

The
UNPUBLISHED DANCES OF THE PHILIPPINES
(Series 4)

by
RAMON A. OBUSAN





The UNPUBLISHED DANCES of the Philippines (Series 4) is premiered at the CCP Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo (Main Theater) on May 21/8 p.m. & 22/3 p.m., 1999.

PROGRAMME

I. SAYAW SAYAW (Philippine Festivals)

II. AL FIN DEL SIGLO

Harpas de Cagayan
Rigodon Royale
Sayaw sa Cuyo
Malaguena
Jota Quirino

III. VAMOS A BELÉN!

Posadas
Infantes
Pastores Bungiawan
Nazareno
Pastores Bool
Pastores Tobog
May Pasko rin sa Smokey Mountain

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IV. FIESTA!

Prusisyon
Ala Kaya
Pinandanggo
Lapay Bantigue

V. LUMAD

Bulah-Bulah/Silat
Kasal/Kawin
Sounds of the Tuntungan
Minandagit
Kadal Taho
Takiling/Salip
Pangamole
Tarak
Sagayan

MESSAGE



If I could have another lifetime and several more, I would definitely go back amongst my dear friends living in deep forest recesses or wedged in some slopes of high mountains to listen to tales of rich cultures, delight in their music, be one with them in dance and capture their timeless traditions to contribute to an ever-hungry art world.

I would continue to swirl in the lyrical lifestyle of the lowland farmer, the fishermen and the hunters as they complete their daily chores. And most certainly I would be there to listen tirelessly to music both introduced and indigenous. I would not stop dancing till I wore off the skin of my feet. I would dance until all of us fell exhausted, contented and fulfilled.

This is what I want to do. This is what I intend to do. But I have only one lifetime...

Ramon A. Obusan

Ramon A. Obusan

Artistic Director, Choreographer and Researcher

The RAMON OBUSAN FOLKLORIC GROUP

The RAMON OBUSAN FOLKLORIC GROUP (ROFG) celebrates 28 years of preservation and perpetuation of Philippine dance and music traditions.

Founded in 1971, the ROFG started as a fledgling folk dance company, composed of not more than thirty performers. Learning on the vast amount of data and artifacts that he had accumulated while he was doing researches, Ramon A. Obusan thought of starting a dance company that will mirror the traditional culture of the Filipinos through dance and music.

For twenty-eight years, the ROFG has created a niche in the world of dance as forerunner of Philippine dance performed closest to the original. Boasting of over a thousand performances in the Philippines and abroad, the ROFG became a resident folk dance company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) in 1986.

Under the able leadership of its father and Artistic Director, Choreographer and Researcher, Ramon A. Obusan, it has so far gone on three successful European Tours in 1987, 1990 and 1993. In 1992, the group was the first Filipino performing artists to receive resounding applause and standing ovations for all its performances in Japan under the auspices of Min-On. In 1994, the group had its first American Tour visiting 16 states capped with a proclamation of February 8 as ROFG Day in Cleveland, Ohio. In Asia, the group represented the Philippines in various dance festivals and conferences as cultural ambassadors. Along with this, Mr. Obusan was chosen as Artistic Director of the first performing group composed of the various dance companies in the ASEAN Village in Sentosa, Singapore performing not only Philippine dances but dances of other Asian countries as well.

In 1995, it helped raise HK 1.5 M. for Filipino OCWs in Hongkang when they performed for a fund-raising event sponsored by the Hongkong Bayanihan Trust. In April and May 1996 the group went to Paris, Turkey, Greece and Sweden for series of performances under the auspices of the Department of Tourism (DOT). In May 1998 the company performed at the Lisbon Expo '98 in Portugal as part of the Philippine Centennial celebration.

Though steep with international recognition, the ROFG has never forgotten the people who are the very source of its pride. For the past two decades it has documented and performed the rituals of more than 50 ethnolinguistic groups in the country. With about fifteen outstanding full-length Filipino dance works, among which are the memorable suites from the Cordillera, Bagobo, T'boli, Tausug, Maranao, the Aeta and the Talaandig among others, the ROFG has served to highlight the authenticity of the movements and costumes of these people.

Today, the ROFG humbly celebrates 28 years of fruitful existence and service to the Filipino people. To the ROFG there is no stopping in the pursuit of recording and staging of fast fading traditions.

RAMON AREVALO OBUSAN

Born in Legazpi, Alalay, June 16, 1936. Choreographer, dancer, scholar and researcher. The son of Praxedes Obusan, a physician, and Josefina Arevalo, a music teacher, he went to the University of the Philippines for degrees in fisheries technology and cultural anthropology. He taught for several years at the Aklan National School of Fisheries, then became a dancer and researcher of the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company.

In 1971, he founded the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, and has since choreographed and directed for some 65 dance groups and over 100 productions nationwide—dance, pageants, festivals, special events, competitions, exhibits, television, movies, and video-films.

