

# Andarele Dance: The Female Body Empowerment Through The Sensual Movement

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## Abstract

This article commences with the historical-epistemological background of the sensual Andarele dance from Esmeraldas, Ecuador, aiming to comprehend the symbolic and social conception of the body. Employing a qualitative methodology, it scrutinizes the relationship between the Andarele dance and social and gender theories. The article's primary objective is to engender a discussion concerning female empowerment, with due consideration given to analyzing data on women's experiences in Ecuador and theoretical studies elucidating the benefits of women's body movement as a novel instrument for self-awareness. This process enables women to recognize their creative potential, empower themselves, and embark on emancipation. Consequently, their bodies become a transversal axis that connects and communicates with the external world.

**Keywords:** sensual, empowerment, andarele, esmeraldas

## *Tari Andarele: Pemberdayaan Tubuh Wanita melalui Gerakan Sensual*

## Abstrak

Artikel ini diawali dengan latar belakang sejarah-epistemologis tarian sensual Andarele dari Esmeraldas, Ekuador, yang bertujuan untuk memahami konsepsi simbolis dan sosial tentang tubuh. Menggunakan metodologi kualitatif, penelitian ini meneliti hubungan antara tarian Andarele dengan teori sosial dan gender. Tujuan utama artikel ini adalah untuk melahirkan diskusi tentang pemberdayaan perempuan, dengan pertimbangan diberikan untuk menganalisis data pengalaman perempuan di Ekuador dan studi teoretis menjelaskan manfaat gerakan tubuh perempuan sebagai instrumen baru untuk kesadaran diri. Proses ini memungkinkan perempuan untuk mengenali potensi kreatif mereka, memberdayakan diri mereka sendiri, dan memulai emansipasi. Akibatnya, tubuh mereka menjadi sumbu transversal yang menghubungkan dan berkomunikasi dengan dunia luar.

**Kata kunci:** sensual, pemberdayaan, andarele, esmeraldas

## INTRODUCTION

Andarele dance is a traditional dance from Ecuador that has movements that have a sensual connotation. This practice allows those who dance to develop their skills of self-knowledge and empowerment, in this case, women. This article is based mainly on a historical and symbolic study of what this dance represents both in an identical form as an ethnic group of a country and, on the other hand, the historical connotation of the struggle of a people for its liberation and how it is expressed through this dance. From this research, this dance, Andarele, is understood more profoundly; above all, the theme of freedom is highlighted as Boada raises it. The author develops it in an even more political and social way, about the benefits of this dance, as a symbol of freedom, femininity, and sensuality through movement. That even allows it to be approached from gender issues, where female empowerment through the body is already a political fact, seen from various perspectives of women artists and anthropologists from Latin America, as well as from perspectives of the erotic as a tool of power such as Audre Lorde raises it.

Therefore, this article seeks to find, on the one hand, the historical semiotic relationships of the meanings of this Andarele dance, which a people have, and also the relationship that a woman can establish with her freedom through her body and with the sensual movement of the dance. Several authors and their analysis support the investigative study to give the epistemic value of identity and gender of this dance. Understand that traditional dance is loaded with history and has this symbolic meaning. A deeper understanding of its content has a conscious or unconscious meaning on the people and, in this way, also understand the deeper relationships of women with their own bodies and empowerment.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

This article analyzes qualitatively the information collected from various authors, including an interview with an Andarele dance expert from Esmeraldas, Ecuador. On the one hand, an analysis qualifies the historical data from which dance arises and how this symbol and historical meaning allow it to have a profound and current impact on women with dance through its practice. On the other hand, it also a descriptive analysis of the authors and theories that support the idea that is to be established about this dance as a tool for the empowerment of women and defines, with the concepts and theories that it analyzes, how it can be sustained through proposals theoretical.

## RESULTS

The result of this research is epistemological through the historical, symbolic, and identity analysis of the Andarele dance and the symbolic and identity analysis from a gender perspective on female empowerment. The authors named here help sustain the value this dance can generate in women.

Therefore, it is a deductive process from historical research, and even the research allows an investigation of the sensual movement as a transversal axis of female empowerment. Through the analysis of several authors, many in branches, psychosocial, political, activist, corporal, and aesthetic.

