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Reflections on Dance Identity Migrant Performing Bodies – Identity Guardians

ABSTRACT
In the recent years the theme of migration has received significant attention worldwide becoming a global process. Migration can be categorized as temporary or permanent. This particular study encompasses both modalities that are in intrinsic relationship with social and economic factors. Furthermore, an analysis of migration through the prism of culture, tradition and identity provides ground for investigating transformation of cultural models and their characteristics. The present research is specifically focused on the Macedonian population. To facilitate a more competent insight and comparative analysis two distinct periods, which were characterized by substantial migratory movements, have been observed: the mid -20th century (1930s-1940s) and the early 21st century (2010s-2020s), The selected periods have consequently determined the choice of geographical areas, specifically countries that were "desired" primary destinations during each respective period. To enhance understanding, the analysis was further constricted and focused on two urban centers that hosted or currently host large and significant Macedonian diasporic communities: Belgrade and Sydney. The most significant processes and effects, resulting from the undertaking of Macedonians in these researched environments, have been established through the actions and activities of migrants and the diaspora community. The intangible culture serves as a pivotal category with a specific emphasis on dance. The body, a fundamental vehicle and embodiment of cultural characteristics, is adopted as an analytical unit in this analysis. The investigation of the dancing body is justified by identification of the inextricable link between identity and culture. Based on the obtained findings, the research defines models that reflect all characteristics of the studied groups, their distinguishing forms, as well as their ultimate functions. This approach provides an expanded understanding of Macedonian culture and identity transmission processes within the countries of immigration.

KEYWORDS
Migration
Body
Identity
Diaspora
Macedonian traditional dances

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Setting Time-Space Coordinates

Migration issues, especially today, are a pivotal topic in the media and are part of the global geo-political dynamics. This issue is complex and can be approached through the lens of diverse scientific disciplines. The article seeks to explore the changes in migration processes by applying the category of intangible culture (more specifically by a particular emphasis on the practice of dance) explicitly related to the Macedonian population. Since the scope of such an inquiry is extremely vast, the study's analysis is limited to two dissimilar periods and two migration destinations.

Time

The temporal scope of this research is defined by two distinct decades: the 1930s-1940s and the 2010s-2020s. These periods are separated by an 80-year interval, a distance chosen to facilitate the observation of long-term research processes and to provide a comparative analysis. The selection of these specific timeframes is initiated by their significant migratory peaks, which enable examine the evolving relationship between culture and identity. Consequently, the comparison between 20th and 21st century migrant activities reveals significant shifts in the nature of migration as a phenomenon. It also enables a deeper exploration of the central research objective: analyzing the concept of culture as a foundation for identity expression and the formation of a sense of belonging.

Space/ Territorial

The spatial dimension, or the destination of migratory movements, constitutes a particularly important parameter of this study. It reflects global trends generally related to political and economic factors. The selection of immigration regions and countries changes across the two periods under investigation. The first period (1930s-1940s) is predominantly characterized by destinations within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and other Balkan nations, such as Romania, with a much low frequency of overseas migration. In contrast, the second period (2010s-2020s) demonstrates a pattern of mass population mobility toward multiple regions, including Western Europe (primarily Germany), North America (the USA and Canada), and Australia. For the purpose of this research, Belgrade and Sydney were chosen as case studies. This selection is not arbitrary but is motivated by two key criteria. The first criterion is the size of the Macedonian migrant population in these cities. During the early 20th century, Belgrade hosted the largest Macedonian

émigré community of any city in this period. Similarly, Sydney has experienced steady growth in its Macedonian community since the early 21st century and now possesses one of the largest in Australia. The second criterion is directly related to the study's focus on performance-based activities, specifically dance. These cities were selected because they have demonstrated consistent and organized activity within the sphere of dance performance, providing a rich environment for research.