His productions include full-length presentations, notably *Kayaw '68* and *Kayaw '74, Maynila - Isang Dakilang Kasaysayan* (Manila), *Kaamulan* (Gathering), *Noon Pa Sa Amin* (The Way It Was), *Sayaw - Handog ng Pilipino sa Mundo* (Dance - Filipino's Gift to the World), *Ritual* (Ritual), *Under the ASEAN Sky, Glimpses of ASEAN, Philippine Festivals, Tausug Tapeslry* and the *Rare and Unpublished Dances* series. He has collaborated in various film projects, among them *American Ninja, Banawe, Hubad na Gubat* (Naked Forest), *The King and the Emperor, Maligayang Pasko* (Merry Christmas), *Noli Me Tangere*, *Waywaya* and *Rizal*. His own group has joined international festivals and expositions in over 25 countries since 1974. It has also toured the Philippines extensively.

Through the years, Ramon Obusan has studied and documented the indigenous culture of Philippine ethnic groups from north to south, focusing on rites and traditions. Proof of this life-work of over three decades is a compilation of over 200 audio and video-documentation of this researches as well as a collection of museum artifacts. He has also done research on the Polynesian culture of Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti and New Zealand, and given lectures, demonstrations, and workshops worldwide. Obusan tries to keep his folk dance presentations authentic by using actual movement patterns, costumes, and music even as dances go onstage.

Two documentaries he directed for the *Tuklas Sining* series won awards in France: grand prize, Prix de Reportage for *Sayaw*, 1990, and Special Mention, Grand Prix International Video-Dance, 1992, for *Philippine Ethnic Dance*. A consultant for UNESCO, he has been cited for his achievements in research, conferences, workshops, and presentations. He was given the *Patnubay ng Kalinangan* award by the City of Manila in 1992 and the Gawad CCP Para sa Sining Sayaw in 1993.

He has actively worked as a member of the Executive Committee of the Philippine Folk Dance Society, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts - Committee on Dance since 1987. He was consultant and co-director of the 1998 Centennial Parade Celebration. He was Co-Curator and Program Director of *Pahiyas: A Philippine Folk Festival*, the Philippine's participation to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington D.C., USA, in July 1998. This year he was one of the 100 artists awarded in the CCP Centennial Honors for the Arts.

An Introduction to the UNPUBLISHED DANCES OF THE PHILIPPINES Series 4

Culturally rich and diverse, the Philippine Islands is peopled by a hundred different ethnic societies. As in many cultures of the world, dance is an integral part of the distinctive identity and traditions of these societies. A Chinese saying simply says it all - "Dance is the SOUL of the people". Dances and people have been interwoven in a fabric marked by patterns of adaptation, physical and psychological expressions, and multi-social relevance from the first dance step in prehistory up to the present time. Baby-parent dances have provided stirring glimpses of the affection for the young. Coming-of-age has been frequently celebrated by dance laden feasts or rituals and dances of the celebrant himself. Marriage, age, trade, status, achievement, rewards and even death have been marked by traditional rituals, chants, music, songs and dance.

The earliest evidence of dance in the Philippines was likely related to animistic rituals, animism, the fear of the unknown, the unexplained phenomenon of death, answering a legion of mysteries that surrounded them, and probably by the magic associated with fire. The early Filipinos sought solutions to these mysteries as ways of strengthening their beliefs and worship of gods; good or evil, through rituals, offerings, sacrifices, supplication, incantation that affect insistence on taboos they believe that both gods and people were protected. Scholars speculate that these various activities were given more and more importance to answer the mysteries surrounding a culture that was becoming more and more complex.

The need or the desire to dance arises from communal rites to conciliate the gods, to solicit blessings, to seek deliverance from pestilence, or for special needs that mark such diverse events as weddings, births, deaths, the preparation for war, for victory, or simply to lighten, to lyricize, rhythmically or melodically accompany such everyday tasks as planting, harvesting, pounding or winnowing rice, fishing and the gathering of such things as betel tobacco, honey or wine. It is therefore easy to understand the importance of such dances, which embody deep beliefs that empowered them to express their socio-psycho-physical needs.

Today, we perceive Philippine dances in all their artistry by viewing them from different distance and perspective. With the initial research work done by the late National Artist Francisco Reyes-Aquino, and inevitably its elevation as a higher theater art form introduced by National Artists Leonor Orosa-Goaungco and Lucrecia Reyes-Urtula, Philippine folk dance has come-of-age.

On the other hand, with thirty-five years of research work, and with the continuing personal commitment in the preservation and perpetuation of Philippine culture, Ramon Obusan has introduced audiences to a discovery of a vast repository of Philippine tradition in dance and music. From this valuable input emerged the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG) - an entity sustained by the affair of research and selflessly engaged in the dissemination of these researches via performances. Through the last 27 years, the ROFG and Ramon Obusan have maintained and refined its research, establishing an extensive network of contacts and informants in the interior areas and compiling substantial information on dances identified and recorded as well as expanding performance activities all over the country and abroad.