## DISCUSSION

The majority of the population that inhabits it are Afro-Ecuadorians, but first, let us understand what this term is: Afro-Ecuadorians are an ethnocultural group that is also part of the process of mestizaje (the historical situation in which the mixture of cultures, ethnicities, and races emerged in Hispanic America during the colonial period). Within this mixture of peoples and cultures, essential elements of Afro-Ecuadorian culture can be found, which are composed of African influences. These elements serve as a focal point where Hispanic and indigenous cultures converge. Additionally, some Africans escaped slavery during an incident involving a shipwreck on the coast of Esmeraldas in the 17th century, thus gaining their freedom. This information provides a general overview of the Museum of the Central Bank of Ecuador, 12, 13 May, Quito (Anton Sanchez, 2007).

According to the chronicles, a Spanish ship with enslaved Black people arrived in Esmeraldas from Africa at the time of the colony. First, it passed through Central America (Panama). It arrived at the Ecuadorian coasts, and an accident caused the ship to sink; at that moment, the enslaved people could escape and be free; ten African men and women arrived in Esmeraldas. Therefore, the historical connotation of this Afro-Ecuadorian population is that it freed itself from the oppressive culture and formed its community based on its history-culture and the cultural encounter with the other peoples that inhabited this area in Ecuador.

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Culture allows the creation of cultural and historical identity, defining the particularities of each community and generating a distinct sense of identity.

Esmeraldas constitutes a legacy of its own identity that came from Africa and was freed from slavery by the Spanish, and these historical events have created its identity. In this Esmeralda's Afro culture, Andarele was born, which is a style of

music and dance. Which, to this day, is the identity of a people that shows its robust character and is free from colonial oppression.

### **Andarele, Afro Esmeraldas Dance**

Guido Boada explains Andarele in the book by Mateos (2013). He considers the Andarele as a figure, a character, a walker looking for some path of liberation from slavery. Andarele style is an artistic and cultural representation in the renewal of ideas that generate the cultural identity of a region and a country if we understand that the dance and music of the people, from their historical processes, also become part of the identity.

In addition to being a historical symbol of identity and culture, music is also, as stated by Washburne in the book by Hall (2020) in his study on salsa, an association with the people. It responds to society as a powerful weapon against injustice. Therefore, salsa music contains lyrics about poverty, violence, and political awareness, which gives it significant symbolic value.

For Rosita, who is a master of Afro-Esmeraldeño dance styles,

*"She is an important character of tradition in Ecuador as Papa Roncón, Petita Palma (masters of Afrosmeladeña culture), has said, Andarele is the end of the party. Why do grandparents say, "It is the Andarele, the end of the party". Because that is the moment when the guardians of the oral tradition meet in one of the lands... That is what our grandparents/elders taught us that the andarele is an end to the party, when it's already over, now it's andarele time, let's get out of here we can't stay anymore. And each one gets to know from which ancestral place they had come (...). (Mosquera, interview, 2022)*

Another thing to add, the Andarele, as Petita (Master) Palma used to say, is when we are dancing in 2/4 signature, and our polleras (skirts) say:

*"here I am, where I am going; here I am, where I am going. The movement of the skirt is a syncretic dance, product of syncretism, because herethere is a polka step, san Juanito [step], and the andarele [step] itself. So, when I studied at the Superior National Institute of Dance."*

*Teacher Paquito Salvador used to say "Rosa, you can do wonders with the andarele, but watch out, lending that step, that movement, to that musical genre. Because sometimes people see, but without being aware of where that step of the andarele comes from. (Mosquera, interview, 2022)*

The music and dances of these people are manifestations of hope, freedom, human bodies, and souls that yearn to be free; the freedom of femininity, the freedom of the pleasure of freedom. In addition, these dances have sensual movements, and this sensuality is related to the natural expression of a body. The

Andarele has movements that are born in the hips, and that is why it has this connotation of sensual dance since its movements are circular and undulating, right in the area of the female uterus, the woman's sexual area, it is also located the sacrum and the coccyx that is moved through this dance.

### **New Perspectives of the Body**

The body is the element we develop and identify ourselves in society. If we analyze it from different perspectives, we can see how, through information channels, they determine ways of understanding our body. Society creates schemes of what we must conceive for what it is or can be to understand. The role it has in society; on the other side, we can understand and analyze several factors, such as the information we have about the body, in this case, the body of women in social networks. On the one hand, is (the body) always has this position of being a sexualized body, which sells products, sells images, and sells an aesthetic, which breaks with the ideal of what it can be to understand the body from a deeper perspective that deconstructs that mistaken idea of what it is.

A person's existence is corporeal, and the social and cultural analysis of which it is the object, the values that distinguish it. Also, speak to us about the person and the variations that their definition and their structural modes of existence have anthropological perspective, allows us to understand that the body allows us to generate an identity about their selves, determines a culture, a geographical place, the relationships they establish, the actions we perform since their bodies are the direct tool that relates to the world.