The analytical approach of this study is grounded in semiology, a theory with its characteristic category concepts serving as a foundational basis. This semiotic framework is further supplemented by established research in the fields of migration and identity, (which will be elaborated in a subsequent chapter). The research methodology is comparative, and the data sourced from a diverse array of materials, which can be categorized into several groups of material sources. Starting from official reports from international and state institutions, as well as specialized books, articles, documents and reports concerning cultural activities of migrant communities during both periods. The study draws upon private archives, (including materials from the collection of Blazhe Smilevski and the Macedonian Cultural and Artistic Association Ilinden). Further data were gathered from announcements, interviews, and reviews published in both Macedonian and international print media. In addition to this for the research 18 interviews[1] were conducted involving members of the Macedonian community in Sydney, as well as those affiliated with the society that is the focus to this research. The analysis was enriched by observational data from video-documented performances available on various web platforms. I subjected this multifaceted data to analytical processing, which led me to construct two distinct models. These models reflect how the body situates itself within a new existential space. I developed them by closely examining the specific circumstances surrounding the Macedonian population. While rooted in this context, I believe the models hold broader relevance—they can be applied to general migration processes and to the cultural reflections of immigrant groups adapting to new host-country environments. The next stage of my analysis will focus on elaborating this theoretical platform in greater depth.

[1] The study involved interviews with Macedonian emigrants ranging in age from 11 to 77 years. Of the 18 participants, 11 are female and 7 male. Data collection was carried out between February and April 2025, utilizing a combination of written correspondence via email and synchronous communication through digital platforms.

A Theoretical Starting Platform

Browsing through books and articles on the topic of migration, identity and tradition, an insightful essay entitled "The creative confusion of the migrating body" caught my eye. (Cools, 2019). The article deals with the experience of a contemporary choreographer Akram Khan in relation to dance identities; talking about those that are inherited and transmitted trans-generationally, as well as the newly emergent ones. This prompted me to delve into the processes related to migrating bodies. In this article, the analysis will be structured around three fundamental categories: 'migration,' 'body,' and 'identity.'

What is migration? Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as follows: "human migration, the permanent change of residence by an individual or group"[2] or in short "International migration, a specific form of spatial mobility" (Kovács, 2023: 73). Migration, particularly within the European context of the 21st century, is exemplified by the influx of migrants originating from Africa and Asia regions driven by aspirations for enhanced economic life. Negative commentary connotations on these developments were constant, causing protests and critical evaluations of an open border policies. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that "spatial mobility" constituting a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. As the authors Brandstetter, Egert and Hartung (2019) observe the migration process is associated with drastically diverse array of causes and effects. This analysis shall look into economic migrations and the effects they have caused in correlation with dance. Migrants, i.e "the *pechalbari*"[3], come into a completely new social and cultural context different from the one they had previously lived. They have established a relationship with their own cultural characteristics and they identify with them. Upon migrating they encounter and interact with new cultural identities, simultaneously presenting and asserting their own. Nowadays, discussions about migration and identity very often inevitably lead to talking about "immigration and ethnicity" (Gleason, 1983: 910). This process may indicate a tenacious preservation of ethnic features such as language, tradition, culture or, less often, permutation and acceptance of cultural and identity features of the new landscape. National cultures strive to frame all existing cultural diversities within the borders of a state.[4] The idea of ethnicity

[2] https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-migration
[3] *Pecalbari* is Macedonian synonym for migrants. The word means member(s) of a family who temporarily emigrate abroad for economic reasons.
[4] Regarding intangible cultural heritage and the ways of its treatment, state strategies and results more in Velika Stojkova Serafimovska ,Dave Wilson and Ivona Opetčeska Tatarčevska, 2016

encourages integration of various societal layers around common meaningful categories that the group nurtures, molds and enriches, thereby bolstering the sense of unity in relation. This process illustrates unification through collective categories. Today we speak uniformly about Macedonian, Serbian, Turkish, Croatian and other cultures. The primary purpose of this analysis is to examine the construction of Macedonian identity in the context of migration processes from the 19th century to the present day. Yet, these national cultural entities are composed of multitude regional distinct specificities. The medium of storage and transmission of intangible culture heritage resides in the third category in this analysis – the body. The body is far more than a complex mechanism of organs that function in a unique whole; it is also a symbol, sign, metaphor and reflective canvas on which the social model is projected. It is a storehouse of memories, traditions, presentations and practices. Bodies from a particular historical and geographical background are part of the culture they represent, acknowledging the natural transmission of knowledge and understanding between people.