Thirty-five years of unrelenting travels and documentation have led Ramon Obusan and many of the members of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group to villages, coastal towns, mountain slopes, caves and forest clearings where precious traditions long preserved and treasured by a respective community or society were shown and allowed to be staged for the Philippines and the world to see. Braving threats to life and safety, hunger, curtailment of movement and the ever-present danger of treading upon sensibilities of the groups studied, ROFG continues to present these rare works of art to the audience at large.

Thus, the "Unpublished Dances of the Philippines" series was born. These productions evolved from documenting, reviving and in many cases rediscovering traditional folk ways unearthed from the dustbins of places as far as Apurim in the North and in Jolo, Sulu down South, a result of painstaking work in the recovery of precious fragments of many Philippine traditions.

Today, the FOURTH of the series is premiered with over twenty "new" dances as well as the celebration of ROFG's 100th contribution to the list of unpublished dances.

Unpublished Dances Series 4 also represents ROFG's decision to depart from the customary dance theater delivery format and, in effect, return to basics by re-contextualizing cultural events as they would be found within the local village or barrio. In the regional or native setting, divisions separating performers and onlookers are permeable and easily crossed by audience members flowing in and out of performance events with relative ease. It is worthy to note that Philippine dance is in fact a manifestation of the drama and stories of our lives. Philippine dance is infused with a theatrical nature, disproving foreign scholars claiming that there is no theater in pre-Western Philippine culture. In fact, it is the vestiges and basic forms of indigenous dance and theater forms that have even survived the passing of time and introduction of foreign theater forms.

In the traditional context, all present at an event are potential participants, illustrating the Filipino's innate sense of actively participating and interacting with others. Today's performance was conceived, planned and executed with this specific intent—to invite all present to participate in what is occurring - whether it be dancing in the aisles, reminiscing about a fond memory or simply clapping hands and delighting in the beauty and diversity of that which is Filipino. The ROFG invites all to remove the boundaries of the proscenium, the inhibitions that suppress true emotions and join together as one community, ONE PEOPLE AND ONE NATION.



SAYAW-SAYAW



Sayaw-Sayaw

Diverse and colorful festivals pepper the Philippine calendar, notwithstanding diversities that affect local weather, economic, social, historical and political situations. To the Filipino, a festival occurs come rain or shine. A fiesta is considered the occasion for one to save for and to be excused from the year-long drudgery of work and, more importantly, is the best reason to expect relatives and friends to come together to visit, feast and make merry. It is also the only reason the hard-working domestic help, overseas worker or office worker to break away from their ungrateful job and to spend a few memorable days with their loved ones. It is also the excuse to don a colorful costume and join their *kababayan* in a noisy and boisterous parade for whatever reason the joy of a festival, and the fond thoughts it leaves behind.

Bahol Island alone boasts of a fiesta everyday in May, while many towns in the Bicol region keep true the Christmas spirit far weeks on end. Be it the feast of a Christian saint, the foundation day of a town or school, the end of a harvest, a *datu's* crowning, and the renewal of vows to tribal chiefs, these festivals are ushered by songs, dances, food and much merriment. Other diverse festivals include those that commune with nature gods to solicit blessings, highlighted by offerings and sacrifices. Best to mention are festivals that mark the various stages and diverse events of the human life-cycle.

The ROFG puts into one colorful production over twenty of the most celebrated and colorful fiestas in the islands - some involve only a handful of participants like the *Djanga* of Gataran, Cagayan while some have thousands of dancers as in the *Sinulog* of Cebu and *Ati-ati* of Aklan. All, however, share in common the joyous expression of life in a multitude of ways.

AL FIN DEL SIGLO

Spain discovered and conquered not only to augment the wealth of an empire, but also to bring Christianity to the rest of the world. One day in the 16th century, early Filipinos saw five galleons appear in the horizon. From then on life in the islands was never the same again. But before Spain could christianize the Philippines, she had to interfere with the once placid life in the islands, dipping her fingers into its political, social, religious activities, and in the process imposing on them her culture. Christian missionaries were delighted to discover that song and dance was second nature to the native, so instead of obliterating the people's musicality, the priests encouraged further the *indios* to continue singing and dancing. Songs and dances from their native Spain were even introduced. To a large degree they succeeded.

For years and hundred more years, goods and ideas from the West continued to enter the Philippines. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, increased imports extensively including among other things, dance forms such as the *jota*, *tandango*, *mazurka*, *valse*, and *lancers* etc., influencing to a great extent the people's outlook in dance and expression. In Philippine arts and culture different silhouettes were created.

There are many questions to be answered regarding just how much Spain has influenced the dance tradition of the Filipino people and how these new dance forms, though far removed from the medium popular to the pre-colonial Filipino, have survived and become part of the national treasure.



