arts

MDPI

Essay

Staging Statecraft: Dance Festivals and Cultural Representations in Konark, Odisha, India

Mihika Banerjee

Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA; mihika26@g.ucla.edu

Abstract: This essay argues that dance festivals are choreographed spaces that shape cultural heritage. The Konark Dance Festival in Odisha, India, is an annual program situated around the Konark Sun Temple, a UNESCO-recognized World Heritage Site. The following explores the interrelationship between the modern space of the temple monument and the modern format of festival dances in Konark. The festival project juxtaposes the monument's archaeological value with the dances' cultural value in choreographic neatness, which requires a critical interrogation to determine the negotiations, appropriations, and discomfort these processes otherwise entail. This article also branches out into cultural discourses beyond the stated festival that examine the historical, diplomatic, and touristic networks the dance festival often encompasses. Following the creation of the modern state of Odisha (in 1936) and of the independent nation of India (in 1947), Odisha regional dance forms were remodelled to produce the state dance Odissi, which gained national "classical" recognition in the 1960s and subsequent international repute. Odissi dance has subsequently been formulated and globally circulated as an anthropomorphic symbol of the geopolitical state of Odisha. Through ethnography, visual study, and choreographic analysis, this essay explores the (re)presentational aspects of the region-state in and through dance, which rhetorically inform the staging of the Konark Dance Festival.

Keywords: nation-state; dance; heritage; history; festivals

Citation: Banerjee, Mihika. 2024. Staging Statecraft: Dance Festivals and Cultural Representations in Konark, Odisha, India. *Arts* 13: 166. https://doi.org/10.3390/arts13060166

Academic Editor: Andrew M. Nedd

Received: 25 December 2023
Revised: 23 October 2024
Accepted: 25 October 2024
Published: 4 November 2024

WINTER NOON, KONARK

Here,
it is only
the dance of the shadows and light.
And the dilapidated history of Orissa sits crouched
in between the laughter
Of the sensuous nautch-girls of stone on the temple walls.
Even the sultry voice of the wind that blows from our past
comes dilapidated.
Here
it is only the soft sunlight of a warm winter noon
which moves over the naked, broken granite bodies
in silent footsteps
as if some obscure figure among the glorious stones
has woken up from its ancient death.

—Jayanta Mahapatra (1997)[1]

On a winter noon, I reached Konark. A small village town in the Odisha state, located in the eastern part of India, Konark is well known for its landmark Sun Temple (Figure 1). Tourists travel from all over the world to visit this World Heritage Site (WHS). On the one hand, Konark is connected by road to the capital city of Bhubaneswar (65 kilometres away). On the other, the coastal lines join Konark to Puri (37 kilometres away), a pilgrimage centre famous both locally and nationally. Konark has developed as a significant centre for tourism in Odisha, owing not only to the archaeological monument of the Sun Temple, but also to the scenic beauty of the neighbouring Chandrabhaga Sea Beach and the cultural extravaganza of the Konark Dance Festival.

Figure 1. Map of India indicating the state of Odisha and the region of Konark.

India hosts 43 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, of which Konark Temple is the only one in Odisha.[2] The Konark Sun Temple was declared a World Heritage Site in 1984. Subsequently, in 1987, an open-air auditorium was built near the temple precinct, and in 1989, the first Konark Dance Festival was organized. It is crucial to underscore the close correspondence of the two events (the recognition of the Sun Temple as a World Heritage Site and the launch of the Konark Dance Festival) to understand how important they both have been for the tourism they generate for the region. Moreover, a corresponding relationship between the monumental edifice and the festival is reflected in the choreography, as the Konark Sun Temple is made to serve as the material background for the staging of the dances. The choreographic juxtaposition of the temple and festival dances offers a spectacle to the viewer that seems aesthetically evocative and politically redolent. This essay examines how the stagecraft and statecraft in Odisha are somatically (re)produced in and through the dancing bodies and the festival performances.

The Konark Dance Festival is among the more reputed dance festivals organized within Odisha and India. Moreover, it is the only dance festival in Odisha set against a world heritage monument, and, thus, significant (inter)national attention and esteem are associated with the festival project. Among the plethora of scholarly and documentary works produced about Konark, its dance festival, despite its long-standing reputation, has not been considered in much detail. Few reports have focused on the tourist market the dance festival has accrued over time (Lenka and Mishra 2015; Sharma 2016; Mohanty 2018).

In addition, within the limited scholarship available on the Konark Festival, an analysis of the dance and festival choreographies has largely been overlooked. It is crucially important to recognize that the WHS branding of the site is maintained and annually regenerated through the yearly performances of the dance festivals.

Moreover, while dance scholars like Purnima Shah (2000) and Urmimala Sarkar Munsi (2017) have shed light on the role of dance festivals in developing cultural diplomacy and cultural tourism in India, and the dance historian Anurima Banerji (2019) has further outlined Odisha state's involvement in producing such cultural extravaganzas around the region, none of these scholarly accounts undertake an in-depth study of the Konark Dance Festival per se.[3] I propose that the Konark Dance Festival offers an exceptional case study by being the only dance festival in Odisha held in the temple precinct of a World Heritage Site while simultaneously interpolating the aesthetic and socio-political discourses that inform the cultural landscape of Odisha at large. This paper uses ethnography, visual study, and choreographic analysis to explore the (re)presentational aspects of region-state identities, festival performances, and cultural production in Odisha.

The paper is divided into six sections: (1) **The Sun Temple Complex: Historical Narratives, Debates, and Discourses** briefly examines the historical value of the Konark Sun Temple throughout the medieval, colonial, and postcolonial eras in India. This section notably points out how the so-called heritage value of Konark has not remained consistent through the ages. (2) **Imagining Dance with(in) the Temple** contextualizes the history of dance within the temples of Odisha, especially by focusing on how dance is being reimagined within the temple site of Konark through the modern project of dance festivals. (3) **Images, Travels, Tourism: The Cultural Nexus** analyses the propagation of the state dance, Odissi, and the prolific use of the dancing body of Odissi in/for state representations across the realm of local, regional, national, and global settings. (4) **Celebrating the State and Its Dance: The Konark Dance Festival** presents the ethnographical details of the emergence of the Konark Dance Festival in close correspondence to the UNESCO recognition of the Sun Temple as a World Heritage Site and demonstrates the importance of the dance festival in promoting the prestige of the state from here on. (5) **The Glitz and Glory of the Festival: Performing a Spectacle** explains the Konark Dance Festival as choreographic projects that produce active and continual interactions among the dance, the temple site, the region, and the nation-state. (6) **Staging Statecraft: Chronicles and Conclusions** summarizes the critical arguments of the paper and states the role of dance festivals in fostering cultural interest, regional economy, diplomatic relations, and heritage tourism within Odisha.

Beyond the many times I have visited Konark and other parts of Odisha, my association with the site grew closer during my research period from 2019 to 2021. The ensuing research was conducted at the Sun Temple in Konark, the Arka Khetra Interpretation Centre in Konark, the Archaeological Museum in Konark, the Regional Centre of the National Archives of India in Bhubaneswar, the State Museum in Bhubaneswar, the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Regional Division in Bhubaneswar and Head Division in Delhi, the Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre (GKCMORC) in Bhubaneswar, the Department of Tourism (Pariyatan Bhavan) in Konark, and the Bhubaneswar and Prasar Bharati Archives, Doordarshan, in Delhi.

1. The Sun Temple Complex: Historical Narratives, Debates, and Discourses

Built around the Sun Temple, Konark derives its name from the *kona* (corner) of the *arka* (sun). Socio-historically, this place has been prominent for its sun worship from the early sixth or seventh century CE. The ancient Hindu text *Brahma Puran* remarks Konark as the most sacred place for worshipping the Sun deity in India.[4]

The monumental design of the Sun Temple is that of a celestial chariot, with twelve sets of wheels supporting the enormous structure and seven horses projected to drive it. According to the medieval palm leaf chronicles of the *Mandala Panji*, Narasimhadeva I of the Ganga dynasty is credited with building the Sun Temple in the 13th century to

commemorate his victory against the Muslim invaders (D. Mitra [1925] 2003). More than twelve hundred artisans and twelve years' worth of state revenue were dedicated to its construction, which took twelve years of relentless efforts. The magnitude of the temple and the intricate artistry reflected from each of its corners have drawn admirers from all over the world.