Philip Auslander, commenting on Susan Leigh Foster's views, writes "Who or what is speaking through the body and in what language" (Auslander, 2016: 9). In an effort to engage with this fundamental question, several scholarly works that explicitly center their analytical focus on the dancing body are taken into consideration. Helena Wulff (2005) explores this in *The Irish Dancing Body*, Jens Richard Giesdorf (2013) delves into the topic *Body of the People: East German Dance since 1945*. It prompts a crucial query whether bodies in their movement inscribe themselves in the very language of their ethnic origins? This consecutively gives incentive for a follow-up question of what happens at the moment of transition of the body into a new environment, one that "speaks" a different cultural language? The examples presented herein suggest tendency to preserve one's own cultural idiom. "Traveling and migrating bodies are often bodies in crisis or in unstable conditions, in unfamiliar (infra)-structures and social constellations; (...) As such, they are often bodies with a heightened awareness and with refined tactics for adapting and resisting, trained to leave behind or hold on to customs, ideas" (Brandstetter, Egert and Hartung, 2019: 5). Migrants, *pechalbari* or *gurbet* (*kurbet*/*kurbét*) workers, as they are often called in the Balkan countries, found diverse strategies to maintain connection closer to their homeland both imaginary and through feelings. The intangible culture they 'carry' in a form of songs, dances and customs represent the most direct and potent link to the homeland. The songs and folk dances

which create the illusion of their home and family 'cured' nostalgia.

Anatol Joukowsky (a contemporary to witness the initial migration wave) is one of the few mid-20th century authors, who alongside his ethnochoreological notes documented the significance of dance for Macedonian migrant workers. Describing the Macedonian folk dances performed by *pechalbari* he notes, "[t]hose people become transported back to their beloved mountains through their dances. Do not watch the steps, rather watch the body, the posture, the eyes" (Joukowsky, 1965: 9). This also determines the status of the migrating body. The phenomenon of the body emitting cultural messages has been explored extensively. In this context only a few authors who treat this issue will be mentioned (Judovitz, 2001; Thomas, 2003; Braidotti, 2011; Pine, Kuhlke, 2013; Zdravkova Djeparoska, 2021). Several authors have considered the human body as a political entity (Foucault, 2012; Fuko, 2005; Brown and Gershon, 2017) The body, apart from the discourse of current policies, can be considered or interpreted more broadly in its social, national, religious and cultural dimensions. As the author Andrée Grau (2011) points out, context and intention conceptualize the body and create culturally and semiotically determined metaphors. The cultural specifics (customs, language, songs, folk dances) that migrants carry with them into the new social context create a simulation of their homeland. Through act of singing and dancing, migrants engage in a symbolic re-creation of the space they have left behind. This phenomenon of cultural code transfer led me to create a visual and graphical representation of the relationships between the foundational elements of this research (Chart 1). It suggests that while (i)migration initiates an inevitable process of interaction with a new environment. The dance body—explored further in the following sections—simultaneously asserts its own cultural identity. This identity is activated through an encounter with the 'other' giving rise to a visible and dynamic multicultural dialogue.

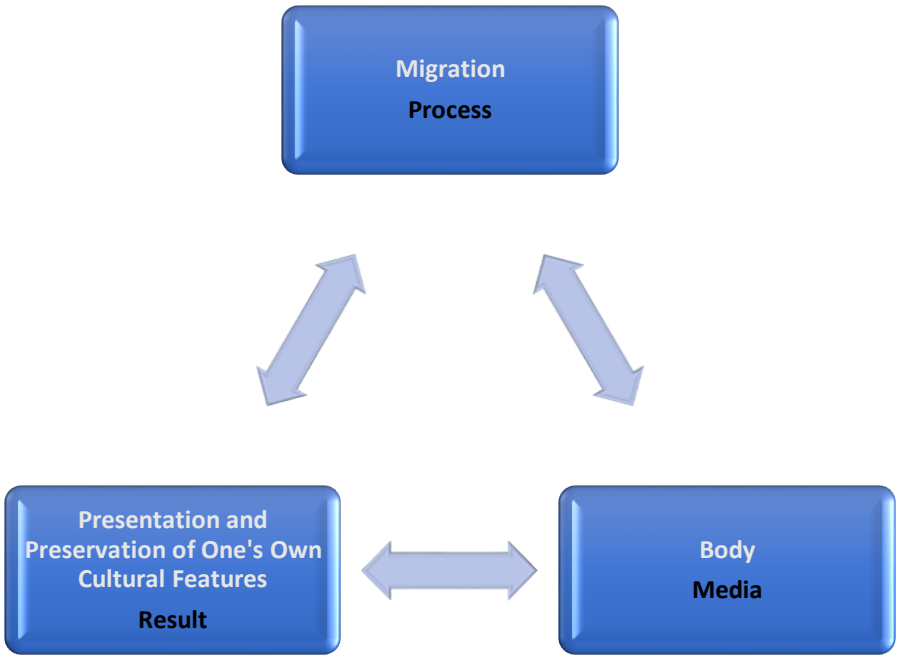

Chart 1

Pechalbari, Transfer of Cultural Traditions (Period 1930s-1940s)