Rigodon Royale

Rigodon Royale. (Zamboangita, Negros Oriental) As a matter of social tradition, the *rigodon royale*, Negros Oriental's version of the popular *rigodon de honor*, is a walk-dance employed by the elite "to see and be seen". Popularized at the end-of-the-century, the *rigodon* reached its peak of popularity during the Commonwealth period in the 1930's. Travelers coming

back from the fashion centers of the world like Paris, New York, London and Milan were in the look out for a grand social with a *rigodon* to show-off their new buys, that is if their arrival was not honored by a *bienvenida*, welcome ball by friends. A *rigodon* was the best event to turn neighbors green with envy. The opening of the Suez Canal, afforded many to update themselves on current trends and styles. Haughty gentlemen sweating in heavy woollen coats danced or exchanged pleasantries with snobbish ladies weighed down with European gowns and smelling of the latest Parisian perfumes. Though languishing in this hot tropical weather, these copycats gracefully moved about pretending not to melt in the sweltering heat. In the other hand, the deprived *indios*, wishing to be in step with the well-traveled *mestizos*, contents himself with wearing local materials, simple and light but very comfortable. Wealth, power and the *rigodon* dance worked interchangeably to relegate the town's who's who into designated places in the social arena.

A *rigodon* must always have a line of *cabezeras* (heads) composed of the high and influential pairs of the town. Though not the best dancers they are society's creme-de-la-creme chosen for their social and political standing. The other line, the *costados* (sides) is composed of the second liners usually the less-traveled or small government officials. It is obvious that even in those days discrimination was not unheard of, a tell-tale of which is, though coated with opulence is an innocent-looking dance.

A visit to Mr. D. Elli, a retired schoolteacher of Zamboangita, Negros Oriental gave us the chance to record this rigodon. Unfortunately for us, we chose a very wet afternoon to record the rigodon royale. Our hearts go to the dancers who inspite of a brown out and a raging typhoon moved with grace and measured steps.

Malagueña



Malagueña, (Catanauan, Quezon) It took an 88 year-old man and an 82 year-old partner to prevent the permanent loss of a treasure - Bening Maglangit of Catanauan, Quezon. *Malagueña* (obviously revealing its far-off origin in sunny Malaga, Spain) is in itself an import from nearby Marinduque island to Catanauan town. Proximity and lucrative trade were reasons that lured Marinduque merchants and adventurers to come to Catanauan. Another reason was the amuse fiesta that was the best occasions to display their wares for sale, taste fiesta foods, test the town's hospitality and participate in the evening dance sessions. It was on these occasions that the *Malagueña* and other dances were performed to the delight and satisfaction of the Catanauans. *Malagueña* was accepted but before it underwent the expected changes a dance usually undergoes. Soon the original has lost its true form to the innovative or creative forms that the *Malagueña* is today.

Mr. Bening Marlangit comes from a well-to-do family which once owned and maintained a big brass band. His mother was the grand old dame from whom the dances *malagueña* and *abaruray* were learned. As a young girl, she learned from her grandmother the grace of a young folk dancer. In turn Mang Bening became one of his mother's best dancers. Now senile and deaf-toned, he could barely hum the *Malagueña* music, however, the steps he remembers well.

From Marinduque and Catanauan only one step is familiar to both, the sway balance, a clear evidence of how a dance transforms when coursed through a fertile mind.

The ROFG extends its profound thanks to Mr. Marlangit and to ROFG's Rimmel Serrano, for his frantic effort to save and learn from his grandfather, Malagueña, thus saving the Catanauan Malagueña.

Sayaw Sa Cuyo (Cuyo, Palawan). The ROFG considers *Sayaw Sa Cuyo* one of its classics, the reason why we are bringing it back for this series. There are a handful of *Sayaw Sa Cuyo* versions, the one using the Panama hat was presented in Series 3, and this time we are using two lace handkerchiefs instead of the hat.

I joined the Cuyo Islanders in their celebration of the 275th year of Christianization in the 70's and it was there where I documented many Cuyonin dances, including two versions of the Sayaw Sa Cuyo. This all-female dance emphasizes the daintiness of girls in their early teens, dressed in paneled skirts that were the fashion of the time. The use of the lace panuelo gave accent to twirls and turns, which are the signature movement of the dance.



Sayaw sa Cuyo

Jota Guirino, (Guirino). Spanish missionaries and soldiers came to Guirino (then Aurora sub province) bringing with them the Western art forms and other Spanish traditions, many of which were assimilated into the local culture. A good part of Andalusian arts and expressions came by way of its famous *jota* dances. Although not as widely accepted and used as the *valse* or waltz, the *jota* was transformed into the varied forms in the hands of the Filipinos. Nowhere in the world is the *jota* interpreted in such variations using ingenious props like bamboo castanets, *manton*, parasols, fans, kerchiefs, hats and even long bamboo poles. Worthy of mention is an Ilocano *jota* once used to accompany a dead to his grave, now a popular ballroom dance.

In Guirino where Ilocano migrants settled amongst numerous indigenous peoples, a great variety of fiestas are celebrated to break away from the drudgery of everyday fieldwork. The

landed farm-owners opened their big plantation houses to big social gatherings and balls, wining and dining with their elite friends while farm hands rendered themselves servicing their masters. And because of these frequent socials, the *indio* were able to master the dances of rich partygoers which today, as the dance stands, is part of Quirino's repertoire of Western-influenced dances.

