



Tensions of the Historiographic Traces of Brazilian Zouk

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ABSTRACT – Tensions of the Historiographic Traces of Brazilian Zouk – This article aims to disseminate information about Brazilian Zouk and contribute to the historical understanding of Brazilian dances through critical reflection. To this end, we researched various bibliographic sources, such as articles, theses, dissertations, videos, and reports, in addition to personal notes. The analysis showed disputes concerning the following aspects: 1) the rise of the musical rhythm and dance; 2) the use of basic and competitive movements; 3) the process of commodification; and 4) contemporary issues related to the body. It is important to emphasize that this work is motivated by the necessity to broaden the debate on dance historiography in the country.

Keywords: **Brazilian Zouk. Historiography. Dance. Autoethnography. History of Dance in Brazil.**

RÉSUMÉ – Tensions dans les Traces Historiographiques du Zouk Brésilien – Cet article a pour objectif de diffuser des informations concernant le zouk brésilien et de contribuer à une compréhension historique des danses brésiliennes par le biais d'une analyse critique. Afin d'atteindre cet objectif, diverses sources bibliographiques telles que des articles, thèses, mémoires, vidéos et rapports ont été consultées, ainsi que des notes personnelles. L'analyse révèle des controverses entourant les aspects suivants: 1) l'émergence du rythme musical et de la danse; 2) l'utilisation de mouvements de base et de mouvements compétitifs; 3) le processus de marchandisation; et 4) les problématiques contemporaines liées au corps. Il est important de souligner que cette étude est motivée par la nécessité d'élargir les discussions autour de l'historiographie de la danse au sein du pays.

Mots-clés: **Zouk Brésilien. Historiographie. Danse. Autoethnographie. Histoire de la Danse au Brésil.**

RESUMO – Tensionamentos dos Rastros Historiográficos do Zouk Brasileiro – O artigo objetiva difundir informações a respeito do Zouk Brasileiro, buscando contribuir com a historicização de danças brasileiras por meio de uma reflexão crítica. Para isso, foram consultadas fontes bibliográficas (artigos, teses, dissertações, vídeos e reportagens) e registros de diários de campo. As análises evidenciam disputas a respeito dos pontos: 1) surgimento do ritmo musical e da dança; 2) utilização de movimentos básicos e competitivos; 3) processo de mercantilização; e 4) questões contemporâneas do corpo. Destaca-se que o trabalho se justifica pela necessidade de ampliação dos debates acerca das historiografias de dança no país.

Palavras-chave: **Zouk Brasileiro. Historiografia. Dança. Autoetnografia. História da Dança no Brasil.**

Introduction

Addressing a subject from a historical point of view requires careful consideration to avoid constructing homogenizing and exclusionary universalisms in favor of a defended standpoint. According to Guaratto (2019), approaching dance from a historiographical perspective is no easy task. The author argues that, in addition to Dance being a field in the process of consolidation, there are disputes between individuals and institutions regarding narratives. Nevertheless, recording the past is described as one of the strategies employed in building the field.

Considering Brazil as a country with significant dance activity, Brazilian cultural manifestations are fraught with meanings related to local codes and symbols (Buarque, 2014). From this perspective, Siqueira (2016) points out that understanding dance implies mastering the cultural code in which it is embedded. For instance, we can mention the denial of folk dances by the cultural elite that consumed scenic dances, as well as the efforts to build a national identity within the political-cultural context of the late 20th century (Amaral, 2018).

In the case of Brazilian Zouk, it is believed that this dance style derived from Lambada, another Brazilian dance (BZDC, 2019b). According to the Brazilian Zouk Dance Council (BZDC, 2019b), Lambada gained popularity in the 1980s with the band Kaoma, but subsequently lost ground due to the complexity and sensuality of its movements. As a result, dancers, eager to continue dancing, began exploring other musical rhythms. It was at this time that Brazilians discovered Zouk, a musical rhythm from the French Caribbean, and adapted Lambada movements to this new rhythm, giving rise to what we know today as Brazilian Zouk.

The increased number of Brazilian Zouk dance competitions led to the establishment of the Brazilian Zouk Dance Council (BZDC), which is responsible for regulating and monitoring competitions. In addition to encouraging and promoting the dance style, the council also ranks competitors internationally. In 2014, the year of its creation, only two official competitions were held. The following year, this number rose to 11; in 2016 and 2017, there were 16 and 19 competitions, respectively. In 2018, 26 competitions were registered, and by December 2019, 39 official competi-

tions were counted. In 2020 and 2021, due to the need for social isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant decrease in the number of official Brazilian Zouk dance competitions, with 12 and 9 registered competitions, respectively. In 2022, the number of official competitions started to grow again, reaching 33 events, and by May 2023, 12 competitions had been registered. Data also shows that the council has sanctioned competitions in 18 countries, including Germany, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Spain, the United States, England, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Russia, Singapore, and Ukraine (BZDC, 2019a).