Migration is a phenomenon that occurs massively on the territory of Macedonia, particularly in certain regions of the country. In the first half of the 20th century this migration was of a temporary nature- migrant workers (*pechalbari*) departing forth and returning back to their ancestral places. This theme became an inspiration for Anton Panov to write the play *Pechalbari* [Migrant workers]. It was printed in 1936 and is one of the first plays performed in Macedonian language during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia era. A tragedy by genre, the writer at the very beginning gives a dramatic landscape - the time and location description- "Time of the action: from 1929-1932. It takes place in a village in western Macedonia" (Panov, 1961: 3). In the third act, as the main protagonist Kostadin prepares to depart to pechalba, comes his acquaintance Karaman Atanas.

> "Karaman Atanas: (He comes alone, drunk, accompanied by Gypsy musicians) (...) (To the Gypsies). Hey, why are you slumbering! Strike the drum, so God may hear!... Strike the *Teshkoto*!... *Teshkoto*![5] (...) (At a cue, a subtle gesture with the handkerchief, the musicians conjure to play the slow sonorous rhythm of *Teshkoto*, Macedonian folk dance. Karaman Atanas is joined by several more male dancers following his individual dance. At a given signal marked with the handkerchief, the players fall silent, the musicians poised in tension. Atanas' eyes fill with tears.)" (ibid: 35)

[5] *Teshkoto* (The Heavy Dance – in English) Macedonian traditional male dance.

Information about dances that belong to intangible culture (bound by time-specific parameters), obtained from literary sources constitute valuable materials for analysis. It is also the case with Panov's drama; the writer identifies the dance as *Teshkoto* - a man's dance. This detail, on the other hand, provides a very precise location. The custom of seeing the pechalbari off with this particular dance was prevalent in the Reka region (most notably in the villages of Lazaropole and Galuchnik). The inhabitants in this region are known as *Mijaci*. In addition to defining the dance and the location it took place, there is also information concerning the ethnicity of the musicians. These are Roma people who almost without exception followed the performances of *Teshkoto*. Emigrating for economic reasons (*pechalbarstvo*) in the Reka region was a mass phenomenon, a reason why the writer Panov sets his drama in this ethnographic region. The author Gorgji Trajchev (1941) provides information that in Galichnik in 1936 there were 800 houses, while the number of migrant workers was also around 800. Each household had on average one pechalbar. Leposava Spirovska (1971) writes that not solely adult men went to *pechalba*, but sometimes even children as young as ten years old had to depart. Economic migrants most often sought work in Belgrade and Bucharest, finding employment in the service industries as bakers, milkmen, waiters. Some of them even managed to establish their own 'modest businesses.'

Eventually, *pechalba* takes a profound toll and slowly breaks up families - a transition from one existential context to a completely new one. This initiated a creation of groups in which migrants nurtured their own songs and folk dances. Concurrently, in the first half of the 20th century, processes of economic migration happened alongside a parallel movement - a trend of mapping of folklore traditions accompanied by public presentation. These two completely independent processes influenced each other specifically in the affirmation of diverse and peculiar folklore characteristics.

For the first time, tradition underwent transmuting into a 'stage performance,' a practice that implies a completely distinct mode of functioning inherent in the performing arts. Folk dances, songs and customs were integrated into *Miyak* life, part of the tradition associated with specific holidays and life cycles, essential for the community's functioning within its micro social structure. This centuries-old practice of customs and folklore was supplanted by stage performance marked by a stark distinction between performers and audience. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1987; 1989), in several of his works, explains in