A young group presented Jota Quirino in a program featuring Quirino province at the Philtrade exhibit in the early 70's. The ROFG takes pride in re-staging the dance as a token of gratitude to the kind people of Quirino province. Bamboo castanets are added, per suggestion of old Quirino residents who used to do this jota.



Jota Quirino.



VAMOS A BELEN!

For more than two hundred years from the 17th up to around the mid-19th century, the church and the state were in partnership as principal patrons of the art. Then the wealthy class emerged to challenge the dominance of the art patrons from these entities.

The church's influence on the arts was incalculable because it was the missionaries who worked directly with the people, marshaling their skills and intentions in the service of religion as well as creating innovations to ease the understanding of the church's tenets.

For their part, the missionaries who enocably positioned themselves in almost all islands capitalized on the Filipinos love for music and dance. No sooner had they set up their first makeshift altar when they realized that the people came to adore in the manner they were used to in supplicating to the deities of nature - by song and dances.

The *pastores* tradition, practiced by the Ybanag of Cagayan, the Tagalog, Waray, Boholanos and, very specially, the Bicolanos, is one example of the church's intent to use song and dance as a catechetical instrument to get closer to the people. Thus, it was the church who introduced the Philippines to celebrate the longest and probably the best known of all festivals - Christmas. Christmas would not be Christmas if it were not interpreted with the tinsels, lights, food, gifts, shopping, visiting and singing the songs of the season.

In keeping with the times, the *pastores*, as a band of men and women (which now has given way to young pupils) roam the streets at Christmas time performing part of the Christmas story for a small token. Part of which goes back to the church as donation for its maintenance and upkeep.

We are proud to present five versions as a result of past Christmas season's researches. The ROFG aims to preserve what is left of fast fading pastores practices, fearing that once senior dancers and musicians go, we stand to lose a significant portion of our treasured heritage.

Pasadas





infantes



Infantes. (Sanchez Mira, Cagayan) Capitalizing on the musicality and dancing ability of the locals, the early Christian missionaries encouraged the community to participate in civic and religious activities performed in streets and plazas such as: parades, processions, street pageantry and theater. Such activities created a harmonious relation between church and people.

In Sanchez Mira a town tucked away in the Northern most province of Cagayan, the church realized that children could be part of a play to make people listen and accept the doctrines of the church. Church festivals, particularly Christmas was the most appropriate time to employ the children in understanding the message of Christmas. Songs of praise to the newborn King is sang in Cagayan's Ybanag dialect accompanied by a handful of harps. Elongated bamboo castanets that take the place of the traditional Spanish castanets are clicked at counter point. Three *higantes* (giants made of bamboo frames and papier mache heads) dressed up to represent the three wise men dart in and out of the dancers' formation.

Families get involved in dressing up their little *infante* (Spanish for child), in red and white crispy lace dress, a fancy hat and a pair of white new shoes. The boys are cute in white long-sleeved shirt and pants and a hat to match. Children between 6 to 12 are chosen from families of good standing in Sanchez Mira.

To help document and preserve the infantes and other Cagayan folk traditions, Mrs. Erlinda Cortez the social and cultural consultant to her husband, CSU President Armando Cortez, invited me to witness the infantes and the tuatubong ensembles in their Sanchez Mira campus in Cagayan in 1990. We are extremely grateful to the CSU family for this opportunity given us.



Pastora Bunglawon

Pastora Bunglawon (Bunglawon, Oas, Albay) As early as the 16th century Catholic missions evangelizing towns of Albay strongly encouraging the observance of feast of patron saints, Holy Week, Christmas and other church activities involving the community. Of these feast days, Christmas has always been the most awaited season as it has been by the whole world.

Oas town may claim to be the *pastores* center of Albay. In 1995, it was host to the *Pastores* Festival sponsored by Atty. Hermes Rebaya, a staunch friend of the ROFG and an avid *pastores* fan. Through his unrelenting effort and dedication to the preservation of a Bicol art, he was able to bring together at least 20 of the best *pastores* groups of villages and barangays of Oas. Christmas 1995 was the most memorable event in recent years.

Several groups composed of elementary pupils competed with groups of old ladies in their 80's equally elegant in their short lace dresses and fancy sun hats. All groups had flower *arcos* or arches interpreted in paper, feathers, bark or wild flowers. This is a necessary prop for almost all *pastores* groups. Additional props are castanets and fans.

String bands of all sorts of combination, with one or two instruments either added or missing, were composed of *banduria*, *octavina*, banjo, guitar, *bajo de arcos*, violin and an accordion and some wind instruments sometimes added.

Whether they understand what they are singing about or not, *pastores* groups sing in either Latin, Spanish, Bicol or Tagalog, a popular melody is "*Pastores a bailar*" - composed by Dr. Jose Rizal while he was in exile in Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte close to in the late 1890's.