Despite the growth in the number of practitioners over the past decade, as evidenced by the increased number of congresses and competitions related to this dance style, there is a gap in the literature regarding its origins. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to recognize tensions and debates present in Brazilian Zouk dance from a historiographical perspective. Building on this argument, the intention of this work is to present the memories constructed over time within this field, observing dialogues and relations between the community of practitioners and society through historical facts and the memories of social actors. Throughout this study, we also seek to provide clues about a possible development of the professional field in this dance style, in addition to the debates and movements that drive its construction.

To this end, we researched bibliographic sources, such as Brazilian Zouk dance teacher training course materials and video archives of lectures, in addition to blog posts and council regulations published in the last five years. Additionally, employing autoethnography, we examined notes from field diaries on experiences in schools, dance events, congresses, and Brazilian Zouk dance competitions over the past ten years.

Currently, the valorization of the role of the subject has allowed for the investigation and use of oral testimonies and other narrative forms in the construction of histories (Ferreira, 2002), including dance histories, both with an 'S' at the end. Therefore, considering that in Brazilian Zouk oral records serve as the primary source of memory about the dance style, exploring the possible paths of its constitution based on these records becomes relevant. Thus, at the beginning of the article, some questions are

presented to familiarize the reader with the concerns that precede the specific tensions of Brazilian Zouk's history, but which are part of the common background to dance history research. Subsequently, information is provided for an initial proposal of historiographical construction of Brazilian Zouk based on accounts, lectures, and relevant bibliographic materials. In order to highlight the tensions and debates present in the constitution of such historiography, points such as origin, development, professionalization, and gender will be emphasized.

Dance History Research: Initial Theoretical Conceptualization

The History of Dance is still permeated by superficial descriptions of significant events and dates, which weakens its understanding. According to Buarque (2014), countries such as Italy, France, and the United States have a vast academic production on dance, while Brazil has scarce written references and limited academic production on the histories and memories of this art form. Therefore, researchers need to be dedicated not only to organizing facts, but also to reflecting on the construction of the dance field. "Far from a totalizing search to know the past as it actually was [...], it is about pointing out traces and clues, as well as tensions" (Cerbino, 2022, n.p.) present throughout the development of Brazilian Zouk.

In order to construct a critical reflection on a Dance historiography, it is necessary to delve into concepts that underlie studies that propose to investigate a theme from a historical perspective. As an example, we can mention the excluding dualism between concepts widely used in research. The dichotomous perception between history and memory, theory and practice, and written and oral tradition has influenced the maintenance of positivist thought characteristics regarding knowledge construction, which categorically discredits the multiplicity of ways of preserving memory (Neto; Silva, 2022). In this context, although memory and history are not synonymous, they are also not antagonistic (Cerbino, 2022).

According to Nora (1993), memory is constantly evolving. The author justifies such viewpoint by claiming that memory is carried by living groups and is associated with "[...] the dialectic of remembrance and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to all uses and manipulations, susceptible to long latencies and sudden revitalizations" (Nora,

1993, p. 9). Memory can be understood as a reconstruction of the past through current information and already altered recollections from an earlier time (Vasconcelos, 2018). In this context, memory is understood as something current and resulting from at times vague and fluctuating recollections, while history is a presentation of the past that requires analysis and critical discourse.

Pollack (1992) further argues that memory plays a fundamental role in the construction of both individual and collective identities, allowing for continuity through self-reconstructions. In this sense, individuals would depend on changes, negotiations, and transformations that occur collectively for the construction of self-images. In other words, the author suggests that identities are produced through collectively constructed agreements based on recognition and opposition to the other.

Still in this context, it is necessary to mention the importance of being attentive to subterranean memories, produced by groups whose discourses do not align with the official narratives of the State (Pollack, 1992). Actors from minority groups are responsible for producing memories and recollections that “may be considered intangible heritage and often confront official memories” (Buarque, 2014, p. 22). Although they may not be tangible in documents or official records due to the lack of archives and documentation, these subterranean memories are also memories of official facts that hold legitimacy. Thus, the memories of these actors can be considered significant in the search for clues about the constitution of a professional field.

Thus, the memories of selected actors can be seen as an extremely important factor in the search for clues that point to the creation of a professional dance field in Brazil. It is through the statements of prominent actors, the trajectories and actions of artists and groups, and the biographies that the ‘sites of memory’ are composed (Buarque, 2014, p. 22).

In the case of Brazilian Zouk, as to which most of the information is orally transmitted from masters to students, it is possible that the history is permeated by alterations resulting from memory. Since memories can be understood as “collective operations of interpreting past events that one wishes to safeguard” (Pollack apud Buarque, 2014, p. 23), the use of oral tradition and memories may raise doubts about the accuracy of recollections; hence, there could be a problem concerning the perception of an in-

tact transmission and the perception of noise existing in the memories (Buarque, 2014, p. 23).