detail how performances function in ritual and stage contexts, drawing a critical distinction between the organization of life of pre-industrial and post-industrial societies. In the latter, he observes, the distinction between work and leisure is strongly pronounced. He notes "because any change in status involves a readjustment of the entire scheme" (Turner, 1987: 4). Tradition, consequently, ceases to be an inseparable element of life in the ethnic area and instead becomes disseminated, promoted and presented beyond its boundaries as a cultural commodity. The *pechalbari*, in addition to maintaining their cultural identity within their own community, began to perform in front of a public audience affirming their own authentic cultural idiom on stage. Organized by individuals and organizations, mostly through the efforts of the "Circle of Serbian Sisters"[6], they realized concert performances documented by several researchers (Janković et al., 1939; Ivančić Dunin and Višinski, 1995; Smilevski 2006). A series of concerts have been recorded throughout Yugoslavia. The Lazaropole group had stage performances in Belgrade, Vršac, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo in 1939. The poster and program for the performance entitled *Lazaropole Evening of Folk Dances and Songs* held in Belgrade on February 6, 1939 reveals the repertoire: folk dances such as: *Gu gu guvche, Lesnoto, Patruna, Teshkoto, Pajdushko, Chamcheto* and other dances combined with the performance of folk songs. Blazhe Smilevski (2006) presents a detailed account of the performance in Brussels, May 1939, offering extensive documentation including names, activities and photo material. A list of eleven participants is presented, the youngest at the age of 19 and the oldest aged 52. The group was composed of seven dancers, three musicians from the village of Lazaropole, and a designated.

[6] "Circle of Serbian Sisters" is an organization with cultural, educational and humanitarian activities. More details in Mira Viktorović (2013) .

Figure 1. *Teshkoto*, 1939. Courtesy of Blazhe Smilevski personal collection.

The repertoire of this performance included folk dances and songs that the group also staged at the Yugoslav Festival, comprising folk dances such as *Gu gu guvche, Lesnoto* and *Teshkoto*. This practice of staging cultural specificities is not unique to only Macedonia, it was and continues to be a global phenomenon. (Nájera-Ramírez, 2014; Shay, 2021; Ravikumar, 2024)

This processed ten-year span is the key to the transition of a body from a permanent status of maintaining traditional models to a body emerging into a performing stage medium. These ten years have catalyzed exceptional movements in the status of cultural constructs and their discursive presentation within the European cultural context. It is important to emphasize once again that this phenomenon is not an isolated example, only in relation to migrants from Macedonia, it is a global process. However, in this case, it is additionally strengthened by economic factors and the trend of "going on *pechalba*." The first articulation of national cultural fragments was namely maintained through the bodies of economic migrants. They, 'becoming embodied exponents of the cultural codes tied' to a specific Macedonian regions. The bodies subjected to international promotion and verification were integrated into cultural representation, thereby attaining status of

Macedonian (nuanced by regional heterogeneity) identity. The pre-war groups characterized by their concert activities[7] and the exhibition of their dance and musical features provided the foundation of the national ensemble *Tanec* establishment within socialist Yugoslavia[8]. Many of these first stage folk-dancers were recruited into *Tanec ensemble*. They contributed to the transmission of the folk-dance preserving their original form and choreography as performed in their authentic context. As well they continued shaping its repertoire and its cultural significance. If we try to transfer the previously elaborated process into a graphical format, it will result in a pie-chart shown in Chart 2.

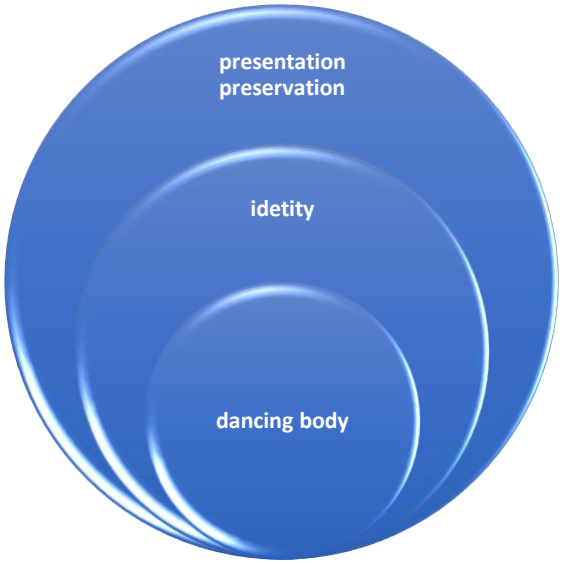

Chart 2

Diaspora Sustaining and Disseminating of Cultural Heritage (Period 2010s-2020s)

Observed across past decades, migration persists with a notable intensity as a phenomenon in the contemporary era. The aspiration for enhanced life prospects has compelled a large number, especially the young population, to undertake permanent emigration; a process linked to the concept of diaspora[9]. The Macedonian diaspora is predominantly situated in European[10] and North American countries, as well as Australia.