Not to be missed during the festival was Bunglawon's entry. Bunglawon may not be as quaint and peaceful a village sitting at the front of majestic Mayon Volcano for it is here where several *pastores* group originated from. The best are those that use flower arches which manifest into hoops strung on the shoulders.

The start of *Bunglawon pastores* is a simple stepped and moderately timed but when the dancers go through the *suot-suot* sequence where each one of them in a group go under arches, one next to the other without letting go of one end of the next dancer's arch, then the dance gets really complicated. The German knot dance comes to mind.



Nazarena

Nazarena, (Dalog, Siaton, Negros Oriental). There are as many versions of the *pastores* (Christmas shepherds) as there are people believing that this blessed season is the best time for giving.

If the Bicol region and some places in the Visayas have children *pastores* drolled up like figurines in a cake, the short kinky-haired *agta* of Dalog, a hilly place in Siaton, Negros Oriental, the women dress in the typical Visayan *patadyang* and the men wear *sinamay* shirts and pants.

Christianity's gift to the *agta* is the image of the Jesus of Nazarene (Jesus Nazareno) which, in Dalog village, is venerated as its patron saint. At Christmas time the image is carried around town accompanied by a song-and-dance performance called *daigon*. *Daigon* to the Visayans is the singing of Christmas carols sung in the Visayan-Cebuano. The *agta* carry the image of the Nazarene from house to house, performing and expecting a few pesos from generous households. Ethnicity is emphasized by leaps or waltzes around the image while manipulating lighted coconut shells. Music is provided by an 8-member string band called *manugkustas* (strummers) composed of a *primera banjo*, a *segunda banjo*, 2 *gitaras*, and a *bajo de arco*.

All chants are started by a *capitan* (Captain-leader) and a side-kick, chorused by the dancers. Monotonous waltzes and fore-arm rolls are broken by free-for-all figures with everyone making a *pasa doble*.

After a day's roaming proceeds are shared equally among the performers and a part donated to the village's chapel for its upkeep.

Nazarena was introduced to me by the same group who performed the inagta for RDPG in 1998. Our special thanks go out to Mr. Constanacio Daol.



Nazarena

Pastores Boal (Boal, Tagbilaran, Bohol). Churches are nowhere as grandiose and imposing as those in towns of Bohol. Stone or coral churches stand today as a silent witness to the glory that was Old Bohol. Early Christian missions foresaw a religion that was to stay forever in the islands, therefore establishing religious centers and building churches as permanent monuments to

this great vision. And from within the walls of churches flowed doctrines and religious tenets that guided the natives into becoming the good Christians expected of them by the religious leaders.

In these hundreds of years devastating calamities like earthquake, typhoons, fires and war have spared these magnificent architectural wonders and together with it the traditions that are based on church's precepts. Yearly church activities honoring saint's days, Lent and especially Christmas are high points in the Christian calendar.



Pastores Bool.

At Christmas time Bool town, like other neighboring towns, expect the arrival of the *pastores*, a group of singer-dancer composed of young men and ladies in their late teens (sometimes older) who move from house to house singing praises in Visayan-Cebuano to the child Jesus. A part of the song enjoins everyone to visit the *belen*. For its irresistible fascination and for the awesome feeling it leaves, the *pastores* is now part of Bool's Christmas celebration. Children who ardently follow the group, dream to be a *pastora* one day, while the old folks wish that the tradition hold a little longer before it finally gives way to the tinsels and lights of today's Christmas.

Through the invitation of kindly old dancers (70-85 years old) of Bool, I was presented with Bool dances including this pastores featuring abrupt changes in music, moving from a slow waltz to a cha-cha and back to a fast waltz. A randalla con banjo provide lifting accompaniment. Many good musicians are old now and some have passed away.



Pastores Tobog.



Pastores Tabog. (Tabog, Oas, Albay) It is Christmas time in Tabog, a small town sitting in the heart of Albay's wide rice plantation. It is also harvest time and the last bundle of *palay* has been tucked away. With Christmas in the air and harvest over, the people of Tabog prepare to celebrate, with the world, the greatest of all feasts.

In church a grateful people sing liturgical songs and carols for the traditional Christmas eve midnight Mass while children keep awake to make sure they do not miss any happening in the makeshift *belen*, set in one side of the main altar. Their eyes are fixed on a sister or a brother chosen among so many to be a *pastora*, (Christmas shepherds) now part of the *belen*. They also make sure that the "sheep" lantern, they set by the *belen* earlier, is not taken away by anybody. These sheep lanterns stuffed with native cakes, candies and money will be opened after the Mass to be shared with children who do not have their own sheeps. These sheeps are similar to the Mexican "*pinatas*" purportedly brought over to the Philippines by the Manila galleons. Come morning the *pastores* will reappear in the streets singing and dancing for selected houses. The *pastora* sing about the first Christmas, ending their performances with an invitation to visit the manger. Sharing an all-Bicol tradition, the *pastores* group use paper-flower arches manipulated to create impressive shapes and forms.