The Sun Temple in Konark has emerged as a well-researched monument, engaging expertise from various fields.[5] It has attracted interest and recognition from historians, architects, sculptors, painters, dancers, and the general public. Thomas Donaldson has remarked, "Probably there has been more written about this monument than about any other single Hindu structure, ranging from critical scholarly studies to popularized editions" (Donaldson 2005, p. 5). Not only is the Sun Temple unique, but it is also credited with being the finest portrayal of the Kalinga style of architecture that exists.[6]

But the Sun Temple also cries a tale of dilapidation (Figure 2). In his poem, Jayanta Mahapatra describes how the Sun Temple in the present day lies naked, bare, and broken. With the foreign invasions of the 16th to 17th centuries, the magnetic head of the temple—shaped like a pot (*kalasa*)—was looted. In the absence of the magnetic force, the iron and copper beams that were used to construct the temple collapsed, destroying the temple tower (D. Mitra [1925] 2003; Behara 2005). Other causes, such as the natural factors of the sand and sea, have also led to the deterioration of the structure. On a visit now, the temple appears as a ruin, in which only parts of the dancing hall, called *Nata Mandapa*, and the central temple porch, referred to as *Jagamohan*, remain extant. Segments of a few secondary buildings of Mayadevi Temple and Vaishnava Temple, and subsidiary remnants—of a kitchen, water reservoir, oblong platforms, and pillars that once supported the shrine—remain dispersed around the temple complex.

Figure 2. "Temple of Kanarug" [Temple of Konark], James Ferguson, 1847. This image is available in the public domain of India as per the Copyright Act 1911. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

For centuries, the temple and its maintenance remained highly neglected. Under British colonial rule in India, there was a growing disdain for the temple sculptures in Konark. The sculptural images were perceived to be too lascivious for the prevailing taste, and this resulted in the temple's denigration. Erotic imagery is prevalent among most Odisha temples of the medieval period, ranging from the 8th to the 13th centuries CE, but

it seems to have been a particularly prominent subject of the discourses surrounding the sculptural iconography of Konark. The radio commentator Lowell Thomas is once said to have referred to the Konark Temple as both the most beautiful and the most obscene building in the world (Donaldson 2005, p. 57). Additionally, Stirling G.F. Cockburn, the commissioner of Orissa in 1858, wrote, "The beastly representations [sculptures] with which it [is covered] covers makes it, I think, very desirable that the whole of the remaining building [of the temple] should be leveled with the ground." He further added, "There is no reason why a single rupee should be expended in keeping up the present detestable remaining part of the old temple" (ibid.).

If, in the eyes of early colonial officials, the "obscene" imagery began to define and consequently devalue the monument in the changing discourse of national modernity, later, in the early and mid-20th century, the temple received a new, more spiritual interpretation. Scholars, such as Ananda Coomaraswamy ([1924] 1985), asserted that the sexual images on the exterior walls symbolized the illusory world of pleasure, which was in direct contrast to the holy nature of the inner sanctum. K. C. Panigrahi (1981) similarly remarked that these sexual images were inserted into the body of the sacred structures to "test" the self-restraint of the visitor. A true devotee is expected to disengage with these outer-worldly distractions and offer their true, obeisant self during worship.

Moreover, receptions of the temple shifted from allegations of obscenity to a celebration of ancient erotica. The temple walls of Konark are filled with sculptural depictions of the daily chores of the people of that time, and, thus, the presence of sex is not inconsistent with the overall themes on display. Many have argued that sex was normalized in ancient times, and the public show of erotic figurines thereby is not so questionable (Panigrahi 1981). Further, sexual motifs were believed to be highly auspicious in ancient times and made up an integral part of many Hindu Tantric sects' practices and rituals. Against the colonial objections, Indological perspectives put forward by R. L. Mitra ([1875] 2007) and N. K. Bose (1932) elaborated on the grandeur of these sculptural motifs and referred to them as the soul of the architectural monument. In fact, in a well-compiled account by Prof. K. S Behera, it is noted that the sexual scenes do not outnumber other leitmotifs, so the erotic nature of the temple may simply be overstated (as cited in S. Mitra 2018). In the later interpretations, as mapped by Tapati Guha-Thakurta, specialists moved from "looking away" to "looking closely" at these erotic sculptures, which resulted in eroticism gaining a place within the nation's art heritage. Amid the density of mythological, cosmological, and ritual explanations, erotic sculptures began to be coded as traditional art and national heritage in the late twentieth century (Guha Thakurta 2004, pp. 237–67). Thus, it is essential to observe that the so-called heritage value of the Konark Temple has not remained consistent over the ages. These (re)evaluations are, in fact, a product of modern history.

The change in these perceptions resulted in serious considerations of restoring and conserving the Konark Temple in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Sincere efforts were initiated by the Marine Board of the East India Company, followed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and then by state government organizations. Until 1938, the onus of conserving the temple lay with the Public Works Department, and thereafter, since 1939, it has been carried forward by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) (D. Mitra [1925] 2003). This period of significant development for the site is marked by Odisha becoming an independent state (1936), followed by India being established as a sovereign country (1947).[7] These two successive political moments established a cultural identity of the nation-state that was conceived as both ancient and modern. The cultural antiquity of the past was reinvigorated within the political context of modern statehood. The newly orchestrated antiquity of the temple coincided with the freshly acquired identity of the sovereign state (and the nation). These processes are further complemented by the regional dance forms (re)modelled into the state dance of Odisha, which further received a national and "classical" status in the 1960s.[8] The festival at the Sun Temple, launched in the ensuing years, corroborates these associations.

2. Imagining Dance With(in) the Temple

Traces of dance imagery in Odisha can be found in cave temples, such as those of Udaygiri and Khandagiri, from as early as the first century CE. The engravings of the medieval temples of Ratnagiri, Lingaraj, Mukteshwar, and especially Konark, with their abundant sculptural examples, testify to how prolific dance was in those eras. Some of the most typical dancing postures and movements are to be found in the female figures that abound on the walls of the temples, figures variously identified as *nayikas* (young maidens), *surasandaris* (celestial women), or *alasa-kanyas* (indolent damsels). These sculptural effigies offer a testimony to the socio-religious prominence of dance in the region across ages (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Iconographies of musicians and dancers in the Sun Temple in Konark. Photographs by author.

The prevalence and practice of dance in daily life and rituals have also been substantiated through textual inscriptions, such as those found in the Ananta Vasudeva Temple in Bhubaneswar or the Jagannath Temple in Puri, and are further supported by palm leaf chronicles, such as the *Mandala Panji*. The profusion of dance postures on the outer walls of the temples is believed to indicate the performing traditions practiced inside the temples. Odisha temples have been known to host *devadasis* for centuries. *Devadasis* were considered the symbolic wives of the temple deity and conducted routine ritual performances (which included singing and dancing) as temple services. Known also as *maharis* in the Odisha region, these ritual performers were given a high social rank, access to education, entitle-

ment to property, and social freedom compared to the rest of the women in the society. The *Mahari* tradition of the Jagannath Temple in Puri is well known and documented (Marglin 1985; Kermorgant 2014; Banerji 2012).