Furthermore, it is necessary to approach the subject critically, understanding that the transmission of knowledge occurs through individual and collective choices about what should be perpetuated or forgotten. Questions arise about the criteria for selecting and reproducing information, as well as the legitimacy of the authorities established by the community as references in dance technique.

In this context, beyond gathering dates and significant events, the following information regarding Brazilian Zouk technique is collected from oral records of lectures, interviews, classes, rehearsals, and dance events. Additionally, debates and conflicts occurring within this field are highlighted, aiming to enable a reflection on its trajectory and formation.

Hybridism: cultural exchanges and the rise of new dances

It is believed that the origins of ballroom dances can be traced back to Europe during the Renaissance period. Subsequently, as they gained popularity in noble salons, they spread to the colonies, where they received diverse local influences (Moraes, 2019). According to Volp (1994), ballroom dance is characterized by the synchronization of steps performed by two dancers. However, concerning partner movements, it is important to highlight that, throughout Dance History, gender roles have undergone changes. For instance, in the late 19th century, it was common that the male dancer's main function in Classical Ballet was to assist in showcasing his partner (Laws, 2002).

Ballroom dance is also regarded as a social dance, as ballroom gatherings were important events for entertainment, social interaction, and business. Examples of this can be seen in the influence of Waltz, Polka, and Quadrille in Brazilian high society (Paula, 2008). Ballroom dance would lose some followers, being considered outdated and outmoded during the disco era. However, after the international success of the musical style Lambada in the 1980s, it regained attention from the youth and reclaimed its prominent position (BZDC, 2019b).

Regarding Lambada, Lamen (2018) indicates that this musical style contributed to the Amazonian regional culture through an aesthetic posture

that was open to intersection with other arts, making it a hybrid form. This was mainly due to popular musicians needing to adapt to “drastic changes in aesthetic, technical, and technological standards” between the 1950s and 1970s (Lamen, 2018). The market demanded musicians capable of playing different genres, influenced by Latin American rhythms that reached Pará in the early 1960s.

Lamen (2018) highlights that Belém became a convergence center of a growing regional transnational economy after World War II. The crews of ships docking in the city were responsible for this centralization. The region connected the northern part of the country to countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, Guianas, and Suriname (Figure 1), and the vessels transporting goods and contraband had an impact on the local economy and information flow. Consequently, records with diverse styles of Caribbean music were brought to the region by sailors, fishermen, and travelers around 1960 (Lamen, 2018), promoting an intense exchange of popular knowledge.



Figure 1 – Northern Borders of the Country. Source: BBC (2020).

In the late 1970s, the fusion of foreign musical genres in the region, such as Ska and Merengue, along with existing Brazilian genres, such as Carimbó, Guitarrada, and Maxixe, led to the rise of Lambada. The first Lambada song was released on the album “Pinduca no Embalo do Carimbó e Sirimbó” in 1976 (Argolo; Carina, 2016). Regarding the creation and choice of the name, the artist recorded on his website:

Once, during a rehearsal with my musical ensemble at my house, I created something that wasn't samba, carimbó, or mambo, but it had a delightful rhythm. A few days later, I was performing at a dance event at Coqueiro's headquarters, and the party seemed dull. That's when I remembered to have them play that rhythm that arose during the rehearsal, and, to my surprise, the dance floor got filled with dancers. At that moment, I pondered what could awaken a person more: a belt lash or a shot of spirit to spur them to work? That's how I chose the name for the musical genre: lambada [lash, gulp of alcohol] (Pinduca apud Caldas, 2011, n. p.).

Regarding this topic, Oliveira and Junior (2010) argue that the term used to name the musical genre was initially associated with vibrant songs and later acquired the status of a rhythm. According to these authors, the expression refers to the swaying motion of the female dancers' skirts. Therefore, further in-depth studies are still needed to clarify the origin of the name and the musical genre itself.

Lambada became widespread in the following years and, as it became associated with Northeastern forró, it gained strength and spread to peripheral areas and mining regions (Caldas, 2011). In the 1980s, as the music genre gained mass popularity, a two-person dance style also known as Lambada emerged. In a broad sense, it can be said that there is no longer a requirement for a dance to be exclusively tied to a specific musical genre. However, considering that there is more literature on the Lambada musical rhythm, it can provide clues to understanding the dance. In the case of this dance technique, the musical genre comes first and serves as a foundation for the creation of the dance style, influencing it throughout its history.

Regarding these cultural exchanges, it is argued that the musical genre and dance known as Carimbó influenced the creation of the rhythm and, subsequently, the movements of Lambada (Figure 2). Through oral history, masters claim that Lambada began with a kind of Carimbó that was danced in an embrace, with new elements added later (Argolo; Carina, 2018). As an example of this relationship, some Lambada steps are inspired by arm movements performed by female Carimbó dancers with their long skirts. Concerning the bodily movements in Lambada, it should be emphasized that among its initial characteristics were the close embrace, with dancers dancing with their bodies very close together, as well as rhythmic footwork and pelvic movements, often guided by the leader through body contact.