Judging by the throngs of people who await the *pastora* each year, it is certain that the *pastores* have many more years to stay. Children who adore the *pastores* as big stars dream of the day when they too become, not ordinary member, but the lead *capitana*. Old folks, on the other hand, watching with nostalgia wish that the *pastores* of their yesterday would never go away. Money collected is shared with the church for its upkeep and maintenance.

Both boys and girls wear "*ginit*" (coconut palm leaf sheath) or hemp cloth taken after shepherds in countries whose Decembers are cold. Flower arches, flaglets bearing a Christmas wish and white sheep "*pinatas*" are Tabog's contribution to a *pastora*.

The ROFG documentation team was witness to the glorious occasion when in December 7, 1999 we were invited to Tabog for their pastores. We had to wade through thousands of villagers who came out to be part of the celebration. To the Tabog people we give our great thanks for sharing their pastora with the ROFG.

May Pasko rin sa Smokey Mountain.



FIESTA!

Nowhere in the world are fiestas and processions given so much attention as those celebrated in the Philippines. Consider the rich variety and color, vibrance and intensity and circumstances that accompany a fiesta or procession, no matter how small or big. There are fiestas and processions to celebrate days of the saints, harvests, thanksgiving, community well-being, as well as those that touch on other church and town affairs.

It is true that the Philippines is the only Christian country in the Far East, but how Christian? Evident in our Christian practice are folk trappings undeniably Filipino. Processions of this kind represents the various instances when such introspections are clear and unique and they are the best examples of the compromise met between strict Catholic orthodox and pre-Hispanic folk belief. At the root of the development of the procession in Philippine societal life can be traced to the Church's realization that indigenous practices of the natives should not be totally abolished but manipulated to better serve a new purpose. Thus, the church utilized and retained the form and content of the folk practices of the people, but replaced the reasons and impetus with Christian values and ideas. The religious and secular, over time, was indistinguishable. It was not then, unbelievable, to see dance and music as part of sacred religious occasions. Until today, the basic fiesta or procession is steeped in both catholic mores and folk beliefs.

ROFG has created this moving tableau, an assemblage of everyday folk, as an encapsulation of the range of odd and possibly outlandish elements that can be found throughout the islands in small villages where the folk and religious have found a happy medium. In the *parada* or *prussyon*, following stories are played out. Fisherman and fruit vendors and *parosa* (children dressed in saint costumes), represent a form of penitence performed by the poorest of the poor, who dress their children in the costume of the patron saint to which they dedicate the child, with the hopes that the child will have good health and no illness plague them.

Performed usually on the feast day of the saint, the *comedia de santo* is the folk adaptation of the Spanish *comedia*, where the devil character or *dyabla* and Saint Michael the Archangel are central figures in the people's portrayal of good versus evil. St. Michael represents the heavenly or good, while the devil not particularly menacing or scary, symbolize the people who have sinned or have turned away from God.

In wedding processions throughout the country, it is desirable to have the participation of *sagala* (elderly women), another folk practice that has survived the centuries of colonial suppression. Believed to be a remaining vestige of the Buddhist influence on the Philippines, before the coming of Islam, the *sagalas* carry phallic symbols in a sort of fertility rite to ensure the blessing of children on the marriage. By orthodox standards this would be considered obscene, however the common folk believe that this is natural as the phallus is the source of life and it is acceptable to display symbols for this reason.

At last are the *parikitan* (beauty contestants), usually seen throughout the streets of Lucban, Quezon during the feast day of San Isidro Labrador. The ladies are dressed in native materials and products— weavings, leaves, bark, feathers, etc. All bent on showing their wares, their costumes and the display of "fruits" of their environment.

For whatever the occasion is - from fluvial to processional, elaborate to ordinary, tribal ethnic to Christian, the ROFG takes pride in having assisted in many ways, performed for, witnessed and documented as many of these fiestas and processions of the country.

Sagala.



Parasa

Parikitan



Djanggo





Ala Kaya

Ala Kaya. (Cuyo, Palawan). Not known to many, Cuyo, an island to the North of Puerto Princesa, was once Palawan's capital and how appropriately so. This small island surrounded by several islets boasts of a fortified church standing just off the coast of the town. The church has a fort complete with catwalks, cannons, watchtowers and massive stones that also serve as the church walls. In times of pirate raids for slaves, which were very frequent in the 17th & 18th centuries, the people sought the church's sanctuary from marauders.

Still in almost perfect preserved state, the church whose patron saint is, St. Augustine, celebrates its feast day every 28th of September. On this special occasion several groups of natives living in the highlands or neighboring mountains come down all dressed to perform as a dancing or singing group showing something of an indigenous art form from their place. Many others paddle themselves from neighboring islands. As practiced, the first performance is before the church's facade, followed by a house-to-house showing. Later in the day, street-corners and any available space in Cuyo would overflow with all sorts of performances, all for a few pesos from satisfied audiences.