The *Mandala Panji* records elaborate accounts of the ritual duties assigned to the *maharis*, who were subdivided into many categories: *bhitara gauni, bahara gauni, nachuni, patuari, raja angila*, and *gahana* (Venkataram 2013, p. 64). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, only the first two categories are known to have been functional. *Bhitara gauni* were referred to as those *maharis* involved in rituals and performances inside the temple, while the *bahara gauni* were involved with rituals and performances outside the temple. The *bahara gaunis* performed regularly at the dancing halls (*Nata Mandapa*) and occasionally at the local festivals of *Chandan Jatra*, *Dola Jatra*, *Jhulan Jatra*, and *Rath Jatra*. Thus, dance, as an intrinsic part of religious festivals and celebrations, holds a rich history in Odisha, lending itself in imagination to the modern spaces of practice, performance, and festivals.

There is, however, no established continuity between the earlier temple festivals and modern dance festivals. Purnima Shah marks this vital distinction between the ancient *utsavs* and modern festivals. Shah contends that the *utsavs* of ancient times were socio-religious ceremonies that have lost their meanings and contexts in the profane settings of modern festivals (Shah 2000, pp. 81–82). The continuity of earlier festivals with contemporary ones also becomes historically meaningless if we delve into the historical trajectory of the *maharis*. During the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, the *Mahari* system was maligned, criminalized, and subsequently abolished.[9] Temple dancing was highly reprimanded, and negative sentiments and comments were attached to public performances of dance.[10] There is a 20th-century Oriya proverb that says, "Salaja bae, nirlaja gae, ati behiya nachaku jae", which translates into, "One with modesty plays an instrument, one with no shame sings, and one who is completely shameless dances".[11] The social stigma against dance grew so intense that dancers were equated with prostitutes, and both professions were severely abhorred. Ratnabali Chatterjee (1993) has argued how different categories of performers, such as the *devadasis* (temple dancers), *nautchees* (dancing girls), *tawaif* (courtesans), and *randi* (sex workers), were all translated and trapped into the monolithic category of the prostitute. Further, these native women were subjected to more severe discrimination than European sex practitioners in India.[12] Indian women who were seen to exist outside the domains of civil domesticity were heavily regulated under medical and state surveillance (Hodges 2005). These discriminatory processes were highly racialized, classed, and gendered.

Given this fraught history, how is dance put "back" into the temples through the formatting of modern dance festivals without producing discomfort, discordance, and detestation? In other words, what does it mean to reimagine dancing at the temples? The making of the independent state (of Odisha, in 1936) and sovereign nation (of India, in 1947) encompassed thorough processes of the reform, redressal, and revival of dance. The emerging middle class began to train themselves in the lost and now defunct art form of the *maharis* (Banerji 2019). The dance form, during this period, underwent rigorous and cautious remodelling. What we now identify as the dance form of Odissi is a modern construction engineered during the 1950s by a specialized group of artists, scholars, and political reformers called *Jayantika* (Dave 2016; Banerji 2019). Odissi drew from various visual, sculptural, textual, and performance traditions, of which the *mahari* practice was one of the many influences. Alessandra Lopez y Royo (2006) argues that this dance transformation is not a simple act of appropriation, since Odissi did not involve or cater to the *maharis* during the process of recasting, and that the Odissi dance is much rather a modern construction. Uttara Asha Coorlawala (1994) similarly elaborates that the contemporary dance form of Odissi is distinct from the dance of the *maharis*. I contend it is this very difference—the historical, social, and aesthetic separation between the ancient temple practices (of *maharis*) and modern classical dance (of Odissi)—that allows for dance to be re-placed within temples. With time, the dance was dissociated and disembodied from the ritual practices of the *maharis* and supposedly sanitized, sanctified, and substituted

by the more "respectable" bodies of the modern urban elites, consequently converting it into a legitimate and acceptable culture (Lowen 1989; Sikand 2016; Banerji 2019). Other neo-classical dance forms in India have traversed similar fates of "purifications" to align with the aesthetics and politics of the dominant caste/class/gender/religious identity (Chakravorty 1998; Coorlawala 2004; Banerji 2023). Paradoxically, the modern formulation of dance re-stages "classical" heritage without resolving its historical deracination.

It is crucial to note that modern dance festivals, like that in Konark, occur within archaeological sites that are not used for active worship. Since the religious functions of these temples have ceased, they posit no direct association with and supposed apprehension to the ritual history of temple dancing. There is a historical, social, aesthetic, and, as noted later, physical distance between the festival dance and the temple framework. Any linkages drawn between the modern dance festival and temple monument are thus choreographically advanced. The Konark Temple, now existing outside its religious function, presents itself as an ideal (and possibly secular) space for choreographing a cultural history of antiquity, grandeur, and nostalgia. This nostalgia is, however, developed in terms of what Arjun Appadurai describes as "nostalgia without memory"[13] (Appadurai 1996, p. 30).

No recorded history of *mahari* practices has been documented in Konark as such, unlike those at the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Yet, an allegorical link between the temple and dance has been constructed in Konark through the sculptural art on the temple walls that depict dancers and musicians in abundance while not having to address the historical and political dissonances of the earlier temple dance traditions. Although the trope of the temple and dance of the past are applied, they do not (co)exist in the same sense. Instead, a new, modern, "secular" relationship has been formulated and promulgated.[14] Yet, the past is continually evoked, remembered, and performed in and through festival performances. The festival choreographs a witnessing of the heritage of the site, of the dance, and of the region without engaging with the intricacies and complexities (even conflicts) of their histories.

3. Images, Travels, Tourism: The Cultural Nexus

Performing dance *in* Odisha overwhelmingly involves presenting the dance *of* Odisha. After Odissi was categorized and canonized as a classical dance of India in 1960, it became one of the most popular symbols of the region of Odisha. The dance has journeyed across national and global stages, and it carries the name and reputation of the regional state. For instance, in 1954, a duet performance by Priyambada Mohanty and Dhirendranath Patnaik in the country's capital of New Delhi brought the dance into the national limelight.[15] Further, in 1958, the celebrity dancer and model Indrani Rehman was featured in an interview with Philip Graston-Jones that aired on British television, in which she spoke of Odissi at length and showcased a *nritta* piece, promoting the dance across a worldwide audience (Banerji 2019).[16] These instances, and more, educated the (inter)national audience about the dance and, in turn, brought worldwide exposure to the culture of the region and the nation.

Consequently, sincere efforts to preserve the Odissi dance as a state identity have consistently taken place. One of the most pronounced images prevalent within Odisha is that of the Odissi dancer. In addition, I suggest that the dancing body has been employed to convey more than dance: it assumes a cultural expression of the regional history and identity. The dancer materially embodies costumes and ornaments made of regional textiles (like Sambalpuri silk, Bomkai silk, and Khandua Paata) and handicrafts (of silver filigree and *shola pith*, or Indian cork). From head to toe, each *aharya*, that is, the decorative elements that the dancer is adorned with, represents the various cultural facets of Odisha. In all its symbolic capacity, Odissi performs the grandeur of Odisha. The Odissi dancing body has hence been formulated and circulated as an anthropomorphic symbol of the geopolitical state of Odisha (Figure 4). State and public discourses ubiquitously apply and, as seen in Figure 4, magnify and exemplify the Odissi dancer's image as a cultural emblem of the region.

Figure 4. Cultural map of Odisha featuring Odissi dancers in the foreground. Source: Official website of Odisha tourism: https://www.odisha-tourism.org/odisha-location/ (accessed on 10 November 2023).

Immediately upon one's arrival, either at the airport or at the railway station in Odisha, the visitor encounters these image(s) (Figure 5a,b). These form glaring evidence of how the Odissi dancer is deployed as the cultural pride and regional prodigy. Images of the dancers are dispersed throughout the region, especially around the capital city of Bhubaneswar. Furthermore, street-long murals of Odissi dance postures and movements have been painted in prominent locations, such as those around the Raj Bhavan (Governor's House) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha (Figure 5c). The strategic position of these wall paintings signals the sociopolitical relations that dance secures with the diplomacy and state affairs of Odisha.[17]

The semiotic relation between the dance and the regional state is reiterated at the State Museum in Bhubaneswar. Next to the entrance of the State Museum, two cutout figures of male and female Odissi dancers have been placed (Figure 6). The layout is fully adorned with traditional costumes and ornaments, while the face is seen to be kept blank. This potentially invites the visitors of the Museum to position their faces into the cut-out and coalesce with it. Thus, the visitor can gesturally participate and significantly embody the state's culture, history, and identity using the dancers' image.

