifted into the profane. This is another reason why we cannot understand the sacred and profane space as two opposing entities; quite the opposite. These are two mutually intertwined phenomena that complement each other because of the temporal and performative context in which they take place. Such a space is actually one entity, consisting of two exchanging parts. In the context of patron saint celebrations, dance and the choreographed body have proven themselves to be a crucial and essential part of sacred space and time: they consecrate, construct and consequently define them. In practice, the moment of condensing the sacred both in space and time cannot happen without the profane. This process is enabled by the body which embodies the space and, conversely, by the space which is created with the use of the body through ritual.

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110 I use the term "folk piety" in accordance with its definition in Church document no. 102 (Congregation 2003). This defines it as activities that are of a private or public nature and have their own expression or form within the Christian faith, which originate from an individual or a group of people and from their cultural circumstances, and are intended for worship or adoration and prayer to God, Mary or the saints (Congregation 2003: 16–17).

THE PILGRIM SWIRL

In the 1970s, the term microhistory appeared in the field of cultural history. It was a response to the economic, social and various other "important" stories in history, such as the rise and progress of ancient Greece and Rome, various reforms and revolutions. Microhistories gave the individual a chance to speak (Burke 2007: 51–53). Their stories may seem insignificant but become very relevant with appropriate historical contextualisation. It is the purpose of this text to examine the numbers of nameless pilgrims who travelled on pilgrims' ways in Styria and Lower Carniola until the middle of the 20th century through a wider cultural and historical prism. This implies that the sometimes scarce and even dull reading of the sources about the pilgrim swirl can only be properly interpreted by taking into account the concepts which appear in the previous chapters of this text. Despite being truly massive in terms of the number of participants, the pilgrim swirl is relatively unknown in Europe and remains a marginal historical phenomenon. Because its participants were nameless common people, most of whom belonged to the bottom of the social hierarchy, it can be classified as microhistory. If there were more sources about his phenomenon, it might have been treated differently. It receives more attention and historical contextualisation now, but we have no illusions about it leading to any revolutionary discoveries. The fourth chapter thus differs slightly from the rest of the paper. It comparatively analyses a very specific phenomenon, but it must be said that there are other phenomena to be found in the context of this text which would also reflect the basic premise of the paper. It deals with the idea of how structures and their contexts may change over time, but it is possible (at least partially) to trace their continuity. Circular movement and dances have been manifested in many different forms from antiquity onwards; one of those forms is the pilgrim swirl. Before we focus on the final part of the paper, I would like to use this introduction to point out that this chapter was purposely designed to differ from the rest and could easily be classified as the second, independent part of the paper. It is primarily based on ethnographic data and translated primary sources, and sheds light on the phenomenon of the pilgrim swirl. It can be read on its own but acquires new meaning if placed into the context of the entire text. The reader can constantly shift between the concept of circle dances, their cosmogonic function and the question of the sacred, and the pilgrim swirl – a form of old folk piety whose form as we know it did not develop by coincidence.

ON GOD'S PATH

The Slovene expression for a pilgrim, *romar*, is linked to the city of Rome. Originally, a pilgrim was someone who made the journey to Rome (Internet source 8). To be a pilgrim means to make the journey to a holy place, for which we also use the term pilgrimage.

Pilgrimages to holy places date back to the Middle Ages. Believers from Slovenia visited holy places (like Rome or, during the Crusades, Jerusalem) or various centres of Christianisation such as Salzburg, Oglej/Aquileia, Štivan pri Devinu/San Giovanni di Duino, etc. From 1349 on, they made pilgrimages to Aachen (*Cáhen*), Cologne (*Kélmorajn*) or Santiago de Compostela (*Kompostélje*) and other major pilgrimage centres every seven years. Later, it became more and more common in Slovenia to make shorter pilgrimages to nearer pilgrimage centres. In the 17th century, there were around 1,000 pilgrimage churches in what were then Slovenian lands. The greatest popularity was achieved by those centres linked to the veneration of Mary, and in the 19th century, it was the pilgrimage to Brezje that became the most commonly undertaken. (Bogataj 2007: 508–509)

Pilgrimages to Cologne were particularly important for the ancestors of Slovenian people. As von Mering points out, this city was the second most important European pilgrimage centre, also referred to as the second Rome (1838a: 235). The city of Aachen can also be added to those of great importance. Preserved sources from the Rhineland are key in helping us understand the pilgrimage tradition (which directly relates to dance culture) and, according to some interpretations, even explain the origins of the pilgrim swirl.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO COLOGNE AND AACHEN

Cologne, Aachen and other similar towns were relatively far away for the average person who lived in Slovenia before the industrial revolution. People mostly only knew them through orally transmitted stories. Few visited these places themselves, and even rarer were the individuals who undertook pilgrimages there more than once. Those familiar with the routes, language, customs, etc., became leaders of pilgrimage groups. They were sometimes compensated for their guidance to these distant cities with money or other goods. Pilgrims, and especially their leaders, were easily recognised by their outward appearance. They held a pilgrim's staff in

their hands, attached a seashell onto their hat or chest, wore a flask or a wooden gourd,[111] and often possessed a rosary.

The length of the pilgrimages varied from just one day (to nearby pilgrimage churches) to several weeks or even months (to more distant cities). Pilgrimages to more distant places were long, especially before the introduction of the railway which greatly contributed to the speed of travel.[112] As a rule, pilgrims went to Cologne and Aachen at least every seven years, when various relics were displayed in the local churches. The first pilgrims set off as early as the Feast of St. Michael (September 29), others at the beginning of the year, and most in early spring, so that they still arrived at their destination around May 18. After some time (most often two weeks or even a little longer) spent at the destination of their pilgrimage, the pilgrims turned back. It took them several weeks to travel home, so they usually returned by the start of the summer or sometime in the fall (Stabej 1965: 22–28).

The purposes of the pilgrimages were very different. In addition to religious ones, undertaken as penance or because of a vow or something they prayed for, people often made pilgrimages for other reasons as well. Pilgrims were introduced to different places and people on these travels. Some of them even asked the locals for (monetary) gifts on pilgrimages and thus acquired some wealth. Weddings between pilgrims also took place on some pilgrims' ways, despite the fact that their encounter on the road was often the first time they met. Vid Fischer, who made several pilgrimages to the Rhineland in the 18th century and hailed from the former Guštanj (today Ravne na Koroškem, Slovenia), reported that three or four (and maybe more) couples got married on each pilgrimage. The records for the year 1769 attest that one of the six couples married in Cologne or Aachen (it is not clear in which church) consisted of Matija Bitenc from Bled and a Styrian woman whom he met on the pilgrimage (Stabej 1965: 50). A pilgrimage was thus not only a religiously conditioned act but had a wider purpose; it was this link between religious practice and secular activities which was often one of the motives for the not necessarily easy journey.

One of these activities, which is generally not highlighted in the literature but nevertheless relates to both religious engagement and entertainment on pilgrimages, was dance and music. If anywhere, dance played an important role in the pilgrimage tradition – on the one hand as part of various forms of the worship of God, Mary or the saints, and on the other as part of the entertainment. We cannot draw a clear and unambiguous dividing line between them.

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111 A wooden flask that was used to carry water. The expression *the bottle of St. Jacob* also appears. (Stabej 1965: 26–28).

112 It should not be overlooked that as early as in the Middle Ages, pilgrims in the Rhineland also used river travel to shorten their journey.

The oldest pilgrims' handbook[113] to also contain the Slovenian language already mentions Slovenian pilgrims in the Rhineland. Among other things, it also mentions dancing. Pilgrims' handbooks were relatively short works that served as prayer books with various instructions and were primarily intended for pilgrims making their journeys abroad. The author of the one such handbook, *Alt-Wenthen, oder Ungern Ordnungs Büchlein*, was Joannes Georg Feystrizer, who most likely hailed from somewhere in the Inner Austrian lands. He had it printed in the 17th century. It describes the various roles of the pilgrimage leader and other members of the expedition, the purposes of the prayers, and contains the Our Father and Hail Mary prayers (as well as a few other phrases) in Slovene. Its author points out the interesting detail of Slovenian pilgrims dancing during their stop at the pilgrims' house in Ipperwald. After dinner and evening devotions, what was perceived as "respectful dancing" took place.

> Now, when all has been done precisely and beautifully as it should be, born out of being humbled by happy memories a respectful dance begins in accordance with an ancient praiseworthy custom and chaste habit, equal to the example of King David; then everyone goes to their place and brings the day's work to a happy end with the evening prayer.
> (Stabej 1965: 42)

There were even more such dance events in the daily life of the pilgrims on their way there and back. Some accounts of this were collected by the knight Arnold Luschin von Ebengreuth. In his paper *Die windische Wallfahrt an den Niederrhein* (1878), he reports that on June 22, 1706, Hungarian pilgrims[114] in the Mariengarten monastery in Cologne "went to the courtyard of the monastery and danced there" after a hearty meal. They expressed "deep gratitude" for the hospitality of the locals (Luschin von Ebengreuth 1878: 466).

In 1720, pilgrims from Hungary also visited Cologne. They stayed at the pilgrims' house in Ipperwald between May 20 and June 30. They had with them an interpreter, for whom the pilgrims' house provided new clothes, hat, socks and shoes. The surviving accounts indicate that the hospice also settled the expenses of "the musicians who performed at the '*Ogrom*' dance on Sundays" (von Mering 1838b: 65).

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113 Kozma Ahačič assumes that this was not the only such handbook, but that it is the only preserved one. Considering the demand and the large number of pilgrimages, he concludes that they had to have printed more of them (2012: 64).

114 Stabej (like the authors he cites) asserts that the reports about Slovenian pilgrims of that time are very vague. This proves that the term *Oger* (in Slovene a synonym for Hungarian) and its adjectival form also referred to Carniola, Styria and Carinthia, and at the same time to the area of present-day Prekmurje. Similar to Oger/Ogrish or the German version Unger/Ungar, the names Wener/Weiner/Wiener, Wend or even Slavonier and the corresponding derived adjectives also appear for the same areas. In Latin, "*altaris sclavorum*" appears as the designation for the Slovenian altar (1965: 9–12).

The report made on July 7, 1734, in Aachen is particularly interesting. It indicates that dance was one of the integral parts of the pilgrimage, as even the authorities accepted and organised it as part of the events during the gathering of pilgrims in the city. It also mentions that the pilgrims "[...] lacked for nothing except for musicians to lead the dancing. That would have to be handled better in seven years' time, otherwise dancing would again be impossible. In 1741, they were able to dance again" (ibid.).

