

### Exhibition hours

Open Tuesday to Friday, 1pm to 7pm;  
Saturday and Sunday, 3pm to 7pm  
Closed on Mondays

-**Between exotism and progress:** the museum's collections at the beginning of the 20th century.

-**From Puna to Chaco. A precolumbian story:** 4000 years of history in the Northwest of Argentina.

-**The uttermost part of the world:** the European occupation of Tierra del Fuego in the 19th and 20th centuries.

-**Temporary exhibitions**

### Library

Monday to Friday, 2pm to 8pm

**More information:** 4345-8196/97

[Info.museo@filo.uba.ar](mailto:Info.museo@filo.uba.ar)

[www.museoetnografico.filo.uba.ar](http://www.museoetnografico.filo.uba.ar)

 Museo Etnografico J. B. Ambrosetti



Moreno 350

City of Buenos Aires

(two blocks from Plaza de Mayo)



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**Facultad de Filosofía y Letras**

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MUSEO



ETNOGRAFICO

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# Dancers of light



**Museo Etnográfico**  
**"Juan B. Ambrosetti"**

# Dancers of light

The so-called Danzantes are a group of ten to twelve dancers dressed in costumes covered with silver plaques. Their dance was a featured act in the processions of Corpus Christi and of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the city of Sucre, in Bolivia.

They were part of the complex world of colonial feasts -public celebrations with bullfighting, theatrical productions, fireworks, dancing, entrada de velas (entry of the candles)- that consumed a great part of the time and economical resources of the cities. Civil and ecclesiastical authorities were the ones that programmed the celebrations and appointed the people responsible for the production of the events.

In the case of the danzantes, each year a different guild of craftsmen was mandatorily appointed to bear the expenses of the new costumes and look for the indigenous dancers. Non-compliance was punishable by imprisonment. The costumes that were already worn were rented to neighbouring communities.

The exploitation of the silver mines constituted the main source of the wealth



of Alto Perú (now Bolivia). Cerro Rico de Potosí was the most important deposit of silver, and it gave its name to the city of Potosí. The abundance of silver in the costumes of the danzantes reflects this wealth, and their decoration often includes the representation of the Cerro Rico.

Even though the danzantes must have existed from a much earlier date, the first known record of them is a painting from the eighteenth century. More than two centuries separate the Soumaya painting from the Danza de Liwiria, a dance that it is still performed by rural communities of the Jalq'a region with similar costumes, in which silver has been replaced by tinfoil. The changing in their contexts surely changed their meanings, but it tells us about a memory determined to persist.

**Cover illustration:** Dance performer's helmet (ME -42312-)

**Photograph:** "Danzantes". Antonio José Torres Rojas. Decade of 1950. Private collection.

**Image:** Silver plaque detail.

## "Dancers of light"

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