The geopolitical association of Odissi dance and the Odisha region also finds a firm grounding within many of the promotional materials regularly generated by the Tourism Department. A video advertisement for Odisha is introduced and carried forward by the movements of an Odissi dancer.[18] While the scenes shift from the district provinces of Dhauli to Konark to Puri to Jajpur and Bhubaneswar, the Odissi dancer appears at different transition points, suggesting that the dancing body single-handedly weaves the different regions of the state together (Figure 7). Out of the variety that the state offers, the Odissi dancer becomes a common and comprehensive ground of expression.

(**a**)

(**b**)

(**c**)

Figure 5. (**a**) Wall mural of an Odissi dancer at Bhubaneswar Railway Station. Photograph by author. (**b**) Odissi dancers' sculptures at Biju Patnaik International Airport, Bhubaneswar. Photograph by author. (**c**) Wall murals around the Governor's House, Bhubaneswar. Photographs by author.

Figure 6. Odissi cutouts at the State Museum, Bhubaneswar. Photograph by author.

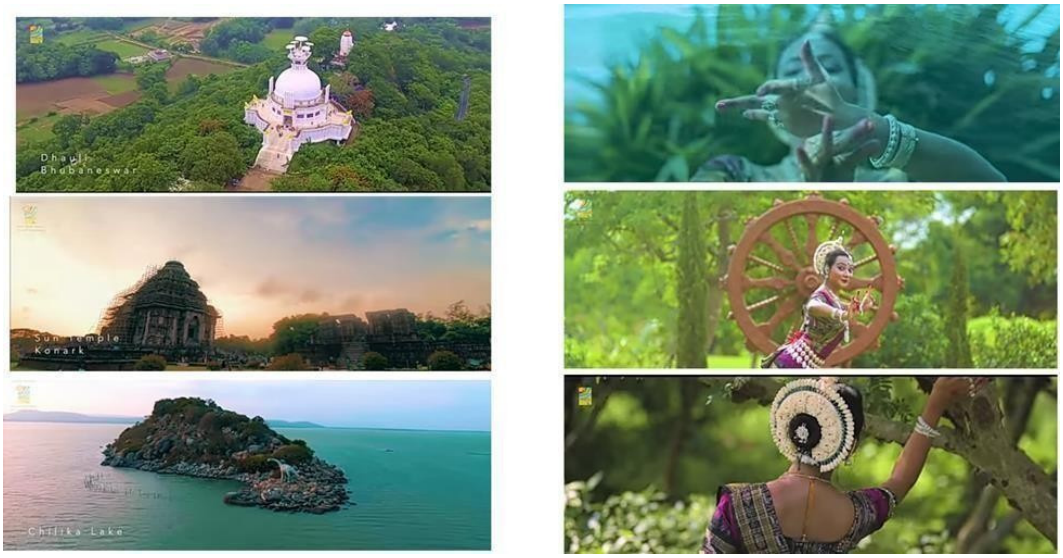

Figure 7. Screenshots from the Odisha Tourism Advertisement. Source: Odisha Tourism.

These visual images also move beyond their geographical origins, circulating across wider regional, national, and global locations. This becomes apparent, for instance, in the way the image of the Odissi dancer finds its place on postal stamps. In 1975, the Indian Post issued a series of six multicoloured stamps displaying different Indian dances, and the Odissi was one of them (Figure 8a).[19] This was a matter of great regional pride, which is still evident in the painting of this stamp on the boundary wall of the Governor's House in Bhubaneswar (Figure 8b). Stamps signal travel, and the Odissi dancer's image on the postal stamps came to signify the widespread prominence the regional culture had accrued over time. This moved a step further when, in 2016, Malaysia issued its second series of stamps with traditional dances; the Odissi featured among them, an indication of its prestige (Figure 8c).[20] This was a moment of great honour, both regional and national.

(**a**) (**b**)

(**c**)

Figure 8. (**a**) Indian postal stamp, depicting an Odissi dancer, 1975 with mention of Orissi (or Odissi) and India. (**b**) Wall art outside the Governor's House, Bhubaneswar. Photograph by author. (**c**) Stamp of Malaysia depicting Odissi dancers, 2016, with mention of Tarian (Dance) Odissi.

When these images travel outside, the outsiders travel toward these images. Although tourists flock to Odisha throughout the year, it is the mild winter months that prove most suitable for a visit. It is then that dance festivals are arranged with the tourists in mind. These events successively unite cultural heritage, the art market, and festival tourism under a common umbrella.

4. Celebrating the State and Its Dance: The Konark Dance Festival

The first dance festival in Odisha was held at the Mukteshwar Temple, Bhubaneswar, in 1986.[21] However, various logistical issues at Mukteshwar prevented the festival from taking place the following year.[22] Concerns regarding the archaeological preservation of Mukteshwar resulted in shifting the festival site to Konark. In the meantime, the Open-Air Theatre (OAT) in Konark had been developed, and with all due arrangements, the Konark Dance Festival began in 1989. Since then, the festival has regularly occurred every year.[23]

A major boost to the conception of this dance festival and the choice of Konark as its site was the nomination and declaration of the Konark Sun Temple as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984. Soon after, in 1987, an amphitheatre in Konark opened, and the

Konark Dance Festival was subsequently launched in 1989. It is important to establish the sequence of these events to understand the significance of the dance festivals at/to the site. The new order of the international spotlight that was shone on Konark in 1984 provided a great opportunity to promote the region's cultural identity on a global stage and the prestige that came with it. The Konark Dance Festival elaborates and celebrates this *amour propre*.

The Open-Air Theatre, where the festival is presented, covers a vast area. With a stage size of approximately 2500 square feet and roughly 1800 seats, the OAT offers an impressive space with the spectacular backdrop of the Sun Temple (Figure 9a). Behind the proscenium stage, one can observe the Odisha Tourism logo (Figure 9b). The dais with the logo then visually slants upward, creating an interconnection between the stage and the Sun Temple. While there is a physical (and temporal) distance between the modern stage and the medieval temple, the visual presentations tie the two together. Connections are further drawn via the dance performances on the festival stage, as we will see. This visual trajectory, which in a single frame binds the stage, the official logo, and the temple together, integrates the dance, state, and heritage, truly symbolizing what the Konark Dance Festival is all about.

(**a**)

(**b**)

Figure 9. (**a**) The Open-Air Auditorium in Konark. The photograph displays the stage, the state logo, and the Sun Temple in the background. (**b**) A close-up of Odisha's logo, which is created through the use of colourful pebbles. Photographs by author.

The Konark Dance Festival is principally organized by the Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, in association with the

Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre (GKCMORC). I was informed that the Konark Dance Festival is one of the highest priorities of the Tourism Department in Konark. Each financial year, this cultural program is the first to be allocated funds and resources, followed by all the rest of the events of the government calendar. Every year, a substantial amount of money is invested for the following purposes:

(a) Advertisements and promotions. Official brochures are published and distributed widely among the hotels and restaurants within Konark. The event is also well marketed across all the other districts of the state. Huge billboards are put up all along the highways and main roads to publicize the mega-event. Posters are attached to the walls of railway stations, and e-advertisements are placed in different national and international airports. Publicity is also conducted in distant parts of the globe, including London, Paraguay, Malaysia, Thailand, and others, to attract a global clientele. Over the years, the dance festival has secured a set of devoted audiences, and these promotions successfully draw additional interest.

(b) Invitations. Delegates from all over the state and country are assembled for the cultural event. Invitations are distributed among different administrators and state government officials, and, in some cases, their families are also invited to the festival. Akash Kumar Singh, the caretaker officer at the OAT, cites that in 2019, around 4,500 invitations were sent out across the five days of the festival.[24] He further notes that the chief minister of Odisha and erstwhile king of Puri grace the occasion with their presence on the inaugural day every year. The event is also open to the general public, who may purchase a pass for a nominal fee.