David Le Breton (2022) talk about a person's corporeal existence. Culture and society are objects that influence the cultural spectrum, therefore directing values and the structures of people's existence; if they are constantly crossed by visual information about the body, and it is their means of relating to the world, of course, they are going to generate ideas and perceptions about their selves and their bodies in the world.

Now to understand the body from a deeper perspective based on philosophical aspects that scholars and various traditional cultures around the world suggest. The body ceases to be an image and is now a place where the soul, spirit lives, thoughts pass through, ideas, emotions, and all this is related to the outside world. The problem of corporality as the main identity of enthusiastic philosophers of man was raised in the early stages of the person's reflection. In the space of corporality, located in the sphere of soul-body dualism, the spiritualization of the body surpassed the soul's exhalation (Sheleketa & Batzanova, 2018; Zinchenko, 1975).

All the reference statement above allows us to see how the body has another space for discussion; in simpler words, the body is considered from a broader

perspective, not only from an aesthetic but a place where a soul and spirit live, and this body is related outwards to the world. The person strives to build a new space in the body. The term introduced by Michael Foucault (1986), "heterotopia," can be used with sufficient reason to characterize this new formation. The philosopher considered such real spaces characterized by special interrelationships between space and time, producing special regimes of body and subjectivity; the author will refer to some critical aspects of Laban because under some elements of his LMA system (Laban Movement Analysis), as first of all prisons, hospitals, brothels, resorts, colonies, ships. All that places are where there are opportunities for transforming subjectivity (Fast, 2006; Sheleketa & Batzanova, 2018; Vilanova, 2009). The author has been carrying out the body's investigation since 2016, when she began the research in Ecuador and started analyzing the body and movement from different perspectives, focusing on Laban as an essential author for the investigations.

The language of the body is born from the movement that is made with the body. Rudolf Von Laban, a Hungarian dancer and philosopher, played an important role in creating expressionism, a system focused on interpreting and understanding movement. Starting from the attention to body energy, it is proposed to understand movement beyond movement, what was once known as the "rigid movements" of classical dance allowing the dancers to explore the space using all possible directions in a rhythmic discharge (Duque Martínez, 2017). For Laban, movement is what brings us closer to our needs and, at the same time, is what determines us when we find ourselves in constant action with the environment. "*Man moves in order to satisfy a need. He aims by his movement at something of value to him*" (Duque Martínez, 2017).

As González Velasco (2012) states, the movement occurs when a nerve impulse reaches the muscle; it contracts and pulls on the bones. Pulling on the bones causes displacement of a body member or the entire body. The brain has made a nerve impulse that has traveled to the muscles, which contract and pull on the bone. Thus, in the anatomical-functional organization, we must take into account the following elements:

- The intervention of the nervous system.
- The intervention of one or more muscles.
- The intervention of the bones, although not in all movements.

The nervous system is ultimately responsible for the movement, which develops and executes the movements. The effector of the movement, the one that performs the task, is the muscle.

This activity, motor, transmitter, and movement executor generates a cerebral reaction. The brain receives this information and therefore perceives what has just happened. If the movement is related to our brain, the brain will create a

thought. The body connects with the mind and can generate thoughts and ideas from this union of the nervous system since a physical, motor activity is born. It becomes information that arrives through neurotransmitters.

The movement of our body constitutes the information we create, and movement refers to all kinds; now, we focus on dance. Dance is produced through the body's movement if the body is our channel of communication and existence with the external world, and movement represents everything we do. Which generates the perception of what we are; dance here is a connector. Dance is how we move, create, share, and manifest new realities to the world.

### **Sensuality and Dance**

Sensuality and dance start from a principle, and this denominator principle is the body, understanding while dancing produces pleasure, dance stimulates the senses, as María Paz Valle Riestra Ortiz de Zevallos puts it. Zevallos (2020) speaks about the body functions as a source of pleasurable sensations through movement, particularly circular movements, which in themselves elicit pleasure. It is important to acknowledge the existence of numerous studies exploring sensuality as an inherent aspect of the body and movement in dance. Furthermore, sensuality is regarded as an energy that intertwines emotions, sensations, and pleasure originating from the body.

The sexualized body, the sensual body, the body as the axis of social relationships, and the body in motion are part of cultural environments related to spaces, modes, events, rituals, and ceremonies, which determine their own perceptions as individuals—the concept of sensuality from a psychological perspective, by Mariana Pérez (2021). Sensuality is the quality, faculty, or ability that a certain person possesses which provokes or leads to an emotional reaction of another. In other words, a person possesses sensuality if he or she produces or triggers an attraction in the senses of any other individual. Another meaning of the word, exposed in the real academy, is the propensity or excessive desire for the pleasures of the senses. Many sources state that sensuality is not an instinct, but something learned in life (Pérez, 2021).