[7] From this period, the groups from Lazaropole, Rashtak (Skopje) and Gevgelija stand out.
[8] The ensemble of folk dances and songs *Tanec* was founded in 1949 to preserve and present Macedonian traditional music and dance on stage. In Yugoslavia, alongside *Tanec*, the ensembles *Kolo* in Serbia (established in 1948) and *Lado* in Croatia (established in 1949) were also formed.
[9] The term diaspora is "populations, such as members of an ethnic or religious group, that originated from the same place but dispersed to different locations. The word 'diaspora' comes from the ancient Greek *dia speiro*, meaning "to sow over" (https://www.britannica.com/topic/diaspora-social-science)
[10] Very indicative data can be found in report of International Organization for Migration. Number of Macedonian citizens in European countries increase from 229,366 in 2010 to 299,506 individuals in 2020, representing an augmentation of approximately 70,000 people (https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2023/MP_profil_2021_mk.pdf)

Emigration in Australia commenced in the late 19th century, initially with a rather small number of emigrants. Substantial immigration waves ensued in the latter half of the 20th century. According to statistical data derived from the 2021 census,[11] the population was categorized into two principal groups. The first comprised individuals born in Macedonia who subsequently settled in Australia, numbering slightly under 50,000. The second group approximately 110,000 declared Macedonian origin, despite being born in Australia. Commenting on the figures from the 2011 census, the authors Ben-Moshe, Pyke and Kirpitchenko (2016) in their article *Diaspora Politics and Australian-Macedonian Relations* note that the accurate size of the Macedonian diaspora community is underestimated. Emigrants from overseas countries were deprived of the opportunity to visit their homeland as frequent as those residing in Europe, thereby an imperative to preserve tradition through diverse activities is accentuated. Australia holds particular significance not only due to the number of emigrant population, but also on the account of its proactive multicultural policy framework. Dona Kolar-Panov analyses the conditions of the Macedonian and Croatian diasporas on the territory of Western Australia and their cultural contexts, especially after disintegration processes in Yugoslavia. She emphasizes "[m]eanwhile, the Macedonian community in Australia has to confront a difficult task of claiming its cultural space inside Australian multiculturalism and is facing a challenging task of creating an Australian-Macedonian cultural identity while avoiding regression to ethno-nationalism" (Kolar-Panov, 1997: 78). Her observation aligns with the increasingly prominent concept of transculturalism. This framework addresses the phenomenon of multigenerational connections between immigrants and their host country. In this context, "a dual allegiance to host and origin countries" (Scully, 2012: 196) occurs, especially among representatives of the second or third generation of immigrants. Valuable insights on this topic are provided by researchers who have studied the Macedonian population in Australia. Their work offers a deeper understanding of migration experiences, cultural adaptation, and the transformation of ethnic identity within the diaspora (Hill, 1989; Najdovski, 1997; Jakubowicz, 1995; Ben-Moshe, Pyke, Kirpitchenko 2016).

Examining processes of migration and conditions in the diaspora in the 21st century, this research will be focused on a specific regional entity functioning as a cultural carrier. As

[11] www.abs.gov.au

a research sample, Sydney with approximately 11,500 declared Macedonians, the second-largest city in Australia in terms of Macedonian population density, will be focus of exploration. Macedonians have established various organizations, clubs and associations. Macedonians representing different generations with permanent residence in Sydney were interviewed, describing their relationship to Macedonian culture. The Macedonian Cultural and Artistic Association *Ilinden* serves as a representative case for this research. According to its official website, the society was founded by a collective of local enthusiasts 59 years ago, on November 26, 1966.[12] The forthcoming year, will mark the celebration of the society's 60th anniversary - a significant milestone. Further evidence confirming the society's enduring relevance and popularity is the establishment of its sister group, *MKUD Ilinden* Western Sydney. His activities have been noted by the Macedonian Agency for Emigration, as well as by several Macedonian and Australian electronic and print media.