(c) Remittance for the performers. National and international artists grace the festival with their performances. Ten groups perform over five days each year at the Konark Dance Festival. The OTDC handles the arrangements for their travel, stay, food, and remuneration.

(d) Cleaning and maintaining the auditorium. The OAT is revamped and decorated each year before the festival commences. Top-notch lighting, sound systems, seating arrangements, and stage decor are also arranged to ensure quality productions at the festival. The program involves workers, technicians, organizers, and artists coming together to produce a grand-scale festival showcase. Caretakers and staff are also hired to maintain the site throughout the year.

(e) Corresponding events. Other tourist attractions and cultural events have developed around the Konark Dance Festival. In 2015, the International Sand Art Festival was inaugurated in Chandrabhaga Beach, 3 km from the Konark Temple. The visitors can anticipate enjoying the Sand Art Festival during the day and the Konark Dance Festival at night. In 2019, the Marine Drive Eco Retreat was also launched in close correspondence with the Konark Festival. Situated on Ramchandi Beach, over 10 ½ kilometers away from Konark, the Eco Retreat provides many sea activities, in addition to luxurious camp stays and regional cuisines for tourists to relish.

(f) Miscellaneous expenses are also factored in.

When asked if the return is as good as the investment, Saroj Kantha Pradhan, a tourist officer in Konark, clarified that "people turn up in large numbers every year for the festival. The district and the state are proud to host the festival every year . . . the artists and the organizers are all happy and proud. The return is (thus) good". The matter is not about money; it is to be evaluated in terms of its prestige, which was later enunciated by Dr. Bijaya Kumar Jena, the secretary of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi.[25] I was not given any estimated figures regarding the festival budget or profits. It is also generally considered disrespectful to compare the value of art and culture in material terms of money. The significance of the festival instead lies in generating an active and democratic interest in the regional art and culture. In that regard, the Konark Dance Festival does pay off well.

It is essential to mention that apart from these interviews, I found very little documentation regarding the Dance Festival in Konark. The site, the state museums, and the national–regional archives have sparse information catalogued about the Konark Dance

Festival or other dance festivals in Odisha. An audio–visual archive is said to have been developed in the GKCMORC, dedicated to documenting the performances of the Odissi maestros. One can hope that some clips from the Konark Festival will soon become available there. At the Tourist Office in Konark, I could obtain some program brochures of the earlier festival renditions, but even those could be traced back only to 2012. Annual dance festivals continually generate significant materials that need to be analysed for their content, form, and impact. Nonetheless, in the absence of hard data, these interviews and personal accounts by individuals serve as "ethnotexts" that prove to be precious.[26]

5. The Glitz and Glory of the Festival: Performing a Spectacle

My thesis is that dance festivals are choreographed spaces that (re)present and (re)produce nation-state histories and identities. Choreography, here, is not limited to the choreographies within the dance but also expands to entail the broader presentations around the temple arena during the festival period. The town of Konark is distinctively decked out during the festival days (1–5 December). From the moment one enters the OAT, the visitor is greeted by a gallery of photographs displaying the performances of esteemed artists who have graced the festival in its previous productions. The gallery is full of photographic images intended to impress the audience with the prestige and popularity that the festival has enjoyed over time. Thus, expectations are set, and the audience then moves toward the auditorium to seek/soak up that year's festival experience for themselves. The performances usually draw in packed audiences. Evenings in Konark that otherwise remain silent and secluded blaze with life and laughter during the five days of the festival. The most lively element of these evenings is the Sun Temple itself. Illuminated in the background, the Sun Temple constitutes a central part of the festival spectacle (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Konark Dance Festival, 2019. Photograph by the author.

Baffled by the sculptural beauty of the Sun Temple, the renowned poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore is said to have once remarked, "Here, the language of man is defeated by the language of the stone"(Mittal Publishing n.d.).The monument is bestowed with a language that is said to bespeak its history, heritage, and grandiosity. Although the Sun Temple may now exist only as ruins, those ruins are steeped not in the tragedy of disintegration but rather as a celebration of its rich and continuing heritage.

The perception of the Konark Temple has evolved over time. Nonetheless, in its choreographic remembering, the monument generates a tale of glorious survival coded in nostalgia. Gaston R. Gordillo has remarked that ruins are always ruins *of* something and often become the metonym of a past (and romanticized) heritage (Gordillo 2014, pp. 8–9). The story of the Sun Temple is choreographed more in terms of reminiscence than remorse. The Sun Temple does not seem to project its present ordeal; it rather enunciates

its past glory. In and through its signalling of the temple's past, I deduce it also shapes its future. As Mahapatra says, "The granite bodies emerge like glorious stones woken from its ancient death." In its resurrection, the temple recites the remaking of a monument globally recognized as a World Heritage Site.

The festival choreographs a constant interest in and interaction with the Sun Temple. Interestingly, during a Kuchipudi recital in the 2019 festival edition, the dancers turned around to face the Sun Temple (Figure 11). They offered their salutations to the temple and spent a long time looking up at the monument. In this choreographic moment, the gaze of the audience is directed toward the temple, and the participants (the artists and the audience) admire the marvel of the Sun Temple collectively. The restored ruins of the temple, juxtaposed with the revived classical dance performances, choreographically arrange a sense/sensing of past heritage. This heritage is not to be confused as one timeless tale but instead needs to be read for its multitemporal construction, dialoguing with the past and present in and through the performance(s). The separation of past and present is both evident in and surpassed by festival stagings and choreographies. The glorification of the festival spectacle, however, often obfuscates the underlying discontinuities, ambiguities, and complexities away from the public view.

Figure 11. Artists look towards the Sun Temple as part of their performance. Photograph by author.

The choreographic conflation of the archaeological monument and the dancers' movements is also discernible through scripts and themes depicted in the dance festival. Many artist groups at the Konark Dance Festival regularly commence their performance with a *Surya Vandana*, a salutation to the Sun God. While a *Vandana* (veneration) forms a vital element of most classical dance repertoires in India, incorporating recitals that address the Sun God seems to be a site-informed decision. These choreographic motivations and movement portrayals further heighten the connections drawn between the dancers and the temple monument. Most groups also include or emulate the Sun Temple within the movement vocabulary of their performances. They replicate cultural motifs like the temple chariot and perform mythologies and legends associated with the site (Figure 12). As previously argued, these dances, including modern Odissi, do not hold historical prevalence at the Konark site. Yet, the festival reimagines an interrelation between the dance and the temple through its choreographing. Moreover, these performance narratives have a wide-ranging reach, either through the cosmopolitan audiences that physically attend these festivals or via the broadcasting media that telecast these performances live on television (Doordarshan India and Doordarshan Odia) and YouTube. The renowned dance critic Sunil

Kothari has cast aspersions on the uninformed calibre of these recordings.[27] He cautions that if the cameraman and the director are not well-versed in the performances, they tend to capture the wrong angles and dimensions, often turning the viewing experience into a disaster. These concerns require a fresh focus, with virtual media becoming the preferred medium for viewing and consuming these performances. Owing to the global pandemic, the 2020 Konark Festival allowed no physical attendance; thus, the festival relied entirely on telecasting it online. There is a need to explore how and if mediatized performances alter the choreographies and the reception of these festival performances. Additionally, there is a widening gap apparent between the worlds of dance scholarship and connoisseurship and the public spectacle and viewership of the festival. As dance becomes a part of the festival's larger demands and spectacle, it loses a critical perspective. The specialist audience is traded for the general public, for whom the Konark Dance Festival packages all classical forms together and places them over a common platform staged across the evenings of the festival. Few attending the festival are concerned with the histories, biographies, and politics of each of the individual dance forms.[28] The festival instead collates a cultural unity among diverse dance traditions, genealogies, and histories. The festival projects a seeming harmony and synchrony amid the different dance styles, between the dance and the temple monument, and further among the dance, region, nation, and global landscapes.