Sensuality is the condition of one or that which is sensual. This adjective, for its part, is linked to the senses and, especially, to sexual desire. It is called sensuality (a term from the Latin *sensualitas*), therefore, to the quality favoring sexual stimulation. In the case of people, sensuality is associated with personality and physical appearance. When these two factors manage to arouse sexual desire in other individuals, the person is said to be sensual (Pérez Porto et al., 2014).

Sensuality in dance is an intrinsic characteristic since sensuality is a factor and character in many dances. Where the central movement is the swaying of the hips or shoulders; however, it should be emphasized that sensuality. It is also

determined in body parts, which are the woman's pelvic area, where her reproductive system is located and therefore. They come to have this sensual connotation. Sabina Magliocco (2014) explains that there are new rituals that now seek to legitimize women since, for so many years, women have been relegated from history. Therefore these new rituals seek women's empowerment in each of its manifestations.

The dance comes from the ritual. The ritual is an encounter, a collective and individual manifestation (Magliocco, 2014). The movement of the hips allows direct contact with the hips through the senses and the body's movement. It starts contact with the female sexual zone and generates movement in these areas, producing brain activations already studied before, which generate new interpretations of femininity.

### **Hip Movement**

There are several medical studies where they have worked with women who have had problems in the pelvic area, and many of them, for years, have gone through intervention processes to recover security through therapeutic processes carried out through dance; since human beings somatize emotions in the body. This condition is where so much pain, thoughts, ideas, and emotions converge, and if there is no way to express them, they become more acute and can cause damage.

Now a moving body can generate new brain connections that allow the person to have a new perception of herself. Although the hip movement is directly connected with the woman's sexual area, this will generate a simultaneous process of reinterpretation of women's identity. Because the premises in the Andarele dance and the swaying dance of the hips is precisely to liberate, let go. These indications will go directly to the brain of this woman, who will interpret and express this dance with freedom and in search of that freedom. These thoughts and understandings about the body generate new connections and understandings about the human being.

Already in 1966 American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) was the Association of dance therapists that recognized dance for work with disabilities, social, physical, or psychological. Dance is a fundamental vehicle that allows restoring the integral well-being of the human being to the body, mind, and spirit of him, which influences himself and his environment. "Dance provides body control, a possibility of expression, and an opportunity to establish relationships with others, as well as discover and build."

In this way, as a therapy, dance is by its own nature. Creativity is a search for structures that allow one to express one's own impulses and needs. It is not limited to exercise but a manifestation of personal feelings and energies and a desire to externalize something of one's own. Dance as a creation is based on a realistic or

abstract concept that needs to be communicated to others (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015, p. 30; Panhofer, 2016).

For this reason, these dances, on the one hand, are a cultural manifestation of a people, but at the same time, for those who practice them. They are a space for liberation and continuous creation while at the same time reconstructing their thoughts about themselves as a woman's body, which they know. That is explored and moves to the rhythm of this happy music, which can already lead to states of climax. At the same time, somebody dances it where new brain connections are produced, allowing another conception of the body as a woman. Furthermore, this influences people's daily life because it is a physical process, and the physical process is tangible and integrated throughout their body, soul, and spirit, as we saw in this article.

On the other hand, this dance has a sensual character since its movements originate in the center of the body, hips, and reproductive system. Furthermore, the performances danced in Ecuador are dynamic, cathartic, explosive, and liberating dances. Dance is a bodily process that allows us to develop perceptions and assertions about ourselves since elements converge in this bodily process. As Bench puts it, corporeal is about inhabiting and cultivating habits of mind and body (Bench, 2016).

This approach to this dance has allowed her to see changes in her corporality, thought, and conception of herself. Moreover, at the same time, she wants to discover these processes in greater depth, which is even related to misconceptions about sensuality, which also, she has seen in her, as well as in society, even as taboo and with a sexual connotation, for the eyes of those who look at it. Furthermore, authors think that it is important to experiment in this sense, about the sensual as freedom, the sensual as therapy, the sensual that does not manifest itself towards the external eyes and that instead internal situations have manifested, causing catharsis of emotional and physical liberation, and they present with new perspectives.