On June 29, 1769, Slovenian pilgrims in Cologne started dancing and jumping after lunch and continued doing so straight into the evening. Similarly, between June 11 and 13, pilgrims danced and rejoiced in the presence of a large crowd of people under the windows of the monastery of St. Matthiashof in Aachen (Stabej 1965: 52).

The report of the District Chief of Carinthia Aichelburg dated September 20, 1775, which he addressed to Carinthian regional leadership, says that the pilgrims ceremoniously entered Cologne singing a Slovenian song. They lived there for six weeks at the city's expense in the Katzenhof pilgrims' house and during this time, performed various offerings[115] and devotions: "[I]n addition to this, two to three times a week they had to dance in the Slovenian way for the people of higher social standing, so they were always accompanied by musicians. One of them was the interpreter Vid Fischer, who was himself skilled in playing the harmonica/lyre [?][116]" (Luschin von Ebengreuth 1878: 460).

Today, it is almost impossible to know what the dance of the Slovenian pilgrims in Germany looked like. Considering the use of adjectives, which point out that in front of the higher social classes, the pilgrims performed a dance *auf windische Art*, we can at least partially draw conclusions about certain differences when

115 These were offerings of wax or candles and other gifts or money.

116 In the original, the word *Leyer* appears as a type of instrument, which Stabej translates somewhat strangely as "*harmonica*" (1965: 52). The addition of the lyre and the question mark is my own, although other comparable data leads to the conclusion that it is also unlikely that Fischer would have used this instrument.

comparing it to the dance of the locals.[117] Stabej was the first to point out that the pilgrim swirl or a variant of it might also have been a part of the dance. In his paper, Mirko Ramovš even allows for the possibility that the pilgrim swirl originates from the time of the pilgrimages to the Rhineland (1975: 74). His findings were summarised by Tanja Roženbergar (1990: 350).

THE PILGRIM SWIRL – ON SOURCES AND OCCURRENCE

The pilgrim swirl is a phenomenon whose historical origins are assumed to be relatively old, though we must not overlook the fact that a single variant of the swirl could change within time and space. As the last of the swirls took place in the years after the Second World War but mostly already disappeared in the decades before, only some written sources and field interviews obtained in the early 1970s remain to attest their existence. Today, a remnant of this swirl can be found in the so-called Roman procession performed on Ptujska Gora.

Roughly speaking, written sources about the pilgrim swirl can be divided into three groups: literary descriptions, documentary descriptions, and scientific analyses of field and other data. The earliest are the literary sources that in one way or another discuss the pilgrim swirl and are thus also documentary descriptions. Slovenian authors Josip Jurčič, Janez Trdina and Prežihov Voranc also wrote about the swirl in the context of literary works. Regardless of the fact that these descriptions are often intertwined with literary fiction, the realist writing

117 As a point of interest, I provide Jurčič's description of a dance in front of a church somewhere in Germany. In 1810, Andrej Pajk, an Austrian soldier from around Stična in Slovenia, was returning from France via Strasbourg and Augsburg. On the way, he came across a Sunday ball, which seemed to him different from what they knew at home, so he made notes of it. Jurčič used this description in his work *Spomini starega Slovenca* (The Memories of an Old Slovene): "After I recovered from my illness, I really liked to watch the rows of boys and girls. On Sundays, especially, they gathered on the flat square in front of the church after Mass; there they rejoiced and chose from the musicians standing in a circle; there were many of them and they were waiting. This one had a bagpipe under his armpit, that one had the zither looking somewhat like our Carniolan grind, etc. I saw all kinds of fiddles and flutes. Two or three pairs of boys and girls each chose one musician. As one played the bagpipes, the other played the flute and so on, so it was a lot to watch and listen to. Each musician played one tune and each was immediately paid for; the dancers moved under the blue sky in such a way that a man's feet were forced off the ground when he saw them. And yet, we Slovenian foreigners had a lot to laugh about. The boys seemed strange to us, beautiful and quite neatly attired, but the hat and clogs – we thought that was a bit funny. To dance there in front of the church in front of all the people and still in clogs – so awkward! Their dance steps were easy; they jumped lightly, clattered their clogs and danced until dusk; after it fell, they dispersed to the taverns. They eat there, pour each other glasses of drink and toast each other in a way that is a joy to behold" (Internet source 9).

and the circumstances in which they were authored mark them as potential sources; we have to employ caution, however, in their use and interpretation. The works of all three authors consist of descriptions based on personal experience, knowledge or even research of individual phenomena. While the sources they used are classified as older sources on the pilgrim swirl, the oldest mention of it is attributed to Valvasor.

If we disregard the note made of it in the pilgrims' handbook that addresses about dancing in Ipperwald – we cannot say with certainty that it actually describes a swirl – then it is the description of Janez Vajkard Valvasor that becomes the earliest known source. In *Die Ehre des Hezogtums Crain*, he describes the procession at the parish church of St. George in Čemšenik.

> Here, they are familiar with a joyful procession led by the sexton. When walking in front of people, he forms a large circle which he then twists into a spiral until he reaches the centre. He then turns around and uncoils the line until it is back in its original formation. It's a lot of fun watching people follow him in pairs as they hold their flags. All of this goes on in the area in front of the church on the hill.
> (Valvasor 1689: 817)

Valvasor's descriptions indicate that in the past, the swirl was probably geographically more widespread than in the second half of the 19th and in the 20th century, when it was only performed on some pilgrimages in Styria and Lower Carniola. As we lack sources, however, we cannot make any definitive conclusions aside from saying that the swirl was a fairly special phenomenon at the time when most of the sources we have on it were written, which is probably why it was mentioned by the authors in the first place and why it is represented in the sources at all. Unfortunately, the latter are still relatively scarce and focused mainly on the form of the swirl, and less on the circumstances in which it took place and the people who performed it.

In addition to written sources, the key data we have today was provided by field researchers: Boris Orel and his teams, Radoslav Hrovatin, and especially Mirko Ramovš in the early 1970s. During this period, the participants in the pilgrim swirl from the period between the two World Wars were still alive. Testimonies of field interlocutors help complete the image of the pilgrim swirl as depicted by written sources.

A few years ago, I also conducted field work in several locations in Lower Carniola and asked people if they still knew or had heard of the pilgrim swirl. It turned out that the field interlocutors no longer knew of it, nor did they remember anything about it from the tales of their ancestors. It appears that historical memory has been discontinued and all further discussions will only be possible if based on the data collected so far.

Despite the fact that additional information about this interesting phenomenon would be very useful, the data collected so far is sufficient for some types of analysis which might already have been carried out or will be in the future.

The key question is when and where the pilgrim swirl occurred. With a single exception, it appears to have always been performed in front of churches dedicated to Mary and always during major pilgrim gatherings. It should also not be ignored that the date of the performance could change or that the swirl might have been performed[118] several times a year, an example of this being Žalostna gora above Mokronog. The main gathering occurred there on the Sunday before the feast of St. Bartholomew (August 24). In his work *Od Kotelj do Belih vod*, in the chapter "From Mokronog to Pijana Gora", Prežihov Voranc mentioned that it was danced on the eve of Assumption Day (August 15). On Trška Gora and Primskovo, the swirl was performed on the eve of Marymas (September 8). On Sladka Gora, it was performed on August 13; from there, the pilgrims often continued on to travel to Šmarje pri Jelšah where the swirl was performed a day later, on August 14, on the eve of Assumption Day. The swirl was also performed on August 14 on Ptujska Gora, and in the evening of July 1 in Brestanica (Ramovš 1975: 52–53).

Pilgrims, some arriving from relatively far away (some journeys took days of walking), were the performers of the pilgrim swirl. Sources mention how people from White Carniola were interesting to the locals in Lower Carniola because of their white attire. Pilgrims from Croatia also stood out, as did people from Prekmurje, Kočevje, the Littoral and even people from Carinthia who often embarked on pilgrimages. Of course, the majority of the participants were locals from the area or region (for more, see Ramovš 1975: 53–58).

STEPS IN THE DARK

The pilgrim Swirl always took place in the evening; it was often performed holding candles or torches, so darkness played a key part in the event. This is also the origin of the other designation for this procession; in Styria, it is mainly known as the Roman procession. These festive processions performed in the evening with candles are known elsewhere too, but no longer have any direct connection to the pilgrim swirl.

In his field notes collected at Marymas on Trška Gora in 1870, Trdina writes:

118 The verb "to perform" was often used in relation to the pilgrim swirl.

The swirl started on the eve before Marymas. It began at dusk. [...] It circled the church and was led by a Styrian. He sold each of them candles 2x, and each girl had a wreath of thorns and blackberries on their heads.

(Trdina 1987: 211–212)

The work of Katarina Vrhovec provides another piece of information: that the swirl was also performed with torches:

> The Lower Carniolans dance their own "swirl" when they embark upon a pilgrimage. Boys and girls dance in a circle, usually when they have gathered in front of the pilgrim church towards evening. Sometimes they dance with torches that had not burned out on the pilgrimage, each slowly walking around the bonfire alone. […] Each group sings a hymn and simultaneously lights the candles held by the dancers.
> (Vrhovec 1936: 483)

A somewhat romanticised, yet eloquent description of the Roman procession from Ptujska Gora was published in 1946 by Metod Turnšek.