Figure 12. Bharatnatyam dancers represent the chariot structure of the Sun Temple. Photograph by author.

Konark Dance Festival has opened up its avenues to the more generalized space of leisure and tourism. To enhance the glamour and experience of the festival period, the Chandrabhaga Sand Art Festival was initiated in 2015, occurring simultaneously with the Dance Festival in Konark. The combination of the Dance and Sand Art Festivals not only typically reflects Konark and its culture but also diversifies the kind of audience one can expect to visit during this period. The Sand Art Festival proves to be an added asset. Under the guidance of Sudarsan Pattnaik, the Sand Art Festival has achieved global fame in only a few years. The artworks are displayed along the backdrop of the sea, making for an enchanting view (Figure 13). In 2019, the Marine Drive Eco Resort was also launched to add to the spaces for tourism in close correspondence with the Konark Dance Festival.

Figure 13. Sand Art Festival of 2019 at Chandrabhaga Beach. Photograph by author.

The association of other events with the Konark Dance Festival enhances the popularity of the dance festival by welcoming a more diverse audience under its domain. This diversity performs a diversion from engaging with any of these art forms closely and critically. The five days of the "festive" period compress different elements of celebration. There are burgeoning local events like the Konark Book Fair, organized by the Regional College of Nimapada. The Book Fair is conducted within the Urbaan Haath, which is an exhibition ground in Konark, situated on the roadway that connects Konark and Chandrabhaga. Right across the Urban Haath is the Kanak Kalyan Mandapa, which also hosts a fair or mela called the Meena Bazaar during these days. Additionally, popular *Jatras* are staged on all five nights around midnight.[29] Celebrations and festivals take myriad forms in Konark during these five days.

The festivals pool in multiple aspects of art, architecture, culture, tourism, and the market to produce a composite and cosmopolitan package in order to keep themselves thriving. The performance of the festival(s) is so dazzling that it evanesces the underlying inconsistencies. Diversity here acts as a form of distraction. Yet, distraction does not necessarily denote a sense of passivity. The festival involves active participation from artists and audiences alike. People buy tickets and turn up for these events. Tourist inflow heightens during the festival period, and, inversely, festivals are conducted during peak tourist seasons. The festivals, aiming for global exposure, directly or indirectly, have brought in a local explosion of commerce and consumption. There is automatically more business in the area during these few days. Visitors are seen to invest time and money into the local arts and culture. There is a visible transformation of the cultural profile and the commercial economy of the temple township of Konark. It has often been overlooked how festivals, as annual events, generate a cyclic, prolonged, and transactional relationship between the participants (organizers, artists, tourists/audience, and locals) and the site. These considerations can further enhance our understanding of the reasons for the tourist footfall and economic revenues generated through festival events, as analysed in the studies of the Konark Dance Festival thus far.

One of the successes of the Konark Dance Festival has been its paving the way for the upsurge of other dance and cultural festivals within Odisha. The proliferation of festivals in Odisha has been profuse. The Mukteshwar Dance Festival, Rajaranai Dance and Music Festival, Dhauli Kalinga Mahotsav, International Odissi Festival, and National Chhau Festival are some of the added popular festivals in Odisha. There has been a similar proliferation of dance festivals in other provincial states in India as well. Furthermore, the motif of festivals has itself permeated into different realms; everything from films to

food is being celebrated in the format of festivals. These festivals often endorse the art, culture, and heritage of the host region and the nation. This is a crucial takeaway from the festivals: they consistently foster an active interest in arts, including dance. Festivals have successfully promoted dance to a diverse democratic public, who regularly pour in in large numbers. While this can be a matter of discontent for the esoteric practitioner and audience, it does not draw the discomfort of corporatization simply by being organized under the rubric of the nation-state and being performed at renowned heritage sites. On the contrary, these festivals often add merit to the artists' profile and career. As an Odissi practitioner myself, I have experienced that the glitz and glamour of the dance festivals play out as much for the audiences as for the artists themselves.

6. Staging Statecraft: Chronicles and Conclusions

After visiting the field on a couple of occasions, engaging with the literature and archives (and, at times, the lack of them), and experiencing encounters with administrators, officers, organizers, practitioners, artists, and locals, a few themes have emerged from the sites that I have tried to present and analyse in the preceding sections.

The festival choreographs a witnessing of the heritage of the region, exhibited through the synchrony of the archaeological monument and dancers' movements. The tradition that the festival seeks to exhibit is a modern retelling of the past. The perception of the Konark Temple has not remained stable across the ages. The discourse around the temple monument has oscillated between objections to its obscenity and celebrations of its antiquity. The history of the Sun Temple is a long story of its consecration, collapse, and later conservation. But the ruins of the temple now represent a tale that has more to do with reminiscence than remorse. And it further conveys the valour of its resuscitation. These ethos are embedded and embodied into cultural projects like dance festivals that celebrate the past in and for the modern present/future. These cultural imaginings have taken shape within the context of the two successive and consolidated political moments of the making of the independent state of Odisha (in 1936) and the making of the sovereign nation of India (in 1947). The stagecraft and statecraft are deeply entwined within the cultural productions of/in Odisha.

The state of Odisha culturally reproduces the Odissi dancer in many of its public discourses. Odissi, as a state dance itself, has a modern genesis. Within the early years of post-independence, Odissi was engineered and recognized as a "classical" dance of national standing, and soon it gained popularity in the global sphere. Odissi dance has been manifested and marketed as a cultural symbol of Odisha. We see these images travel and carry the state's merit in an unwavering sense. Further, they entice travellers to come and witness the prowess of the imagery exemplified at the festival showings.

We have learned that the declaration of the Sun Temple as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the launch of the Dance Festival went hand-in-hand in Konark. The festival performs a choreography that automates the visitors/audiences to immerse in a celebration of grandeur, heritage, and nostalgia. But this nostalgia is one without memory (Appadurai 1996). Re-instituting dance within these temple sites is based on no verifiable historical claim, yet they prove to be ideal sites for the nationalist "secular" project of imagining and performing the past. On the contrary, this essay has argued that, because of a historical, social, and aesthetic separation, dancing in temples can be reimagined and re-placed, without evoking the same sense of disdain that it did in the past. The multitemporality of the past and present is choreographically composed in and through the festival presentation(s). However, the audiences are not exposed to the detailed history of such ruptures and reconstructions. The performance of the festivals is so dazzling that it often obscures their underlying inconsistencies, intricacies, and complexities. On the other side, a crucial takeaway of the dance festivals has been to (re)produce active, democratic, and protracted interest in the arts, including dance. Even though festivals are touted as touristic and diplomatic enterprises, they serve the artists, audiences, and locals to build and benefit

from global exposure, exchange, and economy. The matter, after all, is conceived to do more with cultural prestige rather than the mere material benefits of money.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 In 1981, Jayanta Mahapatra (1928–2023) was the first Indian poet to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award for English poetry, a prestigious literary honour awarded by the National Academy of Literature in India. Later, in 2009, he was also conferred with the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award, by the Government of India. He came from Cuttack in Odisha.

2 However, since 2014, the Chilika Lake and Ekamra Kshetra (Temple City of Bhubaneswar) in Odisha have been nominated for the tentative lists of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has also put effort into having the Lingaraj Temples in Bhubaneswar and Jagannath Temple of Puri included on the World Heritage List. Critical debates on the conditions and criteria that make any site worthy of World Heritage Site (WHS) status have been a growing concern among academics, archaeologists, heritage conservationists, activists, and local communities. For more on WHS, see: Batisse and Bolla (2005), Frey and Steiner (2011), Meskell (2018), among others.