This work seeks the sensual and the movement as a natural representation of freedom, meeting spaces of humanity with nature (rituals), which are manifested to thank and ask for fertility for the earth and its agrarian processes and today, from this experience, as a personal therapy. This work has allowed the author to recognize new forums on the conception of the feminine and movement as a channel for personal reconstruction. Now to understand the body from a deeper perspective based on philosophical aspects and through this cultural connection that emerges in new practical processes. This will allow a new conception of women that will lead them to understand themselves and rediscover ways to empower themselves, their bodies, and their sensuality, and this sensuality is her freedom.

The body is a learning space, and dance brings us closer to that interaction space. For example, when we visit a museum, the visitor learns from what he observes. Most visitors find the place a relaxing platform and are not fascinated by learning something new or enhancing knowledge (Amoako-Hene et al., 2022). Our body is where we learn from each movement and each expression, and we can also expand and celebrate from the hips' movements.

### **Empowerment**

Female empowerment is a new term. For example, how is looking from Hooks distinguishes between power as domination and control over others and power that is creative and life-affirming (Hooks, 2000). From the Latin American perspective, it is a discourse that is in transformation. At the same time, it is based on feminist and gender theories, and it is a term that appears in Europe, Asia, and Africa. In this context, gender studies cannot break away from the epistemological basis of feminism, which was born as an ideology of equality against patriarchy through social and political movements. In other words, discussing the study of gender should also be placed in discussions about social and political movements that continue to grow to this day (Bandel, 2016; Pamungkas, 2017).

Under the social and historical realities the continents face, the term empowerment and its proposed proposal is also constructed and discussed. Srilatha Batliwala (1993) states that empowerment is a capacity that allows individuals to take charge of their lives and be in control, enabling them to organize their agendas. It has been analyzed that empowerment, particularly in women, has developed in the context of gender and identity, which generates discourse on integration, participation, autonomy, and identity development (León, 2001).

If we analyze Audre Lorde's perspective, we can see that she expresses that The erotic is connected to something purer, deeper, and spiritual that resides within the feminine, within us women. It is related to our emotions, thoughts. The erotic and sensual are tools attributed to the physical and practical realm, ultimately leading to being political, concerning identity, and theoretical (Lorde, 2007).

Empowerment has become widespread and entered the international, national, and local spheres in the last two decades; this is due, in part, to the theoretical debate that has filled it with meaning; but, above all, to its relevance to the practical experiences of women (Morales, 2016). Women, from the struggles for their equal rights, have established ways of relating to the world, of placing the actual value of their efforts in a society where it has been socially repressed. The perspective of female empowerment is a political position and a position of ideological thought. Social studies encompass many historical conceptions that pose women as an important axis for the change of society.

One of the factors that support a nation's progress is women's participation in community development. Educated women are crucial aspects in improving the quality of human resources. The government and the community have responsibilities and play an essential role in facilitating educational activities for women in facing the current advanced global competition. The development of human resources becomes a prominent capital of existing in international relations (Dadi, 2021).

Life skills allow the development of abilities to face problems or resolve situations that arise in day-to-day life naturally, without pressure. Then, they seek creative ways to overcome obstacles. Life skills are necessary to interact with the environment, with others, and to be part of the community that surrounds us. This is achieved through various means, such as critical and assertive thinking, effective communication, empathy, self-esteem, and the management of stress or tensions that arise in daily life (Dadi, 2021; Ramadani & Syuraini, 2018; Sondari & Sofiani Zaimar, 2019; Yanti & Mardliyah, 2020).

Empathy is linked to understanding others from various perspectives, including the senses. It involves voluntarily placing the author's thoughts and mental state upon the actions of another person in order to respond appropriately (Baron-Cohen, 2009; Goldstein et al., 2012; Greenberg et al., 2015; Hoffman, 2008; Wardani, 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

Female empowerment is the consequence of a historical process that validates women in all their facets and roles within society. Suppose we understand it from dance and dance practice involving sensuality. In that case, we can understand that this process is self-recognition through the movement of the hips, allowing women. On the one hand, to understand and know their body and their movement and redefine themselves from that practice because today, how necessary practices are, beyond theory and dance, is a practical physical environment, which happens in a body that is a historical body, which is being redefined over the years, and which is reinventing itself in a society, where political, moral and economic powers have imposed many things. That has not allowed a self-recognition of the human being through his body, even more so in the woman who, throughout history, has been displaced from the truth that her body is a tool for development to be seen in the world.

On the other hand, understand that dances with sensual movements arise from other historical needs, such as the Andarele. Is born from unjustly enslaved people and their desire for freedom, which now represents a powerful identity in Ecuador. Since they are free, this freedom that generates empowerment can be shared worldwide through the movement of the hips. Women can recognize their

sensuality not categorized from a moral point of view but from a biological and natural reality that gives women royal power.

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