> When night falls and the first stars twinkle in the sky and the "eternal light" rings out on the Mountain, everyone anticipates the Roman procession. All young people usually participate. Look, the girls have already put colourful wreaths on their heads, they hold candles or torches in their hands. One by one, they join the procession be led by the Duke of Pilgrims (vižar), as it has always been his privilege to do so.
> (Turnšek 1946: 54)

Candlelight processions were considered particularly festive and were performed on major holidays and anniversaries.[119] The history of such processions dates back to early Christianity; even then, they not only walked and danced around holy locations, but developed these practices with the aim of warding off diseases or other unfortunate circumstances such as hunger, various accidents, etc. Candles and torches played a purely symbolic role. Their function was primarily to denote a particularly solemn moment, but at the same time, on a symbolic level, they showed Christ to be the light that has come to defeat the darkness (Suntrup 1978: 254). Fire, as a source of light and heat, coincides with the previously discussed cult of the Sun which overcomes winter and, with this, death, famine and disease. The symbolism of fire and light is already extremely old and can be found in Christian art in various forms from early Christianity onwards. An example, at first glance completely unrelated to the cult of light and the Sun, is the famous mosaic image of the fight between the rooster and the turtle in the Basilica of St. Hermagoras and Fortunatus in Aquileia. The rooster, a harbinger of light, fights the turtle, a symbol of darkness and evil. In the Christian envi-

119 Reports from the parish chronicle of Cerklje ob Krki provide another example of a Roman procession (night procession with candles and torches): "In memory of the 1900th anniversary of our salvation, a solemn three-day Eucharist will be held at Angel Sunday. In conclusion, a magnificent Roman procession of the Most Holy. By order of the Holy Father, a solemn Holy Hour was to mark this jubilee on April 6" (Internet source 5).

ronment, the turtle running around with armour was associated with sin. Just as a shell with its weight limits the movement of a turtle, so does sin influence the human soul (Thomas 2014: 58). Examining early Christian depictions of the struggle between light and darkness, we can trace candlelight processions at least as far back as the 8th century, when they were performed at Candlemas. At that time, the candle symbolically represented Christ incarnate, who was the light of the world dispelling the darkness of paganism and sin. This symbolism is also evident in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish virgins, found in the Gospel of Matthew.[120]

Candles are one of the key objects both in liturgy and otherwise and have held various symbolic meanings throughout history. It crucially complemented various (para)liturgical practices, including the pilgrim swirl, both on a functional (creating light) and a symbolic level (a wide range of meanings).

THE KING OF HEAVEN AND THE DUKE OF PILGRIMS

Pilgrimages to more distant places, such as Aachen or Cologne, had to include more people with important roles in the organisation and course of the pilgrimages. The most important role was that of the so-called Duke of Pilgrims – the *vižar* (someone who knows how to lead and direct; the term is also related to the Slovenian expression *viža*, meaning a song), also known as *vójvoda* or *vájvoda*. Two attendants and twelve arbitrators were further elected to intercede in the event of quarrels or transgressions among the pilgrims (Snoj 1965: 44–45).

The Dukes were key figures in pilgrimages and they performed a variety of tasks. On longer journeys, they received payment for their work, either as money or goods (e.g., clothes). In return, they had to know the way and guide the pilgrims. In foreign lands, they also served as translators and, simultaneously, as connoisseurs and interpreters of the local customs, traditions and way of life. When the pilgrims returned home, they often formed a kind of pilgrim brotherhood, covenant or so-

120 The parable refers to man's readiness to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and tells of five wise and five foolish virgins on their way to meet the bridegroom. All of them took lanterns, and the smart ones also took containers with extra oil. Since the groom was late, they dozed off. When he was finally close, there was some upset, for the fire of the foolish ones was already burning out. The foolish virgins asked the wise ones to give them some oil but were told to go to the market to buy it instead. While they were on their way to the market, the bridegroom came and took the five clever virgins with him to the wedding. When the more foolish virgins caught up, they knocked on the door, but as the bridegroom did not recognise them, he did not wish to open it for them (Mt. 25, 1-13). The fire in this parable indicated man's readiness to enter Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven, despite not knowing the hour or the day on which this will happen.

ciety.[121] The Duke was the one in charge of reporting on the progress of the pilgrimage. During his time as the Duke, Joannes Georg Feystrizer even wrote down instructions and guidelines for pilgrims in his work *Alt-Wenthen oder Ungern Ordnungs Büchlein*, under which he labelled himself Scriba Communitatis – "scribe of the community" (Stabej 1965: 39–45). In addition to everything listed above, the Dukes also led people in prayer and devotion, and – as sources attest in the case of Duke Vid Fischer – also played music for the pilgrims to dance to.

Pilgrims' ways to nearby pilgrimage churches in Slovenia were less challenging, but the role of Dukes as leaders of these pilgrimages was similar. Metod Turnšek wrote:

> Pilgrims usually gather at the village chapel or holy sign where a large pilgrim's cross with a wreath around the crossbars has already been erected. When all the pilgrims are gathered, the Duke, with years of experience in leading the procession, says the Apostle's Creed in front of the chapel, begins to pray the Rosary, stands up and starts walking with the cross. [...] The Duke often addresses the crowds outside the church, speaking partly about the patron saint of the church where they stopped and partly about Mary, to whom they draw ever closer. The Duke implores the pilgrims to patiently endure the hardships of the pilgrimage so that their souls can be redeemed.
>
> (Turnšek 1946: 54)

Turnšek's reporting on pilgrimages and the pilgrim swirl is written in a style that paints a rather romantic picture of the past; a more critical and realistic view of events can be found in the field notes of Janez Trdina. During the pilgrimages and in the pilgrim swirl itself, the dukes often gave sermons and talked about various pieties like the fight against sin and the salvation of souls, gave examples from the lives of the saints, thanked God for the various blessings they received, etc. Even though these sermons were part of the event, they were not always received uncritically or without derision.

> The swirl started on the eve before Marymas. It began at dusk. A man from Šentjernej was leading a young man and woman (there weren't many left) around the church. He took them around three times. Each consecutive circle was smaller and just when the ends almost met, he began to preach how happy he was that God had blessed him with leading the swirl again this day and on this mountain and that he prays to God to be allowed to lead it again in the future, etc. A man stopped him: Why should we listen to you prattle on about who hired you? We have our own priests. When the prattling man prayed for God to continue to preserve the virginities of those present, someone said: Oh, many of them will perish in these bushes before the night ends. [...] Litanies were sung. The Styrian also made a sermon, but she [the girl Jerica, who Trdina writes about, A/N] did not care for it.
>
> (Trdina 1987: 211–212)

121 It remains unclear what names the members gave themselves and exactly what the function of this society was. In Latin, only the label *communitas* appears for them.

Despite the role of the Duke being very important in the context of pilgrimages, people's attitude towards them was often relatively critical. At the declarative level, people accepted their role and various other (church) commandments, but in practice, the situation was very complex, as reflected in their attitude towards the role and activities of the Duke. In spite of the prescribed moral norms, people still searched for their own forms of leisure activities, entertainment, finding potential (sexual) partners, etc. These forms often bypassed any such norms.

When examining the attitudes of the pilgrims towards the Dukes and pilgrimages in general, we must necessarily also examine the Dukes' motives for embarking on pilgrimages. Primarily, their motives were of a religious nature, stemming from pledges, a personal relationship with God, etc. Still, it must be said that the motivations could also be very different, from self-interest and the reimbursement of various expenses, to entertainment, even profit. Proof of this can be found in Vid Fischer's account; due to the expenses accrued over the course of three pilgrimages to Aachen, he was almost completely impoverished. In 1775, he then wrote to the court of Maria Theresa, asking to be reimbursed for the expenses incurred while serving as a guide to the pilgrims (Snoj 1965: 176).

Trdina also mentions a crooked guide who accompanied people to St. Rok above Sevnica:

> Several years ago, one such crook was leading a large group of people from Kisla voda on the pilgrimage to St. Rok above Sevnica. At night, he stole 50 for[122] from the person sleeping next to him, who, luckily, noticed he was short the money in time. The thief was taken by the gendarmes and shown around to people so that they could all see how crooked these saints were.
>
> (Trdina 1987: 211)

Similar information can be obtained about Duke Dular from Brestanica. According to field interlocutors, Dular served as a guide to pilgrims more than fifty times and is remembered for doing so mainly out of a desire for fun, drink and the company of female pilgrims (Ramovš 1975: 62, GNI T 320A).

Regardless of other roles the Dukes might have been tasked with on pilgrimages, they are most often mentioned in connection with the pilgrim swirl. The Dukes had to be familiar with the collective choreography of the processions that were organised on the pilgrims' ways in question. Although these processions all had a similar design, there were still many versions of them; sources state that not everyone knew how to lead the procession in such a way as to

122 The expression is unclear and ambiguous. It denotes a type of currency, but it is impossible to definitively say which one.

successfully coil and uncoil the chain of dancers. The interlocutor from Raztez explained: "*Dular led. He led because no one else knew how*" (GNI T 320A).

These leaders were absolutely crucial for the pilgrim swirl. The role they played in the swirl was still similar to the one occupied by lead dancers since ancient times, throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. In German, they were called *Vortänzer/Vortänzerin*, also *Vorspringer*.[123] This was highlighted by Boris Orel, who pointed out that by leading the processions along a circular route, the Dukes are reminiscent of the ancient Greek first or lead dancer (1940: 11). The Dukes were what remained of the former lead dancers, even if, in the 20th century, they might no longer have been perceived in such a way. The importance of Dukes is symbolic. By leading, they not only assumed a hierarchically higher role, but also benefited from other advantages.

Until the reign of Maria Theresa, it was customary to pay the leaders' expenses or even pay for their pilgrimage, and although this was later abolished, it is the Pilgrim Duke who symbolically approached the concept of the celestial dancer.