Figure 2. Dance ensemble Ilinden. Courtesy of Macedonian Cultural and Artistic Association *Ilinden* collection

[12] https://www.ilinden.com.au/

Of particular interest to the study was the current choreographer of the company, Christopher Karafilovski, who has held this position since 2007. As choreographer, he shapes not only the artistic program but also the overarching vision of the company's work. The primary mission of the association is cultivation of Macedonian culture. "Beyond preserving our folk dances, Ilinden fosters a sense of community, providing a space for Macedonians to connect, celebrate, and share their cultural identity. We are a place where language, customs, and traditions are cherished and passed on to future generations, ensuring that our cultural legacy remains vibrant and strong" (notes Karafilovski, Christopher, personal communication, 2025, March 18-25). The organisation currently comprises approximately 250 core members, with an additional hundred members in *Ilinden* Western Sydney. The organization structure includes several tiers categorized by age and proficiency, as well as a representative performance group. Alongside their regular practice programs, they maintain elite performance group composed of dancers who exemplify remarkable skill and artistic excellence. The ansamble repertoire includes iconic folk-dances such as *Dracevka, Malesevsko, Radovishki Sobor, Ohridski Igri, Belmorski Biser, Pijanec, Kumanovka, Egejka* and many other Macedonian dances. The association has staged numerous performances at festivals and diverse cultural events the Canberra Multicultural Festival, Woodford Folk Festival, Sydney Dance Esteddfords, and the NSW Premiers Dinner etc. Furthermore, guest appearances in Macedonia were recorded during the 1970s, 1980s, 2005, and 2008. A planned tour in 2020 was cancelled due to the global pandemic outbreak.

Migration, compared to the beginning of the 20th century (the time of Panov's *Pechalbari*), has undergone drastic transformations. It is no longer temporary, but is characterized by permanent emigration or migration of all family members. The reason is not only caused by the economic factor, but also by the opportunities offered by the host country (in terms of education, health, legal system, career advancement, etc.). Today we are talking about a diaspora characterized by multi-generational continuity within the new homeland. A figure that exceeds 110,000 residents of Macedonian origin born in Australia confirms this assertion. Cultural ties are not direct connections to the homeland, but indirectly transmitted through parental influence as cultural and identity idioms. These identity features evolve quite naturally, particularly within multicultural societies. In the aforementioned research, the authors highlight the participation of young population activities of these collectives, which function as nuclei for nurturing Macedonian culture

and language. “Those under 40 were more likely to be involved in sporting and social organisations, at 62 per cent and 65 per cent respectively, compared with involvement rates of 37 per cent and 34 per cent respectively for those over 40” (Ben-Moshe, Pyke, Kirpitchenko, 2016: 61). As was emphasized in the interview:

> The initial spark of interest in Macedonian folk dance among younger generations often originates from parental encouragement, families eager to pass down their cultural heritage. However, we acknowledge the increasing challenges posed by assimilation of younger generations into Australian culture. Maintaining a strong connection to our roots requires ongoing effort and creative strategies to engage young people in a world where diverse cultural influences are prevalent. We strive to make our programs relevant and appealing, ensuring that the beauty and significance of Macedonian folklore resonate with today’s youth. (Karafilovski, Christopher, personal communication, 2025, March 18-25)

The younger generation constitutes a crucial link for the continuation and preservation of traditions. They serve as guardians and perpetuators of tradition. This contemporary example from Australian society, illustrates how the body studies and accumulates tradition and identity markers (primarily transmitted through music and dance). Their bodies embody the tradition, bringing it to life via their performative presence and contributing to its sustainability and continuity.

In conclusion, the body in the diaspora serves as a guardian of tradition. Nevertheless, while younger population operates within different social and cultural context, they accumulate and embody the Macedonian identity through their (performative) bodies. Their bodies become vessels of cultural specifics of Macedonian culture. As shown in Chart 3, bodies act as a repository for accumulation and maintenance of identity characteristics. The model associated with the first period (Chart 2) showed a body that was a medium for presentation and promotion, a body that originally had known and ‘carried’ dance practices. The second model shows a function related to adoption and preservation of tradition. This performing body is a transmitter of cultural identity traits (including intangible culture) serving as a medium for their continuation. These are frequently learned and adopted by the second or third generation of migrants. Such practice is particularly significant for perserving and highlighting identity-based ethnic characteristics against the background of the multicultural context of Australian society.