Figure 2 – Carimbó (left) and Lambada (right). Source: BZDC (2021).

The transformation of the Lambada musical genre resulted in changes in the dance as both spread throughout Brazil. Spins and back extensions, known as *cambré*, were added as the dancers began to dance more apart. Additionally, when Lambada reached Porto Seguro and Arraial d’Ajuda (BA), it incorporated movements of the torso and head, popularly known as trunk and head movements¹, as well as elements from regional dances — such as *Forró*, *Samba de Gafieira*, and *Brazilian Bolero*, (Argolo; Carina, 2016; BZDC, 2019b). This historical constitution allows for reflection on processes of cultural hybridization, as the movement known as Lambada is marked by cultural contact with aesthetic elements from indigenous, African, and Portuguese dances (Oliveira; Junior, 2010). Regarding this theme, Jaime Arôxa indicates the existence of three main characteristics inherited by Lambada: “[...] the classical posture of the torso from Europeans; swing, *batuque*, and the way the hips are worked inherited from Africans; and the footwork, strong contact with the ground” (Argolo; Carina, 2018, p. 7) inherited from Brazilian indigenous people.

Lambada² has a great affinity with the Dance Families (Motta, 2006) transfer, locomotion, and turns. In terms of dynamics, high intensity, accents, and impulses are highlighted, as well as execution modes such as led, thrown, and balanced. Movements have large amplitudes and can be performed in all three planes of movement, assuming different spatial levels.

Additionally, there are movements in which the dancers dance with their bodies close together and others where the bodies are apart. As mentioned earlier, rhythmic marking is very present in the lower limbs, while hip and back movements receive emphasis.

During his research and conversations with masters and dancers, Adílio Porto mentions that the Lambada dance seems to have been presented as a social dance for the first time at the Jatobá venue, a venue in Arraial d'Ajuda that belonged to the Maroto Dance School³. According to this master, after a long journey from Belém do Pará to Porto Seguro, the Lambada dance gained recognition around 1981 at Maroto.

The Lambada became popular, attracting tourists who gathered to watch performances and competitions. Lambada marathons emerged, where dancers performed for long hours, competing for prizes (Alo, 2023). Notable among them are the Santos brothers, two remarkable masters who contributed to the spread and popularization of the dance: Braz Dos Santos⁴, a winner of competitions such as the Champion of Champions, and Didi Dos Santos⁵, a marathon champion. Alongside his partner Rebeca Ro Lang, Didi incorporated steps and movements created or inspired by other dances. In addition to the Santos brothers, “Josy Borges, ‘Patrícias’, Rebeca, Bebé (BA), Renato Dias (RJ), Gilson (SP), and others” provided outstanding contributions” (Argolo; Carina, 2018, p. 8).

At times, accidents also played a role in the evolution of Lambada. For instance, the movement known as ‘sitting cambre’ originated when a dancer’s shoes got untied during a dance, and she was compelled to sit on her partner’s knee on the dance floor to tie them (Alo, 2023, n. p.).

It is believed that the dance spread not only throughout Bahia but also to São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and the world. It can be affirmed that contributions and adaptations over time have helped shape what is now understood as the Lambada dance, making it an internationally recognized phenomenon.

Crisis: the fall of lambada and the rise of brazilian zouk

In 1989, the release of the song “Chorando Se Foi”⁶ by the band Kama had a significant international impact. With over five million copies sold, the song topped international charts. In this context, fueled by the

production of films and soap operas that explored the theme of Lambada, the success of the music led to an increased demand for dance classes in fitness centers (BZDC, 2019b). It is worth noting that Lambada dance was prominently featured in Kaoma's concerts and music videos, influencing the popularity of both the dance and fashion, including attire, among the population.

In Rio de Janeiro, Lambada dance arrived in 1988, introduced by Master Jaime Arôxa. Between 1989 and 1994, Lambada gained great popularity in the city, with various venues hosting Lambada dance events, such as Ilha dos Pescadores, a party venue where dances were held on Thursdays and Sundays, organized by the late Tio Piu⁷. However, despite the growing interest in learning Lambada dance, teachers of that time complained that classes started with several students but would dwindle in the following months (Argolo; Carina, 2016). According to teachers, this was due to the rapid rhythmic marking and the high level of difficulty in the movements, which did not favor the teaching-learning process. The difficulty was so evident that it was even addressed by Maurício de Souza in the *Turma da Mônica* comics (Figure 3). Especially because Lambada was mainly practiced socially by amateur dancers, the participants' age became an important factor in whether people were able to dance this technique (BZDC, 2019b). It is likely that this relation also contributed to a higher number of young Brazilian Zouk dance practitioners compared to other partner dance techniques today.