FIGURE 8: *The beggar Tonček Žutek from Cegelnica (Slovenia). He was known for undertaking pilgrimages and his love for singing. He could also lead pilgrim swirls and assume the role of the Duke. The photograph was taken before the Second World War (archive of Dolenjski muzej Novo mesto, no. VII/202).*

123 For more on this, consult the chapter *The birth of* chorus angelicus.

The motif of the celestial dancer is a concept dating back to antiquity (e.g., Klinghardt 2005). Its role has not changed significantly since. With the mystical literary tradition of the Middle Ages, the symbolic dimensions of dance leaders grew. A brief glance at the court literature of the 14th century suggests that privileged individuals such as kings, princesses or dukes often served as dance leaders. The very label Duke (of Pilgrims) indicates a correlation between the medieval social hierarchy, its symbolism and the subsequent roles of pilgrim Dukes. The most important leader of them all, surpassing even the earthly kings, was Christ, the King of Heaven, sometimes also referred to as a prince.[124] His role is not just symbolic; in the context of Christianity he rules supreme over the souls of people and exercises authority over them.[125] He is the leader of the entire hierarchy of the social order and, at the same time, its centre. His dance integrates the sacred and the salvation of man, human resurrection and eternal life (Zimmermann 2007: 138–140). In addition to assuming an organisational role and offering assistance to the pilgrims, the pilgrim Dukes can also be understood as the remains of the embodiment of the old hierarchical system of feudalism. They were unique echoes of the past and assumed a ritual role while leading the pilgrim-dancers. The Duke of Pilgrims embodied not only the leaders of the world, but also Christ himself, who enabled that which was above all: the redemption of people's souls through order and norms. The pilgrim swirl was thus a dance of hierarchy, of a social and moral order, led by the Duke. The cosmogonic principles of movement (whose origin can be traced far back into antiquity) were expressed in the form of ritual dance/the dance of the pilgrims - for the last time before this principle stopped occurring in the context of this ritual. Certain Christian norms were clearly wearing off during the decline of the pilgrim swirl. As attested to above, it was easy to see that in practice, the Dukes were losing their importance and that the Christian idea of what constituted a suitable life for a believer was not unconditionally accepted. On a symbolic

124 Designation found in the German-speaking world: *der Himmelfürst,* in English "the Duke of Heaven".

125 It is necessary to point to another parallel, also found in circle dances (*kolo*) in the Balkans. The leader of the *kolo* – *kolovodja* or *korovodja* – the first dancer and leader of the circle, determines how the dancers will move. Only he can decide whether to dance in a circle, in straight lines, in a spiral or with serpentine turns.
These dances sometimes also exhibit a hierarchical arrangement of dancers: the *kolovodja* is the one in charge, and then the others follow in a hierarchical sequence from more to less important. Importance is determined by age, gender, social status, etc. Even joining the chain of dancers during the dance was not arbitrary. The rules about who, when and where could join indicate that the hierarchy within a *kolo* was clear. If an individual violated these rules and disrupted the unity of the dancers, physical violence could even be committed against them and, in extreme cases (calling a woman's honour into question), even murder. The *kolovodja* embodied order and was the master of the dancers. If he could not maintain the uniformity, order and structure of the dance, he was replaced, and a punishment could lie in store (Kowalska according to Mladenović 1991: 115–117).

level, the Duke is thus a synthesis of the disciplined body (which at this time – the first half of the 20th century – increasingly resisted the regulations) and the promise of eternal life, an idea which slid further and further back in the believers' minds. The last Dukes after the Second World War did not represent the ideal of the incarnation of Christ but were only the death throes of the medieval Christian order – the Church was losing its hegemony over the body of the Christian.

A CACOPHONY OF SOUND

The pilgrim swirl was one of the highlights of the pilgrimages. It was a mass event that could last for an hour or more. The pilgrim swirl on Ptujska Gora was known to last from half an hour to more than an hour (Turnšek 1946: 56). Prežih also states that the dance lasted almost an hour (1945: 35), as does Trdina in his work *Rože in trnje* (*Roses and Thorns*):

> You have to gather at the church the evening before the holiday if you do not wish to miss it; it is performed at night, a few hours before midnight.
> (Trdina 2012: 80)

Field interlocutors confirmed that the swirl could last for more than an hour. In Šmarje pri Jelšah, they performed the pilgrim swirl for an hour or even two, depending on the weather and the disposition of the pilgrims (GNI T 321B). We should examine Trdina's description of the duration of the swirl with some reservation, though it is of a literary nature:

> For a long, long time, probably more than two hours, the young move around the lawn, pray the Rosary, sing litanies and sacred songs. And yet no pilgrim tires, no one is anxious to go sleep or drink.
> (Trdina 1956: 51)

The number of pilgrims attending the pilgrim swirl fluctuated, though the sources state that they were numerous in any case. In his description of his own experience as a participant in the swirl, Prežih noted that the swirl was played by a crowd a thousand strong, and spoke of a large, entranced mass of people moving about in front of the church on Žalostna Gora (1945: 34–35).

In addition to the duration of the swirl and the number of participants, it is also necessary to highlight its specific sound or musical landscape. As early as the Middle Ages, the tradition of processions was strongly linked to various forms of music, especially songs and litanies. We can therefore conclude that the swirl adhered to the established model of processions or dance movements accompanied by music. At the musical level, the phenomenon of the pilgrim swirl is

fairly specific. It appears almost consistently in all sources and testimonies of field interlocutors as one of the swirl's key components. While walking in the procession, individual groups of people varied in size each performed their own song independently of each other.

A pilgrim who had regularly made journeys to Sladka Gora for decades, had this to say:

> *Everyone sang their own song, a little differently here and a little differently there, so you didn't know which group you belonged to. We sang Mary's songs: Lepa si, lepa roža Marija* [You are beautiful, beautiful, Mary the Flower]*, Srce moje naj Mariji slavo poje* [May my heart sing the glory of Mary] ... *Three or four voices were heard at the same time. That sounded nice.*
>
> (GNI T 321A*)[126]

There are similar accounts from Žalostna Gora:

> *Each group sang in its own way, they shouted over each other.* [...] *This singing was not beautiful singing. It was more of a hollering. The more people shouted, the better they thought they were singing. In the evening, this was even more evident.* [...] *Each group sang their own song, but none of them very well. The more people shouted, the better they thought they were singing. Just like at home, the only way they knew how.* [...] *The tunes were such as they were because there were also singers* [church choir singers, A/N]. *It's not nice ... It's not the way they sing today.*
>
> (GNI T 321B, GNI T 322A*)

Data collected from field interlocutors matches and complements the written sources of various authors.

> When it got dark, individual groups of pilgrims with their "vajvoda" [the Duke, A/N] at the head began to move ceremoniously in serpentine turns, each singing their own song.
>
> (Hrovatin 1951: 283)

Odilo Hajnšek made similar notes:

> Pilgrims from the same place stayed together and each group sang their own Marian hymns.
>
> (Hajnšek 1971: 196)

Prežihov Voranc contributed a slightly more literary and subjective account of his own experience as part of the pilgrim swirl:

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126 Transcription of field recordings marked with an asterisk mean that due to the unclear sentence structure or narration of the interlocutor, the quote is only a summary of the narration and not a literal transcription. The summaries are written so as to make as few interventions in the original speech as possible to avoid any substantive changes or deviations from the message of the field interlocutor.

> The crowd was loudly singing a Marian hymn ending with the chorus:
> Marija, prid' po nas [Mary, come for us] ...
> The crowd sang passionately, uptightly, raucously. Women carried lit candles. The singing grew louder and louder, more and more dizzying, until a single melody echoed into the night from a thousand throats, without any distinct lyrics. The voices merged into a single heavy rasping prayer.
> (Prežih 1945: 34)

The soundscape in which the pilgrims found themselves was a mixture of singing. In 1936, Strniša also noted that it was a kind of mixture of voices: "And this mixture of voices, in which you catch here and there a familiar tune, echoes strangely into the silent night" (1936: 7).[127] There are no records about any instrumental accompaniment to the singing. The sound of the singing, however, created a unique auditory impression which crucially contributed to the perception of the entire event. There are several symbolic interpretations of the cacophony of sound; one of them is offered by Craig Wright and highlights medieval liturgical dramas which contained an element of cacophony.

In the churches where they had labyrinths drawn on the floor, a play about the dispute between Christ and the Devil was performed at Easter. The labyrinth served as the stage on which the dispute, called *verberatio*, was depicted either through acting or dance. The participants produced noise and cacophony, as both concepts were associated with hell. Regardless of whether it was a dramaturgical or a dance representation of the scene, all church activities were performed on the east-west axis; first, they moved from the east to the west, i.e., from the altar to the labyrinth, and then back towards the east, where the activities again concluded at the altar. The direction contains symbolism which points towards the Easter arrival of Christ and the spiritual progression of people. The cacophonous part accompanied the phase where Christ fought with the devil unto his final victory (Wright 2001: 85).

Wright's theory can at least partially help draw parallels with the pilgrim swirl. The journey of the pilgrims who embark on the swirl takes place at night. This is a time in itself symbolically considered dangerous and close to creatures that want to harm people and their souls.[128] Pilgrims, carrying candles as a symbol of the light/Christ, set out on a complex path of the swirl where they could also get lost. It was symbolically associated with the path of life, where sin can lead a person to

127 The music pedagogue Jurče Vreža reported that people used to say that they sang the pilgrim swirl on various other, "non-pilgrim" social occasions (e.g., at weddings), where several groups of people sang separate songs at the same time. I would like to thank Mirko Ramovš for this piece of information.

128 For a comprehensive study of the meaning and perception of night before the industrial revolution and the invention of artificial light, consult Ekirch 2010.

fall into hell and death.[129] Sin belonged to the world of death and chaos, which was represented on the sound level by chaotic singing. The cacophony thus symbolised a turning point on the way to the cosmos of harmonious singing. The path of the pilgrim swirl ended in the church, which, as the temple of God and the centre of all that is holy, was still the centre of these events and a symbol of salvation. In Christianity, it represented the home of the eternal light (Christ) and was where pilgrims were headed to along the winding path of the swirl/life in order to reach the ultimate goal: eternal happiness and the harmony of the blessed in God. The latter also coincides with the testimony of a priest who himself took part in a pilgrim swirl sometime after 1935:

> *The night ended with a swirl and sung litanies. The whole procession then returned to the church. There, things calmed; not every choir sang their own song anymore.*
> (GNI T 321B)

MEANDERING THROUGH THE PILGRIM SWIRL

The choreography of the pilgrim swirl is yet another unknown component. We have to keep in mind that the form of the swirl or simply the movement of the dances could change over time and space and that it was a full three centuries that passed from its first mention in the 17th century to its eventual decline.

Timewise, the swirl took place at night, but we should also examine where exactly it began and how it unfolded. While dance movement has its own structure, it is relatively easy to adjust or change it. A plethora of factors could influence the form of dance, including the spatial features of the dance venue. The pilgrim swirl was also dependent on the space surrounding the churches. The procession could form inside or right next to the church, or at a nearby, more suitable area. A testimony from Zaplaz claims the following:

> *It began right next to the church. When the lights were lit, he* [the Duke, A/N] *began at one end and moved over and over.*
> (GNI T 320A)

The interlocutor recalled that at Sladka Gora, it was a nearby meadow that people moved to after Mass (GNI T 320A).

Where and how the pilgrim swirl began was decided by the space, but the Duke of Pilgrims also had role to play at the very start. He was at the forefront of the procession and carried the cross. Candles may have been attached to it or it was

129 The symbolic meanings of the spiral-shaped path of the pilgrim swirl will be re-examined a little later in the text.

topped by a wreath of flowers and greenery (GNI T 320A, GNI T 321B). On rare occasions, a statue of Mary was carried at the head of the procession on Žalostna Gora, followed closely by the Duke and then the other pilgrims.