3 Additionally, a small body of scholarship on dance festivals regarding the Festival of India is available through the works of Janet O'Shea (2016) and Rebecca Brown (2017). The Festival of India was a global event hosted under the aegis of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in different parts of the UK, the US, France, the USSR, China, Japan, and other regions to promote global relationships across nations. Interestingly, the same decade (the 1980s) gave birth to dance festivals in the home country of India. Purnima Shah's doctoral dissertation (Shah 2000) taps into this connection and analyses the importance of dance festivals in securing national identities, both within India and across the globe. Shah's work as a full-length study of dance festivals in India remains valuable; however, the dissertation does not encapsulate an exploration of the festival space, which becomes highly relevant for the festivals conducted at World Heritage Sites. Further, Shah's case studies do not include a reading of the Konark Dance Festival.

4 Sun worship was prevalent in the Harappan civilization, which was earlier than or contemporaneous with the Mesopotamia and Nile Valley civilizations. There are around twelve to fourteen Sun Temples in contemporary India (Source: *Arka Khetra*, Information Centre at Konark, Odisha, India).

5 See, Ferguson (1848), D. Mitra ([1925] 2003, R. L. Mitra [1875] 2007) among others.

6 The Kalinga style of temples is prevalent across Odisha, India. It is of three types: *Rekha*, *Pidha* and *Kharkara*. *Rekha* temples are curvilinear, *Pidha* are pyramidal, and *Kharkara* have semicylindrical roofs. Initially, the temple consisted of only one structure, which later developed to include the *Vimana* or *Deula* (main temple or sanctuary), *Jagamohan* or *Mukhasala* or *Bhadra Deula* (porch), *Nata Mandapa* (hall of dance), and *Bhoja Mandapa* (hall of offering). A Kalinga-style temple usually has three segments: *Bada*, *Gandi*, and *Mastaka*. The construction techniques are based on corbelling principles, that is, laying each successive course of stones so that they project above the lower course; the stones are held in place by a counterpoised system of balance and equilibrium. There is no use of mortar in its construction (Source: *Arka Khetra*).

7 What we now identify as Odisha was divided among the three provinces of the Bengal Presidency, Central Provinces, and Madras Presidency under the British administration. The native community of Odias felt neglected under the dominance of other hegemonic groups across these provinces. Thus, a socio-political movement began to consolidate the community under a common (and separate) state of Odisha. On the lines of a shared language and culture, Odisha was made an autonomous state in 1936. Odisha was the first of the many linguistic regions to be created in modern India and the only one to have declared sovereign statehood in pre-independence India. For more, see P. K. Mishra (1986), Acharya (2008), P. Mishra (2020), among others.

8 For more, see: Lowen (1989), Dave (2016), Banerji (2019), among others.

9 The shift from private ritual performances in temples to public showcases in salons and courts is said to have marred the reputation of the temple dancers. However, such a linear narrative of the transition of the temple dancers from the temples to the courts has been contested by Davesh Soneji (2012), for instance. Moreover, in the case of the *maharis*, we learn that the *bahara gaunis* participated in performances in public spaces and occasions that did not interfere with or lessen their service or stature within the temples. Unfortunately, in Odisha, these steps were undertaken apropos of the *Devadasi* system of Southern India without making room to address the separate and different forms of existence of the *Maharis* in this region.

10 The anti-*devadasi* or anti-*nautch* sentiments spread widely during the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. Organizations like the Punjab Purity Association (Lahore) and Social Service League (Bombay), among others, vehemently spoke against the malevolence of the *devadasi* system, especially targeting the female dancer. The social reformer Keshub Chandra Sen, in a publication of the Punjab Purity Association, opined, "a hideous woman . . . hell in her eyes. In her breast is a vast ocean of poison. Round her comely waist dwell the furies of hell. Her hands are brandishing unseen daggers ever ready to strike unwary or willful victims that fall in her way. Her blandishments are India's ruin. Alas! Her smile is India's death" (Courtney 1998). The *devadasi* was claimed to bring about "India's death"; she was thereby seen to be a direct threat to the nation.

[11] The celebrated Odissi dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi iterated this proverb in her interview in Ron Hess's documentary film, "Given to Dance: India's Odissi Tradition" (1985) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFVwIVVs9Cw (accessed on 10 November 2023).

[12] To avoid an interracial mix between British men and Indian women, European (especially Jewish) sex workers were transported to India, particularly to areas in Calcutta and Bombay. See: Tambe (2005).

[13] "This is one of the central ironies of the politics of global cultural flows", Arjun Appadurai contends (Appadurai 1996, p. 30). He argues that global capitalism evokes nostalgia for a past that may not bear historical or mnemonic accuracy yet appears as a central tenet of cultural production and its ensuing consumption (ibid.).

[14] Many scholars have noted a growing concern regarding the downfall of secularism in contemporary India. Since the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a fresh rise in Hindutva nationalism brewing in the country, and these developments and tensions are also reflected in the performing arts (Chakravorty 2000; Bharucha 2000; Chatterjea 2004). The Konark Dance Festival, which emerged in 1989, under a political climate of sectarian nationalism, cannot be insulated from these processes. An in-depth analysis of the coterminous relationship between religious and secular identities within dance festivals in India is part of my ongoing research.

[15] The audience included an esteemed public, including the dance historian Charles Fabri, the eminent Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher Rukmini Devi, the dance critic Sunil Kothari, and others. This was an important occasion that paved the way for Odissi to be included in the National Dance Seminar in 1958. It was succeeded by Odissi's classical recognition in 1960. For more, see Banerji (2019), and Nayak (2020).

[16] *Nritta* refers to pure abstract dancing. According to Indian arts and aesthetics, classical dance is composed of three elements: *natya* (drama), *nritya* (lyrical movements), and *nritta* (abstract dance). For more, see: Vatsyayan (1967) and M. Bose (1991).

[17] For an examination of the role of dance and diplomacy, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Prevots (1998), Croft (2015), among others.

[18] "Odisha Tourism latest film on the beauty of Odisha", posted by Odisha Tourism, 5 July 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uqmc0891L2U (accessed on 10 November 2023).

[19] Along with other classical dances of India: Kathak, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Bharatnatyam, and Kathakali.

[20] Others included the dance movements of the Cempaka sari, Ribbon dance, Magunatip and Rajang be'uh.

[21] The date seems contestable. The official website of Odisha Tourism mentions that in 1984 the first festival was held in Mukteshwar. But in an interview with Buddhadeb Das, an accountant at GKCMORC who has witnessed these festivals since their outset, he claims the year was 1986.

[22] Since 2004, the dance festival has resumed at the site of Mukteshwar Temple in Bhubaneswar.

[23] The only exception was in 1999, when Odisha was severely affected by a super cyclone, with the result that the dance festival had to be stalled.

[24] Interviewed on 4 November 2019, in Konark.

[25] Interviewed on 6 December 2019, in Bhubaneswar.

[26] Performance studies scholars like Diana Taylor (2003), Rebecca Schneider (2012), and André Lepecki (2013), among others, have recognized the value of the body as an archive. Conventionally, historiographical studies have favoured the logocentric power of written archives over somatic knowledge and performance repertoire(s). The archive is often relegated to the textual and the tangible—documents, maps, books, records, and letters: in short, what "remains"—and is mostly set apart from the repertoire—dance, music, ritual, and social practices (broadly termed as performance)—and is further understood to "disappear" (Taylor 2003; Schneider 2012). These concerns are heightened in the context of dance and festivals, both perceived as ephemeral events. However, it is crucial to turn our lens to the living memories, corporeal knowledge, and individual and collective bodily archives, especially in cases when they appear to be our only choice.

[27] Sunil Kothari, "Konark Dance Festival 2014", Narthaki, 14 December 2014, https://narthaki.com/info/gtsk/gtsk107.html (accessed on 10 November 2023).

[28] When placed within a common background (here, the temple), the biographies of each dance are lost. Each dance form instead "performs" a ritualistic role of venerating and celebrating the site, with or without any direct association with the Sun Temple. Further, these performances do not account for the historical and discursive shifts that have taken place within the respective dance styles through time.