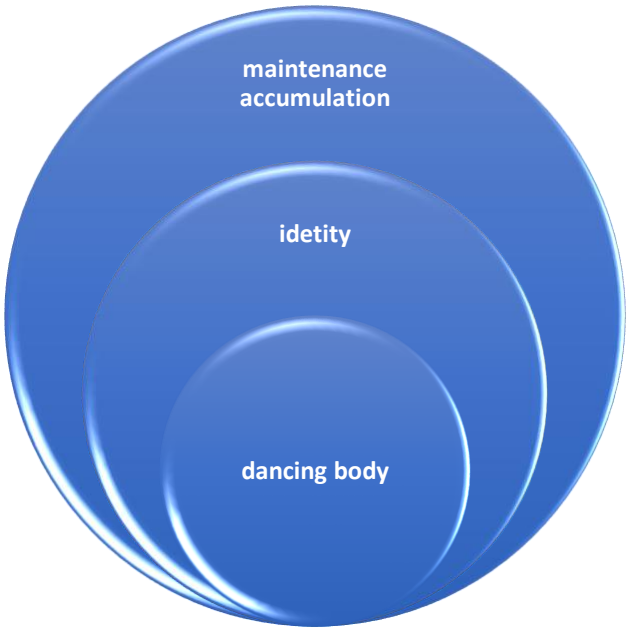

Chart 3

Conclusion

The study highlights the dynamic interplay between corporeal performance, collective memory, and emphasizing identity in multinational contexts. It traces evolution across historical and geographic boundaries. It reveals how embodied practices, particularly dance, serve not only as expressions of cultural continuity but also as adaptive responses to displacement and diaspora. Layla Zami introduces the concept of PerforMemory. She observes the dance body as a vault of memory linked to diaspora, tradition, and related conceptual categories. "PerforMemory foregrounds corporeality as a mode of production and transmission of cultural memory" (Zami, 2020: 29) writes the author. My primary goal in studying Macedonian migration was to analyze the transmission not only of cultural memory, but also specific cultural models across different historical periods. The analysis reveals, the evolutional transition in the function of the fundamental bodily element when placed in different temporal-spatial contexts shaped by migration.

The body represents a matrix that accumulates, transmits and constructs identity (personal, family, cultural, religious, ethnic, etc.) In the example of migrant workers from the 30s-40s of the 20th century, a transition towards a new function - the staged presentation and promotion of the dance body - that did not exist before, has been observed. This emergent position of the body contributed to the affirmation of cultural identity within a broader European frames. The dance body conversely in contemporary

conditions and trends of the 21st century, especially within communities exhibiting multi-generational ties to their adopted 'homeland,' brought a completely new status to the body. The bodies first need to adopt and accumulate, and than embody the Macedonian dance tradition thereby integrating into the multicultural mosaic of Australia. Consequently, the dance manifests clearly expressed characteristics and uniqueness in its cultural and identity format.

"The body is a home" claims Layla Zami (2020: 133). The concept of "the body as a home" signifies the process of connecting with the location/place that each of us feels as home. It is a movement through space, time, but also memory. By performing the folk-dance, the performer localizes his presence regardless of where he actually is. He returns to Macedonia through his steps, his rhythm and his emotion.[13]

The migrant dance body that was observed exhibits divergent function in both examples. However, what they have in common is that they create an imaginary space of home by body practice. In reference to the research out of 1083 respondents, the following findings had been obtained: "An overwhelming majority of 86.5 per cent in the survey described themselves as being either "very close" or "close" in their feelings towards Macedonia" (Ben-Moshe, Pyke, Kirpitchenko, 2016: 60). Cultural features play a crucial role in shaping matrices of belonging. Each of us pretty easily relates and identifies with the music and dance from our birthplace, from our childhood, from family gatherings and from our home. It helps us establish relationships of belonging of what our homeland signifies to us even when we are far from our birth place.

From all that has been presented, one may conclude that, it is evident that the dance body functions as culturally inscribed medium through which notions of home, identity, and belonging are embodied and transmitted across diasporic temporalities and spatialities.

[13] In this context, I highlight several excerpts from the interviews that were conducted. In response to the question about the significance of Macedonian dance and music in their lives, they answered. "Being so far away our culture unites us here. Nothing more important than understanding who you are. Preserving and passing it on to your children. Dancing oro is probably the easiest way to enjoy our culture" (J.K., female, age 51); "Each step of the dance brought me closer to home, as if I had never left Macedonia" (E.J., female, age 43); "When I dance, I feel that I am little more connected to my people. More specifically, I'm connected to my ancestors, who would have danced to the same melodies and rhythms"(M.D, male, age 56).

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