> In the evening procession, they carry the statue of Mary across the hill and sing their song. [...] old men and women, husbands and wives, boys and girls – they all sing and follow the statue of Mary.
> (Strniša 1936: 7)

> Soon, the statue of Mary was brought from the church, carried on the shoulders of the young men. [...] And the dancing began. The Duke and the bearers of Mary's statue walked straight towards where the crowd in front of the church was the densest and enveloped it in a large semicircle. A chain of people was immediately formed after the bearers, increasingly narrow and close to the centre. At first, the procession twisted inwards, but when it reached the centre, it began to twist outwards. Thousands of people coiled the line simultaneously. It coiled around itself.
> (Prežih 1945: 33–34)

The basic principle of the swirl, as partially demonstrated by the descriptions above, was following the leader of the swirl, the Duke, who led the line of people in meandering turns before twisting the line into the spiral shape of a cochlea. This part of the pilgrim swirl is most commonly mentioned in sources and is a key part of the event. In some locations, like in Šmarje pri Jelšah, the Duke invited the pilgrims to partake in the swirl before it began and gave them brief instructions on how to perform it. Most of the time, they formed a long chain where, as a rule, they were arranged in pairs and followed the leader as he first meandered across the space and then shaped the whole procession into a spiral. When the Duke reached the centre of the spiral and could no longer continue, he had to turn around and make the entire line of pairs turn in the opposite direction too, thereby uncoiling the swirl. Afterwards, he made his way to the church where everyone gathered again.

> The pilgrim swirl is a kind of pilgrim procession which "meanders as their leader commands". This leader and the many bends on the path are a very important part of the pilgrim swirl.
> (Orel 1940: 11)

> Something unique was experienced by the pilgrims on Žalostna Gora on Saturday night after prayer. A long procession began to move from the church – a living burning chain. Each pilgrim carried a lit candle in their hands. The girls wore wreaths of fresh flowers on their heads. The procession moved into the valley to the large meadow below the hill, making turns and bends as dictated by the leader or the Duke, also called "vižar". [...] It was a kind of folk performance on Žalostna Gora, which was called "Marijin vrtec" [Mary's swirl] or "vrtec igrajo" [performing the swirl].
> (Hajnšek 1961: 169)

> When darkness fell, individual groups of pilgrims, each with their "vajvoda" at the helm, began to solemnly twist and turn, each singing a different song. The line mysteriously coiled further and further into itself until it reached a peak, at which point it shattered and individual couples scattered through the forest.
> (Hrovatin 1951: 283)

Field interlocutors complemented our understanding of the path of the movement of the procession in a similar manner.

> The old pilgrim first twisted the procession so that it looked like a kind of cake with him in the middle, and then, after his sermon, untwisted the swirl.
> (Ramovš 1975: 66)

> In the procession, they carried the cross "okul in okul" [round and round], so that the one carrying the cross ended up in the middle.
> (Ramovš 1975: 65)

One of the tasks of the Duke was to give a sermon. Generally, that happened after the swirl had finished forming the spiral. There, the line of couples stopped and was allowed to sit down on the floor. Once the sermon was finished, they got up again and moved the swirl in the other direction. The Duke could give the sermon at any other moment; some were good and passionate speakers who made use of various biblical and other parables in their speeches.[130]

While the sermon was thematically religious, it also tended not to be taken seriously; pilgrimages and the nocturnal pilgrim swirls were often used by the younger participants as a way to socialise, have fun and find sexual, emotional or marriage partners. An interlocutor made a remark about the pilgrimage and pilgrim swirl at Zaplaz:

> *All sorts of things happened. The boys went, the girls went. Those who were in love went. They saw an opportunity.*
> (GNI T 322A)

And similarly:

> Such pious exercises have cost many an honest girl her virginity. Sad examples often testify to what sort of people become leaders of swirls and other such exercises which the pious and the priests do not frequent, but sadly also do not prohibit.
> The participants in a swirl were boys and girls, a lot of them Croatian. After they finished dancing the kolo (e.g., round dance), they went to a nearby house with a dance floor – to dance as much as their feet would allow. Four couples were dancing on an area no larger than a table.
> (Trdina 1987: 211–212)

130 Examples of sermons or individual excerpts that people still remembered were published by Mirko Ramovš in his essay *The Pilgrim Swirl* (1975: 66–68).

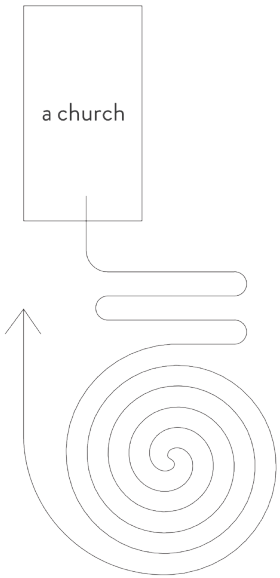

Figure 9: *A diagram of the path of a pilgrim swirl (author: Jan Šinkovec, 2021).*

Dance and seeking contact with other people were part of the events surrounding pilgrimages and the performing of the pilgrim swirl. Nevertheless, we can claim that this was not the only reason for participation in and performing the swirl in the first place. The sermon of the Duke can only be understood as worded norms that were prescribed and definitively implemented. The Duke thus embodied norms that the participants often violated, both on pilgrimages and otherwise.

The importance of the sermon and its location are overshadowed by the question of the exact course of the pilgrimage swirl. Its most common variant most often includes a procession of paired dancers who twist and turn in order to make and unmake a spiral. One of the earlier records of the swirl on Ptujska Gora dates to 1870 and claims that the swirl could also be carried out by encircling the church:

> Let me also mention here that circling, dancing around the church, has been pre-

> served by Slovenian pilgrims. Their leader coordinates this jumping either around the church or in front of it, on the lawn. The pilgrims sing while dancing and call this worship "performing the swirl" (orig. German: den Kreistanz spielen). Schwenck also says that Christianised Slavic pagans in the town of Duino (Magdeburg) have long maintained this habit of dancing around the church, and that dancing furiously was often imposed unto themselves as penance after confession.
>
> (Trstenjak 1870: 24–25)

A similar record was made some decades later, which further complicates the question of the course of the swirl on Ptujska Gora. It makes the claim that each of the groups of pilgrims had their own Duke. The groups moved around the church and got mixed up during the meandering; it was up to the Duke to always find a way out of the confusion.

> Dozens of songs echo into a starry night, the light from the torches and candles illuminates the walls of the hilltop church around which the various local processions move, meet, mix with each other, twist and turn themselves into shapes that the Duke has to find a way out of.
>
> (Turnšek 1946: 56)

In addition to the description of the movement itself, the record provides us with an interesting label to indicate how the dancers moved. Instead of the ordinary walk they used to form a spiral, Trstenjak uses the terms "jumping" and "jumps" for the movement performed. This is the only record that suggests a kind of dance movement or at least a movement that was not walking. The description should not be uncritically accepted; the use of the verb "to jump" makes us wonder whether the participants of the pilgrim swirl actually performed such jumps as those in the procession in Echternach, or if this verb might not only have been used as a loan word from German. German calques were a common occurrence in the Slovene language at the time[131] and the expression would make sense in the case of dance if the verb *springen* (like *hupfen*) were not already archaic when the quoted text was produced in the second half of the 19th century and thus virtually no longer used in this context. In this period, it was the verbs *tanzen* and *reien* that were used to refer to dancing. With some reservation, we can thus conclude that other forms of movement – not only walking but also some sort of jumping or leaping – might have been used within the pilgrim swirl. It must be understood, however, that despite the fact that jumping would fit very well into historical practices in processions, the (perhaps random) use of one verb is not a sufficient to definitively prove that people jumped during this dance.

In addition to the possibility of jumping, sources also indicate that the swirl was not always made up of a line of paired dancers following the Duke. A few years before the

131 Examples of the verb "jump" in the context of dance are found in slightly older texts. One of the authors who uses it frequently is Janez Svetokriški in his works *Sacrum Promptuium Pars prima, secunda, tertia, quarta* and *quinta* (1691–1707).

Second World War, Gustav Strniša reported from Lower Carniola:

> Then the pilgrims dance the "swirl". They clasp each other's hands and walk in a long chain of dancers over the hill. The first leads them. This first is usually an older, serious man. Finally, he wraps them like a spiral around him and, simple farmer as he is, begins a sermon about Mary.
> (Strniša 1936: 7)

Another form of the swirl can be deduced from the writing of Juš Kozak:

> The pilgrims started to dance the swirl. They walked in lines of six, lit candles and formed a circle around the church. The Lower Carniolans mixed with the Styrians and White Carniolans, each sang a different song. The circle spinned.
> (Kozak 1929: 112)

Judging by the quote above, it is quite possible that one of the choreographic versions of the pilgrim swirl took place in the form of the still known *čindara* dance. It is a form of chain dance performed in Slovenia and some other countries on various occasions. The parallel between the pilgrim swirl and the *ovrtenica* or *kolo* was first drawn by Hrovatin (1951: 173). Gyorgy Martin, on the other hand, assumes that chain dances are a choreographic form that experienced its peak in the Middle Ages and was then gradually transformed into couple's dances. Singing while dancing was gradually replaced by instrumental music. Unlike in the Eastern European areas and the Balkans, increasingly popular variations of couple dances were being established in Hungarian, German and Austrian lands (which culturally influenced the former Slovenian lands, so they can be counted among them) after having started occurring in the Renaissance. With the birth of couple dances, chain dances were becoming more and more marginalised, although they were preserved for a long time in rural areas. The abandonment of chain dances in the north and central part of Europe began to gain intensity at the end of the Middle Ages, and it was couple dances that dominated the 17th and 18th centuries [132] (Martin 1973). Chain dance persevered for much longer as part of children's dance game and as parts of ritually based activities. Based on the knowledge about the development of dance and the history of processional activities, we can say that it is likely that some variants of the pilgrim swirl were also a kind of chain dance.

We can observe a similar phenomenon in the contemporary *čindara* performed on the occasion of a *Prima Missa*. The possibility of this kind of development is highlighted by Martin and his remarks on the typology of the depictions the so called *danse macabre* (Ibid.).