[29] *Jatras* are troops of theatre practitioners, popular in Odisha and its neighbouring state, West Bengal, who travel from place to place to perform. *Jatra* literally means journey or traveling.

References

Acharya, Pritish. 2008. *National Movement and Politics in Orissa, 1920–1929*. New Delhi: SAGE India.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Banerji, Arunima. 2012. Dance and the Distributed Body: Odissi, Ritual Practice, and Mahari Performance. *About Performance* 11: 7–39.

Banerji, Arunima. 2019. *Dancing Odissi: Paratopic Performances of Gender and State*. Calcutta: Seagull Books.

Banerji, Arunima. 2023. The Epistemic Politics of Indian Classical Dance. In *Performance Cultures as Epistemic Cultures*. London: Routledge, vol. 2.

Batisse, Michel, and Gerard Bolla. 2005. *The Invention of "World Heritage"*. English translation by Robert Grauman (for the first part) Raymond Johnson (for the second part). Paris: Association of Former UNESCO Staff Members.
Behara, Karuna Sagar. 2005. *Konark: The Black Pagoda*. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India.
Bharucha, Rustom. 2000. *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.
Bose, Mandakranta. 1991. Movement and Mimesis: The Idea of Dance in the Sanskritic Tradition. Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
Bose, Nirmal Kumar. 1932. *Canons of Orissa Architecture*. Calcutta: Prabasi Press.
Brown, Rebecca. 2017. *Displaying Time: The Many Temporalities of the Festival of India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
Chakravorty, Pallabi. 1998. Hegemony, Dance, and Nation: The Construction of the Classical Dance in India. *Journal of South Asian Studies* 21: 107–20. [CrossRef]
Chakravorty, Pallabi. 2000. From Interculturalism to Historicism: Reflections on Classical Indian Dance. *Dance Research Journal* 32: 108–19. [CrossRef]
Chatterjea, Ananya. 2004. In Search of a Secular in Contemporary Indian Dance: A Continuing Journey. *Dance Research Journal* 36: 102–16. [CrossRef]
Chatterjee, Ratnabali. 1993. Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Bengal: Construction of Class and Gender. *Social Scientist* 21: 9–11. [CrossRef]
Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. 1985. *The Dance of Siva: Essays on Indian Art and Culture*. New York: Dover. First published 1924.
Coorlawala, Usha Asha. 1994. Classical and Contemporary Indian Dance: Overview, Criteria, and a Choreographic Analysis. Ph.D. thesis, New York University, New York, NY, USA.
Coorlawala, Usha Asha. 2004. The Sanskritized Body. *Dance Research Journal* 36: 50–63. [CrossRef]
Courtney, David. 1998. The Tawaif, the Anti-Nautch Movement, and the Development of North Indian Classical Music. Available online: https://chandrakantha.com/music-and-dance/i-class-music/hindustani-sangeet/history/tawaif/ (accessed on 10 November 2023).
Croft, Clare. 2015. *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dave, Ranjana. 2016. Liminal Spaces: Odissi as a Continually Evolving Form. In *Tilt Pause Shift: Dance Ecologies in India*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
Donaldson, Thomas. 2005. *Konark: Monumental Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Ferguson, James. 1848. *Picturesque Illustrations of Ancient Architecture in Hindostan*. London: J Hogarth Haymarket.
Frey, Bruno S., and Lasse Steiner. 2011. World Heritage List: Does It Make Sense? *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 17: 555–73. [CrossRef]
Gordillo, Gaston R. 2014. *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
Guha Thakurta, Tapati. 2004. *Monuments, Objects and Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.
Hodges, Sarah. 2005. 'Looting' the Lock Hospital in Colonial Madras during the Famine Years of the 1870s. *Social History of Medicine* 18: 379–98. [CrossRef]
Kermorgant, Catherine Rubin. 2014. *Servants of the Goddess: The Modern-Day Devadasis*. New York: Random House India.
Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1998. *Destination Culture: Tourism Museums and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Lepecki, André. 2013. Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the task of the dancer. *TDR: The Drama Review* 57: 13–27. [CrossRef]
Lenka, Sarat Kumar, and Alok Ranjan Mishra. 2015. Promotion of Tourism through Event: A Study on Konark Festival. *Odisha Review* 72: 9–12.
Lopez y Royo, Alessandra. 2006. *ReConstructing and RePresenting Dance: Exploring Dance/Archaeology Conjunction*. Ebook published by Metamedia@Stanford. Palo Alto: Stanford Humanities Lab.
Lowen, Sharon. 1989. Contemporary Issues of Sastra in the Classical Dance of Orissa. In *Shastric Tradition in Indian Arts*. Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg.
Mahapatra, Jayanta. 1997. Winter Noon, Konark. In *Indian Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, vol. 40, p. 178.
Marglin, Frédérique Apffel. 1985. *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis in Puri*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Meskell, Lynn. 2018. *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Mishra, P. K. 1986. Growth of Oriya Nationalism, 1868–1921. In *Glimpses of Orissa*. Edited by S. Das. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak.
Mishra, Pritipushpa. 2020. *Language and the Making of Modern India: Nationalism and the Vernacular in Colonial Odisha, 1803–1956*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
Mitra, Debala. 2003. *Konarak*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India. First published 1925.
Mitra, Rajendra Lal. 2007. *Antiquities of Orissa*. Bhubaneswar: Amadeus Press, vols. 1 and 2. First published 1875.
Mitra, Sandipan. 2018. Nirmalkumar Bose and the Making of Anthropology in Bengal, 1849–1949. Master's dissertation, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, India.
Mittal Publishing. n.d. *Puri, Konark & Bhubaneswar*. Bhubaneswar: Mittal Publishing.
Mohanty, P. P. 2018. Towards Frameworking a Strategic Approach for Festival Tourism Destination Marketing and Management: Case Study of Odisha (India). *Turizam* 22: 145–57. [CrossRef]

Nayak, Supriya. 2020. Odissi: An Understanding of Neo-Classical Aesthetics. *Sahapedia.* Available online: https://www.sahapedia.org/brief-history-odissi-dance (accessed on 10 November 2023).
O'Shea, Janet. 2016. Festivals and Local Identities in a Global Economy: The Festival of India and Dance Umbrella. In *Choreography and Corporeality: Relay in Motion*. Edited by Thomas DeFrantz and Philipa Rothfield. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Panigrahi, Krishna Chandra. 1981. *History of Orissa: Hindu Period*. Chennai: Notion Press.
Prevots, Naima. 1998. *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.
Sarkar Munsi, Urmimala. 2017. Performance Sites/ Sights: Framing the Women Dancers. In *The Moving Space: Women in Dance*. Edited by Aishika Chakraborty and Urmimala Sarkar Munsi. Delhi: Primus Books.
Schneider, Rebecca. 2012. Performance Remains. In *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*. Edited by Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield. Bristol: Intellect Press.
Shah, Purnima. 2000. National Dance Festivals in India: Public Culture, Social Memory, and Identity. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA.
Sharma, Poonam. 2016. Creative Cultural Events: A New Tourism Product Development at the UNESCO India Heritage Sites. *Journal of Tourism* 17: 37–47.
Sikand, Nandini. 2016. *Languid Bodies, Grounded Stances: The Curving Pathway of Neoclassical Odissi Dance*. New York: Berghahn Books.
Soneji, Davesh. 2012. *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory, and Modernity in South India*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
Tambe, Ashwini. 2005. The Elusive Ingenue: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of European Prostitution in Colonial Bengal. *Gender and Society* 19: 160–79. [CrossRef]
Taylor, Diana. 2003. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. North Carolina: Duke University Press.
Vatsyayan, Kapila. 1967. The Theory and Technique of Classical Indian Dancing. *Artibus Asiae* 29: 229–38. [CrossRef]
Venkataram, Leela. 2013. Evolution of Odissi. In *Imagining Odisha*. Edited by H. Hulke. Odisha: Prafulla Publications.