Figure 3 – The difficulty of dancing Lambada. Source: Mônica (1990).

Furthermore, it is believed that sensuality and the end of the band Kama also contributed to the decline in classes. After an event known as “Enterro da Lambada” (The Burial of Lambada), Jaime Arôxa appointed Renata Peçanha and Adílio Porto, dancers of his company, to take over his classes⁸. This duo is recognized by the community as those main responsible for systematizing the basic movements used in Brazilian Zouk. According to the pioneers of this dance, this event was a result of DJs’ dissatisfaction with the high demand for Lambada in the city’s dance venues (BZDC, 2019b; Argolo; Carina, 2016).

Zouk did not have a single creator; it had several people who helped the movement to continue the dance [Lambada] but ended up creating another wonderful form of dancing. If you ask me, ‘Adílio, did you participate in the Creation of Zouk Movement?’ I would answer, ‘Yes, I was one of them. Perhaps the most stubborn among the people who were there from the beginning, the one who never gave up, the one who fought a lot, the one who left home at 14 and went to live at Jaime’s school and still hasn’t returned because for 30 years, I’ve been trave-

ling and there are still many places to take this wonderful dance called Brazilian Zouk to' (Porto, 2020, online).

After the loss of popularity, teachers and dancers found other ways to continue dancing. In the 1990s, similarities were identified between Lambada and the musical rhythm Zouk (Peçanha, 2015), which originated from the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Zouk enabled dancers to keep dancing and, as a result, their body movements were gradually adapted and influenced by this new musical rhythm. For instance, one strategy used by teachers was adopting a slower rhythmic marking to facilitate learning and reduce the drop in the number of students⁹.

The history of the Zouk genre is linked to the group Kassav'¹⁰, which was the pioneer and driving force behind this musical genre. With the aim of creating a specific musical identity for the Caribbean islands for international presentation, Zouk was developed around 1979 in Guadeloupe by the group led by Pierre-Edouard Décimus and Freddy Marshal (Laupeze, 2016). It is believed that Zouk reflects the musical diversity of the Caribbean, combining earlier musical influences such as reggae and cadence-lypso with elements of traditional music inherited from the period of slavery. Additionally, the use of technologies such as digital recordings and electronic drums also contributed to the sonic evolution of this genre (Laupeze, 2016). Thus, this Caribbean musical genre combines traditional influences such as gwo ka and biguine with modern elements of pop, dance, and hip-hop music (Desroches, 1992).

Originally sung in Creole, a language created through the mix of African, European, and indigenous languages, Zouk enabled artists to authentically express their experiences and cultural identity (Laupeze, 2016). However, due to the presence of French in the Caribbean islands, the language was also incorporated into Zouk music, boosting its commercial success and international recognition.

The widespread acceptance among Caribbean audiences led to the name "Zouk" for this genre, referencing a typical dance party. According to Laupeze (2016), Zouk became the preferred musical genre in the region, meeting the creators' expectations by offering original music deeply rooted in the Caribbean environment. Furthermore, Zouk played a fundamental role in the cultural empowerment of Caribbean communities, providing a

connection to their roots and a shared Caribbean identity. This cultural connection also extended to the Caribbean diaspora around the world (Laupeze, 2016).

In terms of movement, the original Zouk¹¹ dance from Guadeloupe and Martinique is characterized by being danced with the bodies of the dancers very close together¹² (Argolo; Carina, 2018), with few or almost no movements of separation between the bodies. In Caribbean Zouk, the rhythmic marking on the lower limbs occurs primarily on the beat, as opposed to off-beat. Additionally, the main Dance Families (Motta, 2006) present are the transfer and small displacements. The dance takes place at a high level, with a practically upright posture, prioritizing small hip movements that can also be observed in the Kizomba dance.

Regarding the contact between Lambada and the Zouk musical genre, it occurred in different ways in Brazilian states. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, when teachers noticed a difficulty related to teaching circular body movements in Lambada, they proposed performing movements in line, influenced by other Brazilian dance styles, such as Samba de Gafieira and Bolero. Based on this, elements like the “basic step forward and back” were included (BZDC, 2019b, n. p.). Contact with linear Salsa also led to the emergence of new movements, such as lateral, bônus, and raul. An interesting fact about this process is that the bônus movement received its name for being a bonus to the student who learned the set of basic steps in the style¹³.

On the other hand, while, in Rio de Janeiro, Lambada branched out from the development of methodologies with slower rhythmically marked music, emphasizing the use of melody, the style danced in Porto Seguro continued to evolve with fast-paced music and movements similar to those of Lambada from the 1980s (Oliveira; Junior, 2010). Through teachers such as Philip Miha, the relation between Lambada and Zouk in the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais occurred differently, leading to the emergence of different styles within Brazilian Zouk. Currently, Brazilian Zouk has branches such as Traditional Brazilian Zouk, Zouk Flow, Neozouk, Urban Zouk, and others. This fact can be interpreted as a result of “adherence to the neoliberal trend of commercializing culture” (Oliveira; Junior,

2010, n. p.), with these branches acquiring product status and enabling professionals to be seen as specialists in a particular technique.