If our assumptions of the choreographic development of the pilgrim swirl are

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132 In the eastern parts of Europe and in the Balkans, this process was slightly different. The introduction of couple dances was much slower and appeared much later. Martin believes this process only took place in the 19th century (1973: 104).

true, then we can make the observation that while some changes occur, its form (regardless of historical form) still follows the idea of reflecting heavenly paradise. The choreography of the bodies of pilgrims has never been very far removed from the depictions of rejoicing heavenly angels, seen, for example, at the end of the Middle Ages in the famous works by Fra Angelico and others.

THE PILGRIM SWIRL – INTERPRETATIONS AND SYMBOLIC DIMENSIONS

The course of the pilgrim swirl was based on walking around churches, meandering and twisting the procession into one and then, as a rule, into the other direction. What all these forms of movement have in common is circumambulation; in combination with other parts of the events they open up the possibility of the extensive symbolic importance of this phenomenon.

The pilgrim swirl is undoubtedly reminiscent of the movement through a labyrinth or the ambulatory.

The rituals of circling the altar, usually associated with the dance processions, indicate that the swirl is a developmental remnant of medieval liturgical practices. Over the course of centuries, a number of symbolic dimensions of circumambulation developed, and can be partly explained with the help of etymology.

The expression "pilgrim swirl"[133] alone indicates that the basic movement took place in a circle. The Slovene word *vrtec* (swirl) originally refers to the notion of spinning and is descended from the Indo-European of base **u̯ert* – meaning "to rotate", "turn", derived from the root **u̯er* – "to rotate", "bend", "wrap" (Internet source 6). The Indo-European origins of the word "*vrtec*" coincide with the actual course of a pilgrim swirl, turning and wrapping itself around the room. Another label was used by Josip Jurčič who relied on oral tradition and various historical sources, especially Valvasor, and joined them together in his literary works. In the novella, Jurij Kozjak mentions an old dance that the grandfathers called *ovrtenica* and one which the clergy seemed to allow. The dance was performed along pilgrims' ways (1919: 300). The *ovrtenica* also coincides with the primary motivation of the formation of the word "swirl". The last but not least, this word family includes the *vrtenica*, an expression still used for a fast-spinning couple dance in a double tempo, sometimes also referred to as *cvajšrit* (rotating two-step dance). The circular movement around the church is highlighted by the following record: "The Roman procession walks around the church [...] until

133 Prežih also uses the term "Marijin venček [Mary's medley]".

it has been circled countless times" (Turnšek 1946: 56). It is this record that provides us with an additional dimension of the pilgrim swirl. Surrounding the church space with candles is a practice first pointed out by Sergej Vilfan. Turnšek goes further and describes the swirl as "enveloping" the church. Turnšek's use of the word "*envelop*" might be a coincidence, but it still highlights the practice of placing candles all around the church during some patron saint celebrations. This practice has been proven to have taken place but remains poorly documented. The expression *opasilo*[134] which is used in Slovenian coastal areas to denote patron saint celebrations, can be perceived to relate to the exact same practice of surrounding churches with candles. Slovenian lands are also familiar with the ritual of surrounding the churches of St. Leonard with chains. Niko Kuret finds an explanation for this in pre-Christian beliefs where this ritualistic placing of chains was meant to protect a specific area or object (1998b: 106–107). Vilfan points to the possible legal ramifications of such acts, during which the space obtained a different legal status. Referring to Kretzenbacher's comparative study *Die Ketten um die Leonhardskirchen im Ostalpenraum* (1954), he understands the surrounding of an area or object as restricting it, which has two possible effects. The first is legal (restricting a space to which different rules apply), the second occult (restricting the space dedicated to worshipping God or other holy beings) (Vilfan 1956: 253–260). The swirl that took place around the church could be argued to have been an act of the occult. It is difficult, however, to make the claim that the swirl was used to limit or restrict a space subjected to different legal norms; no sources exist to confirm this. The swirl certainly formed a kind of sacred space, either by encircling the church or by taking place near graveyards. The concept of dead ancestors occurs several times in relation to the swirls. Jurčič recorded the information about the *ovrtenica* "faithfully, just as I heard it in my hometown, close to Vir, when I was young and more than once since" (1919: 101). While doing so, he drew attention to the old funeral mounds which the lords from Vir supposedly danced around:

> An old tailor, who was particularly fond of telling me about the "town of Vir", claimed that the aristocracy from Vir had gardens all over these mounds and that they made them round so that they could dance on the grass around them some old dance called "ovrtenica".
>
> (Jurčič 1919: 100–101)

Jurčič's writing overlaps with field-acquired data. Field interlocutors have said that swirls were sometimes performed in or near the graveyard, e.g., in Šmarje pri Jelšah or on Sladka Gora. There were also sermons about the dead given

134 Elsewhere in Slovenia, a number of other dialectal expressions are used to celebrate the patron saint of the parish: *žegnanje* (blessing), *sejem* (a type of church fair; the word has many variants), *lepa nedelja* (beautiful Sunday), *proščenje*, etc.

during swirls. In this event, dance was used as a means of communication that traditionally intervenes between different worlds. Traditional ideas about the three-part structure of the world indicate that it was crucial, on the one hand, to establish contact with the sky (which is given the role of Heaven and the residence of God in the Christian context), and, on the other hand, to constantly renew the border between our world and the otherworld of our deceased ancestors with the help of different rituals. Christianity joins this otherworld with the concept of hell. Dancing and music were a medium of communication and were manifested as cosmogonic activities in various rituals associated with the afterlife. The cosmogony of space through dance in a pilgrim swirl can be observed both at the vertical and horizontal level.

The pilgrim swirl was a type of movement that could make contact with the "above" – with God, Mary, the holy, etc. By placing the swirl into space connected with burial grounds, we can discern that it also seemed to be a medium of communication with the dead and a means of limiting this contact. Circular movements on graves represent the important cosmogonic principles known to early Christians. Traditional interpretations of the tripartite structure of the world as a place with special meaning also highlighted the importance of burial grounds. They were often places where the world of living mingled with the world of the dead. Through caves, abysses, holes, and especially through graves, the dead could come back, thus blurring the line between the worlds. For this reason, the need for a defined border between other communities and other worlds was constantly reinforced (Risteski 2001, Šmitek 1999). Dance, combined with music or noise, assumed the role. This is implied by a series of rituals performed at death, burial or on graves, as well as certain remains of dances or games associated with the dead. One such example is a dance which was performed as the body was being accompanied to the grave, a dance with bones performed in cemeteries in some parts of Europe. Cemeteries were also the location of various burial games or entertainment that made people laugh[135] (Backman 1952: 140, Bächtold-Stäubli and Hoffman-Krayer 1987: 1075, 1098–1100, Czerwinski 1862: 241–242, Ramovš 1996: 205, 209, Ložar-Podlogar 1999a: 17 and 1999b). Due to its sacral context, the pilgrim swirl can be understood as an act which simultaneously ensured both transcendence and a clear demarcation between the lower and the middle world, and thus between the communities of the living and the dead.

135 Helena Ložar-Podlogar highlights the importance of laughter during the wake: "A cheerful mood was supposed to protect a person from death, which was believed to be contagious, especially at night, when a person was sleepy. Since folk dances usually had several purposes, the cheerful mood at the wake was also supported by the claim that the mourners wanted to cheer up the deceased – they would be offended if their relatives and acquaintances parted with them with sadness." (1999a: 17)

Taking care to maintain a relationship with the dead created a place where space was constantly defined at a vertical level. The pilgrim swirl, however, also organised space horizontally. Jill Dubisch emphasises that the tradition of pilgrimages in different cultures is mainly linked to the holy places people visited. These places were often specific in that they were located outside major administrative, urban and religious centres. According to her findings, this is particularly characteristic of Christian pilgrimage churches. Throughout history, such pilgrimage centres were able to develop further and become world-renowned, but in the beginning (and often today still) it was much more common to find holy pilgrimage sites "somewhere outside" (Dubisch 1995: 36). These remote pilgrim centres were located in areas considered wild and chaotic. Places where the sacred was represented, embodied by pilgrim centres, were crucial for the symbolism and for maintaining order in a chaotic world. Circumambulation is one of the more frequently recorded phenomena which ensure and reaffirm a specific space at a symbolic level. It is a rite that uses a circular path to symbolically establish a border between the exterior and the interior. This makes the area safe, tidy and sacred, and juxtaposes is with the outside space, which represents the exact opposite. Holy places such as the church with its immediate surroundings had to be protected to preserve their holiness (Mencej 2013a: 105–109). A pilgrim swirl involving the encircling of the church, or the rounds that the pilgrims made around the church upon the arrival at their destination, was linked to the circumambulation of the altar, which was initially (in the Middle Ages) performed outside the church and later (with the advent of interior circumambulatory paths) on the inside.[136] The pilgrim swirl also reflects the developmental version of processions and dance around (mainly) graves and crypts that led to the development of ambulatories.

The movement of the procession (or line of dancers) constructed a (sacred) space, but simultaneously offered other symbolic levels of understanding the pilgrim swirl. The main part of the pilgrim swirl was the twisting and turning of the line around the room, followed by a spiral coiling and uncoiling of the procession. The route itself is reminiscent of medieval labyrinths of the Chartres type. These were round (in some exceptions octahedral) labyrinths whose paths symbolically depicted the movement of the planets.[137] An individual joining a pilgrim swirl found themselves in an entangled line of people which made them feel like they were getting lost, just like in the labyrinth. A participant in the swirl on Žalostna Gora also attests to this:

136 For further explanation, consult the chapter *The ambulatory – the paths of stars set in stone*.

137 For further explanation, consult the chapter *The labyrinth - a link between art and morality*.

> The Duke led the procession as if in a labyrinth, now to the left, now to the right. [...] And there were so many lights.
> (Ramovš 1975: 64)

The pilgrims' route was in itself undoubtedly reminiscent of the circular paths of labyrinths. The concentric movement of the pilgrims and their journey to the centre and back coincide with the interpretation of the labyrinths where the dancers symbolically indicate Christ's deliverance of people from the hands of the Devil. Their concentrically designed path moves from right to left and vice versa, thereby indicating the paths of the stars and planets. If we recall that according to medieval astronomical explanations, some planets travelled in a circle across the sky from one side to the other and back, while some were stationary and rotated in place, then symbolically, the pilgrims walked along that same path while moving within the pilgrim swirl, embodying the old Platonic ideas about the harmony of the celestial spheres.

The symbolic dimensions of the pilgrim swirl do not end here. In order to understand the swirl, it is also necessary to highlight the moral significance of labyrinths. When an individual entered a maze, they entered a system which could very easily lead them astray; it was a system of corridors where it was easy to get lost. Symbolically, the labyrinth became a metaphor for the life of the individual who can easily lose themselves to sin. The individual entered a system bigger than they were, and without making the right decisions, they could not find their way back out. The system of corridors and paths is tricky, but has its own structure and reflects God's order – an order which transcends the human and demands they choose the right path. The pilgrim swirl had a similar role. The individual could lose their way during the meandering, while simultaneously, the sound created by the singers indicated disharmony and thus a place of decay and death. It was only with the harmony of the choreography and following each other (in addition to the concept of light, which literally lit their way and symbolically illuminated the right path through the night), that they were able to escape the confusion of the swirl and return to the church. In this centre of holiness, the house of God to which everyone aspired, they sang a song together and prayed.

Depicting the path of the stars and thereby embodying Platonic principles, and entering the swirl being a symbol of the labyrinth of life are just two interpretations that complement each other. There is another that should not be overlooked. In churches, labyrinths and altars represented two symbolic points on the east-west axis. The various rituals and dancing in labyrinths took place in such a way that the action moved from east to west (from the altar to the labyrinth) and then back to the east (to the altar). The symbolic meaning of this axis is tied to the symbolism of the cardinal directions. The rising sun as the light of

a new life is the opposite of the dying evening light. The symbolism of ritual paths always ends in the east, where the altar stands as the centre of the sacred.

The pilgrim swirl adheres to this sequence of movement around the premises. While we cannot truly discuss the swirl in the context of an east-west axis, the movement is still aligned with the church. If the swirl started next to the church,[138] it meandered away to another place. Pilgrims formed the spiral somewhere in the vicinity of the church, after which they went back inside it in a procession. The axis of movement through the space, in the centre of which the swirl ends, symbolically coincides with the axis of movement as it was known in various rituals performed in churches with labyrinths. It is a central sacred spot around which everything is organised and can be connected to the east in rituals involving labyrinths, or with the altar in the case of the pilgrim swirl. The parallels with circular movement, the principles of the understanding and organisation of space and the associated semantics are relatively clear. The old idea of the *chorus angelicus* also supports the connection. Pilgrims in Aachen danced in the courtyard called Paradise, the representation of the heavenly temple in this world, and slowly moved into the basilica. The swirl similarly reflected the image of the map of the heavens to Earth. If the centre of everything in Heaven was the divine temple where God dwelt, then on Earth it is the church with the holiest to which the pilgrims return cyclically every year. The axis of movement and the ritual activity, and consequently also the design of the space itself, unequivocally reflect the symbolism and harmony of the spatial order.

If only to illustrate and offer some thoughts on the broader context of dancing next to churches, it is necessary to provide information on the toponyms around churches that more or less directly indicate the tradition of dance activities on church premises in Slovenia as well. This opens an additional historical aspect of the pilgrim swirl, as well as other dance practices. In addition to the aforementioned example in Aachen, another is provided by the church of St. Mary Magdalene on Magdalenska Gora in the parish Šmarje pri Ljubljana, in 1719 also labelled the Church of St. Mary in Paradise ("in Paradais") (Höfler 2015: 123). The term "Paradise" appears several times in connection with church space. It also found as a microtoponym at the new cemetery in Krško, a few hundred meters south of the Church of the Sorrowful Mother of God.[139] Similar to "Paradiž" (*paradise*), we can find the toponym Plesišče (*dance floor*), which is probably related to dancing in immediate vicinity of churches. The toponym was recorded at the church of St. Mary Magdalene on Šentviška gora, which was said

138 The swirl was not necessarily started right next to the church, as, for example, on Zaplaz. People could move from there or gather at a certain location.

139 I would like to thank dr. Jernej Rihter for this information (personal communication, 10/09/2021).

in 1771 to be located "in Pleshizha". Only a few years later, this church's location was described as "near Daber pri Plesišču" (Höfler 2016: 49). Another example is the church of St. Marjeta pod Stolom in Breginjski Kot, right below which is a meadow called Plesišče.[140] Similarly, the toponym Ples (*dance*) can be found right next to the church of the Holy Cross (from the 17th century) in Bistrica ob Sotli, Slovenia. What caused these toponyms to appear is not clear or provable, but the oral tradition from the Vipava valley speaks in favour of it being related to dancing next to churches. There is a place near the church of St. John the Baptist in Ustje in the Vipava valley which is also called Plesišče (*dance floor*), and where, according to local oral tradition, people lit and danced around bonfires (Kompare 2014: 127–128). This interpretation is seemingly confirmed by the aforementioned dance practice from Metlika. On Easter Monday, the so called *Metlika rituals* were performed on the meadow by the church of St. Martin until the Second World War. Systematic analysis would uncover many more instances.[141]

In addition to dance being part of rituals in or next to churches, it is precisely the reports of the pilgrim swirl that indicate another role that movement might have had in one shape or another. From the end of the Middle Ages onwards, church representatives increasingly pushed dance into the sphere of the profane, causing it to lose or change its sacral function, [142] especially that part of its sacral role which, in certain periods of history, also enabled transcendence. With dance, it was possible to address the Holy in the context of sacred spaces. Dance became somewhat of a holy act that encouraged a person to worship God and included prayer, singing or other forms of worship. At least in part, we are led to this conclusion by the records of the pilgrim swirl; those have to be treated with caution, as there is no concrete evidence of any ecstatic or other such practices, even if that is a belief that is frequently expressed in general discourse. At best, we can only conclude that the participants of the pilgrim swirl could have experienced some form of an altered

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140 I would like to thank Mirko Ramovš for the information (personal communication, 08/09/2021).

141 I must point out that there are even more toponyms next to churches or cemeteries that are supposedly connected to dance culture. Even a quick look at some of the maps shows that, in addition to Plesišče or Paradiž, there are a few other names that could potentially lead us to this. One of these can be the toponym of Nebesa or Raj (also meaning "heaven"). However, a systematic historical analysis would be necessary for a comprehensive insight into microtoponymy related to dance culture. This is the only way to find out what the original semantic motivations were for the creation of these toponyms. In addition, there is also a great danger we might incorrectly conclude that the toponyms derived from the root *pleš-* (e.g., Pleše, Plešivica, Plešivo) were created in the same way as toponyms derived from the root *ples-* (e.g., Plesišče).

142 Based on the texts of Thomas Aquinas, dance was declared *adiaphoron*, an act that has no moral value in itself, but the latter originates from individual consciousness and circumstances. As a result, dance in itself can be neither good nor bad, and above all, it cannot in itself be a means of communication with God (Rohmann 2013: 225). For more, consult the chapter *Dance between the sacred and the profane.*

state of consciousness.[143] We are led to believe this because of a testimony which at indicates at least a partial loss of the sense of time and space. A pilgrim from Trška Gora attested:

> [T]here was one in Šentjernej, that one could tell you what to do, walking up and down here and there ... Everyone was with their own group, I went to the church, I didn't know if I'd gone mad …
>
> (Ramovš 1975: 65)

The interlocutor who attended the swirl on Žalostna Gora a few times as a young girl recounts the same feeling: "It lifts a person up, as if he were going to dance" (GNI T 321B).

The indirect mention of this can be found in field research conducted by Mirko Ramovš, who, based on recounts, wrote down the following:

> For pilgrims, the swirl was the pinnacle of their pilgrimage, it was the outward expression of their piety and religious experience. The swirl drew the pilgrims into a kind of ecstatic trance in which they forgot about the troubles of everyday life [...]. They were in a trance the whole time.
>
> (Ramovš 1975: 72–73)

Tanja Roženbergar makes a similar point:

> It is a dance procession in which the pilgrims could fall into a real ecstatic trance.
>
> (Roženbergar 1990: 350)

Whether or not this was really an ecstatic experience is almost impossible to conclude on the basis of direct sources. If we support the thesis about a changed state of consciousness, however, we can surely claim that this was another concept which made the swirl fit into an older, ancient idea of joyful and cheerful worship of God. This could be manifested in an intense religious feeling, joy and exalted happiness that the ancient Greeks called *chara*. The concept of *therapeute* takes a step further from this exalted joy and already indicates an otherwise socially acceptable experience of God which resulted in drunkenness, trance and ecstatic experiences. The sources we have on the pilgrim swirl do not attest to this, but it is interesting to note that the parameters that determined the *therapeute* could also define the pilgrim swirl. The concept of entrancement and the ecstatic experience of God through dance was adapted from antiquity to Christianity. Thus, this dance with the *therapeute* enabled a kind of paradoxical vigilance in God which occurred at the same

143 Since there is no unified view on the question of the definition of an altered state of consciousness, I declare that I understand an altered state of consciousness to be a temporary change in the dominant forms of experience and perception, which the individual perceives as different from the general and dominant forms of experience in the waking state. The form and levels of the altered state of consciousness can be perceived in several ways, both on a wider social level and on an individual level. In any case, I do not equate an altered state of consciousness with ecstasy.

time as being "drunk" on Him. The dance itself did not express erotic elements,[144] which is often the case with its other forms, and was intended only for divine inspiration. This type of dancing combined with the *therapeute* was often perceived as playful and was always performed in a group led by the first dancer. The purpose of it was to worship God and find one's path to Him. In its pre-Christian form, such a dance was not necessarily connected with the worship of a god, but could also be performed as a form of worshipping the Muses or had other semantic dimensions. These hymns and other songs or prayers were performed in different choirs, which, not insignificantly, were united by dance into a community (Klinghardt 2005: 17–28, see also Hellsten 2016: 58–61, Tronca 2016: 55) – that community which, since early Christianity, has formed not only the material, but also symbolically the spiritual temple: the church. To paraphrase Hugo of Saint Victor, this means that the bodies of Christians are in themselves temples. When they unite, they become a church not only in a material, but also in a spiritual sense. This forms an equation that has been valid for centuries and which symbolically connects the body and the church. It was precisely this equation that enabled Christians in the Middle Ages and well into the New Age to understand the community of people, possibly on the dance floor, as a community of bodies that are symbolically the same as the Church; at whose head is Christ, incarnated in the first dancer. The theologians took this a step further and drew a parallel with baptism, which purifies the body, and in turn finds a parallel in the consecration of the church, which sanctifies the space. Ivo of Chartres, while addressing the people during the building of the famous cathedral there, told them that "whatever is being built here will be completed within you" (Mayes 2003: 11–17).