Traditional Brazilian Zouk¹⁴, developed by Renata Peçanha and Adílio Porto, has as one of its main characteristics the execution of movements in synchrony with the rhythmic marking of the music. However, it is also possible to perform them according to the melody (Argolo; Carina, 2018). When analyzing the movements, it is observed that transfers, locomotion, and turns are the most present Dance Families in this branch. Although movements occur in all three planes of motion, undulations are mainly performed in the frontal and sagittal planes (Argolo; Carina, 2018). Locomotions can be executed through straight or circular line displacements, and there is a spatial emphasis on using movements at high levels. Regarding the form, straight, curved, and angular lines stand out. It is important to emphasize that the passage of force (Motta, 2006) is well defined, allowing the identification of initiation and sequencing (Bartenieff; Lewis, 1993) of the movement, which mainly occurs in a continuous flow and with a guided mode of execution.

Zouk Flow¹⁵, systematized around 2002 by the teacher and DJ Bruno Barreto, also known as Arknjo (Argolo; Carina, 2018), is a branch that emphasizes the Flow Factor of Movement. In this sense, the predominant use of free and continuous flow movements is highlighted, seeking to minimize the perception of the beginning and end of each movement. The creator of the branch emphasizes that there was an attempt to move away “from the regionality of Zouk/Lambada to embrace a more urban and globalized movement” (Arknjo apud Argolo; Carina, 2018). The presence of rhythmic marking in the lower limbs and the execution of circumductions and trunk twists stimulate the perception of polyrhythm, which can be observed through the Homologous Connection Pattern (upper/lower; cranial/caudal) (Hackney, 1998). This approach contributes to a broad perception of Sculpted Form. It is also worth noting that hip movements are not given as much emphasis as in other branches.

Neozouk¹⁶ was systematized by Mafie Zouker and its main characteristic is the concept of unlimitation (Argolo; Carina, 2018). In this style, the freedom of creation and movement is highly valued, enabling the leaders to be attentive to the individualities that each follower brings to their dance.

Each response to the previous movement is seen as an opportunity for creation, taking into account the particularities of the body and individual experiences (Argolo; Carina, 2018). It is also worth noting that the rhythmic marking in the lower limbs is not prioritized as in other styles. Movements involving circling of the head, anterior and lateral flexion and extension of the spine are emphasized, and they are mainly led through contact between the leader's upper limbs and the follower's upper body. As there is a focus on the torso, the distances between the dancers' bodies are less evident. Locomotions tend to produce more circular movements, and there is a strong affinity with the Sculpted Form (Bartenieff; Lewis, 1993), twists, and deformations.

Urban Zouk (formerly known as Zouk Black)¹⁷ was strongly influenced by Hip-Hop and was created around 2008 by Renato Veronezi (Argolo; Carina, 2018). Consequently, the Flow is predominantly discontinuous, accents are widely present, and movements are often more segmented than in other styles. There is a greater affinity with the Strong element and verticality. Regarding musical timing, marking on the offbeat is favored over marking on the beat.

With the increasing demand for Brazilian Zouk in other countries, congresses emerged with the aim of bringing together practitioners of the dance style. Among the main annual congresses are Zouk in Rio (Rio de Janeiro, 2013–present), Rio Zouk Congress (Rio de Janeiro, 2014–present), Casa do Zouk (Australia, 2014–present), Russian Zouk Congress (Russia, 2014–present), Prague Zouk Congress (Prague, 2014–present), Aliança Zouk (Rio de Janeiro, 2015–present), Zouk Day Congress (São Paulo, 2016–present), Ilha do Zouk (Rio de Janeiro and Australia, 2009 to 2013, 2022), and Brasil Latin Open (São Paulo, 2014–2019). By hosting participants from different cities around the world during their events, these congresses provide spaces for socialization between individuals from diverse cultures, fostering close bonds, emotional exchanges, and business opportunities. Moreover, beyond offering classes with professionals recognized in the international market, shows, and dance parties, the congresses feature competitions that often serve as gateways to the international job market for their winners. It is worth noting that, in addition to boosting the economy,

Brazilian Zouk competitions significantly influence the career trajectories of the dancers who practice it.

Basic Movements *vs.* Competitive Elements

With the increased number of competitions, there has been a transformation in choreographic elements, incorporating high-level acrobatic movements into the presentations. Historiographical records show that Russians were the main pioneers in introducing circus aspects into dance during the 20th century (Laws, 2002). Initially, these elements were related to *pas de deux* in Classical Ballet. However, due to their appeal for the audience, athletic movements continue to be used in various forms of dance, as can be observed in Brazilian Zouk competition videos easily found on YouTube. During acrobatic or highly challenging movements, such as counterbalances, lifts, and spins on the axis, the audience tends to react enthusiastically.