Regardless of whether the pilgrim swirl was a medium for ecstasy and altered states of consciousness or not, it cannot be understood without being placed into a broader cultural and historical context. Even though we have no records of it existing before the 17th century, it undoubtedly contained all those elements whose parallels are visible in the rich semantic context of church and other history – the history which, in the end, was also reflected in their understanding of the event. In this respect, the pilgrim swirl was able to evoke extremely strong experiences; among them were the emotional experience of the pilgrim swirl, highlighted several times in the sources, and especially the actual leaving the church. After the pilgrims had spent the night in the church (they slept on the floor and benches), they often cried when they had to leave. A testimony from a pilgrimage around 1935 explains how they even showed deep respect by walking out of the church backwards:

144 There is no data about the erotic elements in the swirl itself, but we must not overlook the fact that at night after the pilgrim swirl, the participants often engaged in dancing, singing and general entertainment, where sexual intercourse also took place. Erotic elements were thus part of the entire event.

A whole group of people spontaneously formed a procession between the pews. If there were many people from the same parish, then the church was quite full. This was after Mass. This was farewell, the crowd lining the church from the altar to the entrance, all looking at the statue of Mary and singing. [...] *They walked back quite calmly and softly. And you never felt anyone step on your foot or anything, even though there were a lot of people. One blessed them there at the door. They had teary eyes, as if they were saying goodbye to their father and mother. Even those watching had a hard time holding back tears.* [...] *While the bells were ringing, the processions left the road.*

(GNI T 321B)

Just as the pilgrims arrived, either individually or in group (like those pilgrims from Prekmurje who performed a choreographed greeting to Mary), they also departed. This was a ritualised farewell, which reflected not only physical discipline and intense emotion, but – influenced by the entire act of pilgrimage – the totality of a long, often complex, but by no means incidental history of the meanings and embodiments of sacred and profane spaces and actions.

IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION: ON THE LIFE OF IDEAS

Many models and ways of using the body have developed thought history. Perceptions about the position of the body within a wider cosmic system of pre-modern society are only one of these ideological models, and it is important to know it did not develop by chance – it belonged to the historical causalities of human cosmogonic activities. The pre-modern body was not only the centre of a rational understanding of oneself and the world, but also was the medium for bodily practices that crucially shaped the ideological contours of times and spaces. These physical practices were very heterogeneous and constantly fluid in both structure and semantics. This is characteristic of every concept, idea and ideology, which remains alive for a long time; they are transmitted and preserved throughout history precisely because of their ability to adapt. They survive and are preserved by continuous reinvention and thus also the constant redefining of the medium through which they are expressed. This path of constant reinventions of the idea of Platonic cosmogony, reflected at different levels of people's everyday lives, is what this text attempts to trace. The voices of ancient Greek ideas echo anciently in the modern concepts of circling around the altar, making processional rounds and, last but not least, in the pilgrim swirl.

If retrogradely analysed, these ideas are often perceived as very abstract or even distant from people's everyday life, but still had an important role to play. Such ideological postulates enabled people to make sense of themselves, their actions and the world. This is what happened to the ancient Greek sages. When they looked up at the starry sky, they formed a universal idea which made sense of the apparent disorder of nature and man's place in it (we shall leave aside the fact that their ideas were based on those of a few of their Asian predecessors). Some 2,500 years ago, the common denominator of the functioning of the entire cosmos became numbers (Gr. *arithmos*) and numerical ratios (Gr. *armonia*), which were kept functional in combination with circulation. Later, these cosmogonic eras were frequently adapted and had many variations and forms. It is relevant to his work that all the ideas and phenomena under consideration followed, albeit evolutionarily, the basic Pythagorean-Platonic principles. Over the course of several centuries, this set ideas and perceptions about the world and fellow humans has become the leading paradigm for the use of bodies throughout Europe

and beyond.[145] Cosmogonic ideas about the world, conscious or not, became invisible threads between countless generations of bodies which were continuously adopted and adapted; paradoxically, this is how they were preserved. Planetary determinism and the logic of numbers dictated the corporealization of bodies, the spatialisation of space and a host of other related activities. Circulation and rhythm therefore began to find their place in the processes of human activities on a variety of levels, from music and architecture to religious acts and entertainment, and last but not least, these principles were woven into the very essence of dance, walking, gesturing, etc. This raises the question of how to explain the longevity of this set of perceptions. This could be the subject of a completely independent analysis, but I shall only mention three more or less related concepts noted by authors who dealt with the issue of different folk practices.

Francisco Vaz da Silva concerned himself with the question of why certain structures, ideas and narratives are preserved and able to survive for an extremely long time. He sees this tradition as a long fluid dynamic of transmission. Primarily, Vaz da Silva researched tradition through oral literature, but it is possible to extract from his findings theses that support the application of Pythagorean-Platonic ideas to the everyday life of people throughout history. Vaz da Silva defines tradition through three interconnected moments. In the first, it is understood as relatively static, as a construct that researchers most often utilise to deal with tradition in the context of modernity. The first view is less important for this text, but the other two more than make up for it. The second view understands tradition as a dynamic process in which relatively stable elements of traditional matter are transformed. Understanding tradition thus requires mapping transformational patterns. He notes that several hundred stable motifs have been formed in literary folklore, all of which live and develop through transmission. His third observation is that the patterns formed in this way can live for an extremely long time and cross different, even seemingly mutually exclusive areas. They often appear in a new guise, pass into literature and back into oral tradition, influence and shape the scientific community, and seep into modern thought processes. In this respect, tradition is a process that repeatedly interferes with modernity (2012). All three of these findings are also true of the transmission and development of the ideas of the Platonic cosmogony. For centuries, relatively stable ideas about the meaningfulness of circulation and rhythm remained crucial for various human activities. These ideas were also transferred to the field of dance as well as to other genres of art, the understanding and creation of space, the relationship with the sacred, etc. The original Platonic cosmogony was thus repeatedly reflected in different spaces and societies throughout history.

145 It should not be overlooked that with the discovery of new parts of the world in the Renaissance, these notions were also transferred there.

The model of meaning transfers over time has been comprehensively (and even more schematically than Vaz da Silva) explained by Andrej Pleterski. While he relied on Vaz da Silva's findings and his dynamic understanding of tradition, he created the concept of the cultural genome, which more systematically explains the individual stages of the development of ideas. By introducing the concept of a cultural genome, he – to some extent – equates cultural phenomena with biological phenomena.[146] This model assumes that phenomena develop and that development is a neutral phenomenon that takes place on both the biological and cultural level. This changes older perceptions and reforms them to correspond to the new requirements; importantly, thought, individual phenomena tend to contain bits of their predecessors. Pleterski explains the cultural genome in four stages. The first stage is based on human observation of the environment and nature. What a humans see, they explain to themselves and create cognition, which in turn gives rise to the first mental models and knowledge. These models are explanatory in nature and are linked to the second stage of development, in which the original knowledge and cognition are expressed, put into practice and simplified. This results in the third stage of development, which is revealed by various myths, prayers, chants, etc. Mental models of actions influence the development of various ritual activities, whereas spatial actions influence the formation of physical spaces (buildings, graves, sanctuaries, spaces for daily activities, etc.). The development of various ideograms also originates in the mental model of space and images. What develops in the final stage is what this text deals within the form of practical examples: folk verbal art (fairy tales, songs, etc.), folk music and dance, various spaces of folk pieties and customs, and finally also folk visual materialised art (decoration, various buildings, constructions, etc.). What is important about Andrej Pleterski's concept of the cultural genome is that it proves that younger versions of various vernacular practices and other phenomena can also contain information about older forms. According to this evolutionary view, the author understands this process as a completely neutral phenomenon present in every society (2014).[147, 148] Pleterski emphasises the continuity of development but does not deny that the model only approaches the

146 I must point out that ideologically, Andrej Pleterski also leans on the meme theory of Richard Dawkins without really taking into account the criticism that this theory has been subjected to.

147 At least in part, this is how Andrej Pleterski responds to the criticism of cultural history previously developed by Michel Foucault. Foucault was particularly critical of various interpretations of history that point to any progressive development or interpretation of development that takes place in the sense of progress towards some final goal (e.g., increasing personal freedom). For more on this, consult Burke 2007: 59–64.

148 Pleterski emphasises the evolutionary principle of understanding the genome but has warned that he is aware of the existence of data that contradict his explanatory model. He does not exclude or deny the existence of such data, but according to him, the interpretive potential of the evolutionary view is great enough to make sense for it to be developed (2014: 21–22).

ideal and cannot provide an answer to all the questions – it would have to be further refined, especially in areas it has not dealt with.

To conclude, I would like to mention another author engaged in the study of human practices and their logic, who could help us understand the long history of the paradoxes of a varied culture, which in its development constantly oscillated between tradition and innovation. In other words: this culture was torn between Platonic rules and their historical derivatives. For a long time, the emic view considered them to be universal, but they were simultaneously under constant pressure from changing circumstances. Such rules were reflected in the practices of people's daily lives. Pierre Bourdieu approached people's practices in an analytical-philosophical manner and thereby crucially contributed to the development of cultural-historical thought. Among other things, it is his theory of practice that is of importance and especially so the concept of habitus. He defines habitus as the continuous practice of improvisation within frameworks that culture imprints on the body and mind of an individual (Burke according to Bourdieu 2007: 65–66). Bourdieu thereby established a relationship between the objective and the subjective. In some ways, the concept of habitus would make it easier to explain some phenomena presented in this text, but it would also open a number of new questions that should be systematically answered on the basis of further analysis. It would then also be necessary to discuss several topics not covered in this paper, as this would be the only way (if it exists at all) we could fully shed light on this complex perception of ideas and bodies – those bodies that were existentially dependent on these ideas, but at the same time also formed them. Pre-modern (often to some extent even modern) principles can therefore not only be understood as a regulation of a higher or lower level of appropriateness of human activity; they point to the very ontology of man. With their ideas, humans not only make sense of the existence of the material body, but also its use, creation and everything connected with such creation (e.g., space, time, the moral or the sacred). The Greek philosopher Plotinus would put it this way: whatever loses its harmony, loses its existence. Therefore, everything that is tied to the causality of Platonic disharmony is pushed aside into non-being. Stretched between the forces of being and non-being is the body, today only partially unveiling its complicated history of elusive movement.

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