Although these elements are not part of the specific Zouk technique repertoire¹⁸, their use may be related to the positive reception of the audience during performances. A possible sociological analysis for this phenomenon is the valorization of the overcoming of human limits, representing the dancers as heroes for executing highly challenging movements. In response to the increasing demand for these movements in competitions, dancers have been refining their techniques, seeking training with specialized circus artists for lifts and with gymnastics coaches to master the acrobatics.

As a consequence, restrictions have been established on the use of these elements in competitions. In some improvisation competitions, such as Jack&Jill, the use of movements where dancers lose contact with both feet on the floor is prohibited. Additionally, in couple choreography competitions, limitations on the time and number of lifts have been observed in some congresses.

Acrobatics and drops (where at least one foot of each partner remains on the floor) are allowed. Aerials (when both feet of one partner leave the floor and their weight is supported) are not permitted in any category and result in immediate disqualification (preliminaries) or last place (finals) (BZDC, 2021, n. p.).

Based on the above, a debate arises regarding how competitions can influence and modify the practitioners' perception of dance technique. This relation can be observed in social Zouk Brasileiro dances, where there is a greater use of elements previously seen only in competitions. This reflects the growing interest of amateurs in performing high-difficulty movements. Consequently, these elements are incorporated into classes and workshops, and the style undergoes adaptations to meet market demands.

Social, performance, or competitive?

From another perspective, it can be asserted that Brazilian Zouk is not exclusively situated in a context of socialization at two-dance events. The increase in the number of congresses and competitions has provided new opportunities for professionals, causing this dance, which originated from socialization processes, to incorporate scenic and sportive elements. An example of this is the numerous performances that take place at congresses (Figure 4). Often, these performances are referred to as shows by professionals and can be commissioned by event organizers. In these cases, choreographies include aspects of scenic dance, such as a concern for frontality.

In parallel, there is also a sportive aspect, with performances marked by the combination of dance and sport. The so-called DanceSport is internationally regulated as a sport by the World DanceSport Federation, having been recognized as an Olympic sport by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in September 1997. Currently, DanceSport is divided into two categories: Standard (Slow Waltz, International Tango, Viennese Waltz, Slow Foxtrot, and Quickstep) and Latin (International Samba, Cha Cha Cha, Rumba, Paso Doble, and Jive) (CNDD, 2021). Although Brazilian Zouk is not regulated by this organization, there are common elements between these competitions. Therefore, it is possible that Brazilian Zouk will also be included and federated in the World DanceSport Federation in the near future.



Figure 4 – Competitive portage element. Source: Rio Zouk Congress.

Contemporary issues of the body

Another current debate within the Brazilian Zouk community is related to the roles played by genders during the dance. As a two-person dance mode, Brazilian Zouk primarily occurs through leading, the necessary stimulus for the movements to take place. Feitoza (2011) indicates that leading was associated with a certain type of control over the other body, considered successful when communication between idea and movement occurred smoothly.

Traditionally, leading was performed by individuals of the male gender, also known as gentlemen. The role of the lady was to receive the stimulus and respond appropriately to her partner's proposal. Zamoner (2011) argues that leading was originally linked to etiquette norms that individuals were expected to follow, meaning the lady's passivity in the dance was associated with the social role she should play.

Currently, with advancements resulting from the gender debate, the terms gentleman and lady have been replaced by leader and follower, respectively. This change is mainly related to the understanding that the role played in the dance is not linked to the gender of the person dancing. In this context, some competitions allow competitors to register in the roles of leaders or followers, regardless of their gender. However, there is still a long

way to go for all individuals to be welcomed, regardless of their gender, in relation to the position they will assume during the dance.

You can compete as a leader or follower, regardless of your gender or sex. You can also switch roles in different competitions. However, you can only participate in one BZDC competition level per event. For instance, you cannot participate in the beginner category as both a leader and a follower (BZDC, 2021, n. p.).

Furthermore, some teachers argue that followers should also have autonomy to propose movements during the dance, associating it with a corporal dialogue between two individuals. From this perspective, followers do not solely assume a passive role, as they can suggest and experiment with inductions. There is also a practice proposed by some practitioners at social dances, in which individuals can experience both roles during the same dance, enabling fluidity between leading and following and an alternation of roles. However, this proposal has been subject to criticism from more traditional professionals, who believe that such changes would alter the essence of partner dance.

Current Considerations

As demonstrated throughout this work, the historical traces of Brazilian Zouk are marked by struggles and debates related to the professionalization of the field, encompassing various points. Within the text, both continuities and innovations in discourses have been highlighted, as well as inherent tensions within the field. Through the research of bibliographic material, field diary notes, and memories of social actors involved, the main disputes identified are: narratives about the origin of the musical rhythm and dance, the use of basic and competitive movements, the process of commodification, and contemporary issues related to the body, such as gender.

By analyzing the history of Brazilian Zouk, it can be concluded that this dance technique appears to have arisen as a response to the crisis faced by Lambada, providing an alternative for dancers to continue expressing themselves and developing artistically. By incorporating choreographic and stylistic elements through the fusion with the Zouk musical rhythm, Brazilian Zouk gave rise to different branches within this practice.

With the rise of competitions and the influence of circus artists, Brazilian Zouk started to include acrobatic movements and high-difficulty elements, which provided a new appeal for the audience and made dancers be admired as true heroes of dance. However, this evolution also sparked discussions about the limits and safety of such movements, leading some competitions to impose restrictions. Additionally, Brazilian Zouk expanded its scope beyond social dances, gaining space in congresses, and incorporating scenic and sportive elements into its performances. This expansion provided a new dimension to the dance, combining artistic and athletic aspects in a unique manner. Another relevant aspect is the change in the understanding of gender roles during the dance. Contemporary debates and the pursuit of gender equality led to a revision of terms and concepts used, enabling greater autonomy and active participation of all dancers, regardless of gender.

In conclusion, Brazilian Zouk is an example of how dance is deeply connected with social, political, and economic issues of societies that practice it. We note the transformations and potential for exchanges, as they can lead to the creation of other forms of expression and movement. This technique has evolved over time, adapting to musical and cultural influences, incorporating acrobatic elements, and exploring different artistic and athletic aspects. Simultaneously, the debates about gender roles reflect the need for a more inclusive and egalitarian dance. Brazilian Zouk continues to develop, transform, and challenge established norms, remaining a vibrant and lively expression of Brazilian culture and creativity.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the records identified by this article provide an overview of the historical traces of Brazilian Zouk, but further in-depth research is required. Therefore, more research should be conducted to collect, organize, and disseminate information about Brazilian Zouk, contributing to the historicization of Brazilian dances through critical reflection.

Notes

- ¹ Léo and Ana Paula Gomes giving an oral presentation during a class for the BOEZ company, directed by Rafael Oliveira, in Rio de Janeiro in 2018.

- ² Lambada. Available at: <https://youtu.be/8jbdJxkqmg0>. Accessed: May 19, 2023.
- ³ Adílio Porto, considered one of the pioneering masters of Brazilian Zouk, in posts on online discussion forums about the history of Lambada and Zouk in 2020.
- ⁴ Mestre Braz, born in Porto Seguro, Brazil, in 1969, was a crucial contributor to the development of Lambada in Bocca da Barra. After winning numerous competitions, he and his brother Didi were chosen to perform internationally with the band Kaoma, which made Lambada an international sensation.
- ⁵ Mestre Didi was a pioneer of Lambada, a performer with the band Kaoma, and co-host of the Brazouka Beach Festivals. He was the innovator of many dance steps that are still danced today.
- ⁶ Music video for the song “Chorando Se Foi,” which was released by the band Kaoma. Available at: <https://youtu.be/iyLdoQGBchQ>. Accessed: May 18, 2023.
- ⁷ Adílio Porto, considered one of the key systematizing masters of Brazilian Zouk, in posts on online discussion forums about the history of Lambada and Zouk in 2020.
- ⁸ Adílio Porto delivering a lecture during the Brazilian Zouk Teachers Course at the International Zouk Congress held in January 2017 at the Choreographic Center in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- ⁹ Renata Peçanha giving a lecture during the Brazilian Zouk Teachers Course at the International Zouk Congress held in January 2017 at the Choreographic Center in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- ¹⁰ Concerts played by the band Kassav’. Available at: <https://youtu.be/oQBOtJUiea0> and <https://youtu.be/SxmGEWd5nIc>. Accessed: May 18, 2023.
- ¹¹ Basic Steps of Caribbean Zouk. Available at: https://youtu.be/3FVqswIy_3o. Accessed: May 19, 2023.
- ¹² Foundations of Caribbean Zouk. Available at: <https://youtu.be/DwcTE2GZEhI>. Accessed: May 19, 2023.
- ¹³ Renata Peçanha in classes taught at Núcleo de Dança Renata Peçanha in Rio de Janeiro in 2017.
- ¹⁴ Traditional Zouk. Available at: https://youtu.be/Cw_a5TvHIcA. Accessed: May 28, 2023.
- ¹⁵ Zouk Flow. Available at: <https://youtu.be/ANp192MnRYY>. Accessed: May 28, 2023.

- ¹⁶ Neozouk. Available at: <https://youtu.be/za69LJHKFOA>. Accessed: May 18, 2023.
- ¹⁷ Urban Zouk (formerly Black Zouk). Available at: <https://youtu.be/iDjzglD2UtQ>. Accessed: May 18, 2023.
- ¹⁸ Renata Peçanha in classes taught at the Renata Peçanha Dance Center in Rio de Janeiro in 2017.

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