On this day St. Augustine, the saint associated with animals, especially the wild ones he tamed is visited by unique "creatures" including the half-man half-animal *Alakaya*. The *alakaya* is a band of young boys (13 to 16) out to have fun and at the same time earn good time money. Dressed in g-strings made out of tree barks and sleeveless jackets of *giri* (jute-like sheath from coconut palms) matched by an outlandish mask of the same material signaturred by a wide nose, fluffy ears, fancy mustache of horse or human hair. Eyes and mouth are cut-out for seeing and breathing convenience. Each has a miniature bow and an arrow set not to fly.

Moving as a band of mischievous performers, they chase people, especially good looking girls of their age. The only way to lure them away is to throw coins a good distance away. Then those molested can cower to a safer place while the *alakayas* collect the coins with their mouths. Revelers excitedly watch the *alakaya* pick the coins up through the mask's opening (a piece of cloth is sewn in the cut-out mouth part to prevent dirt into the cavity), heads and butts swaying to and fro. The more people to chase the more coins tossed and earned, making the celebration merrier. And when the coins stops coming, the bolsterous *alakaya* boys stage a short *divertissement*. Part of their "show" is to gang up on an innocent girl and hunt her down with arrows. What people do not know is that this girl is actually a play and is a part of the *alakaya* group. She pretends to be frightened and runs away but is finally finished off by an arrow with a long line. Finally all the boys haul her into their arms, all in mime, all in playful gestures.

When Cuyo celebrated its 275th year of Christianization in the early 70's, alakaya was one of the many dances documented by the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. Our hearts go out to the alakaya boys to whom we offer this alakaya as a tribute for helping preserve a time-honored tradition.

Pinandanggo. (Zamboangita, Negros Oriental). The introduction of Spanish dance forms in the Philippines succeeded in both goals to Christianize and acculturate. Dance as well as other art forms like music and theater were used as necessary and effective means to celebrate church and state affairs which included the feast days of saints, fiestas, social and civic events and anniversaries.



Several Spanish dance forms left tremendous and lasting impact on the shape and growth of Philippine dance. Lavish social gatherings and great balls featuring the elite were fertile grounds for these new dance forms to take root and flourish. Even rustic outdoor activities of workers and farm hands were not spared from the onslaught of Spanish-introduced innovations.

One of the more playful dances that demonstrates the Filipino zest for life is the popular *Pinandanggo* (from the Spanish *Fandango* popularized in Zamboangita. Meant to be delightful, it features two lovers, each full of passion and longing, entangled in a love mesh. As *Pinandanggo* dancers they perform provocative sequences of chases, runs and teasing, ending in a happy compromise.

I wish to personally thank Mr. D. E. Elli and the people of Zamboangita, Negros Oriental for introducing this dance to the ROFG.



Pinandanggo.





Lapay Bantigue. (Bantigue, Zambales). What is it to fly like a sea gull? What is it to back bend so exaggeratedly that your head nearly touches the floor? What is it to move in pairs imitating two birds jerking at each other? And what is it like for the body to wriggle upwards starting from knees to the legs, pelvis, waist, chest, neck to a head jerk. Try *Lapay Bantigue* and know what it is to be a sea gull. *Lapay* refers to the sea gulls that are plentiful in the island of Bantigue, a coastal province of Masbate.

At early dawn fish merchants, vendors, early risers and even children gather in the beach to await the arrival of boats loaded with their catch. Here too would gather thousands of *lapay* or sea gulls flying about scouring the beach for food.

As men and birds wait, each are attracted to the other, the *lapay* for breakfast morsels, the men for the gentle glides and swoops of the birds. *Lapay* that dare walk the sand are chased away by children, and those that dive low gracefully get some people to imitate them. Very soon people "flew" and began encouraging others to follow. Finally, after these initial flights, some fishermen picked, scratched, wiggled and walked like the *lapay*. Not before long pairs came together choreographing unrehearsed steps. Innovative bird antics interpreted by subsequent pairs became what *Lapay Bantigue* is today.

The difficult back bends in the dance did not keep many old ladies (probably 60 years old or over) from demonstrating to me this extraordinary dance. Thanks go to the barangay captain of Bantigue Island for fetching me from Masbate and ferrying me to his small island where he organized a small group of lapay dancers for me to document. It was 1994. This is a comeback for Lapay in answer to numerous requests by teachers from all over. We are informed that it has caught the fancy of their field and stage demonstrations in schools all over the country, earning it the title "dance of the year", if there is such a thing. If somehow some steps of Lapay have escaped your memory, here they are once more.



Lapay Bantigue.

LUMAD



Blaan.

The *lumads* are pockets of small cultural communities tucked in some forest recesses or unreachable nooks in high mountain ranges. Early chroniclers, accounting for their presence, long before any Westerner set foot into our islands, also described tradition and culture, based from the day-to-day activities of the village. Remarkable are the ways these bands of people have preserved their customs despite culture changes from within and without.

Man may now scale extra-terrestrial territories but, within our midst are groups of people still intensely engaged in timeworn traditions, in rituals that celebrate life bringing its intrinsic mysteries closer to man's understanding.

ROFG has always been associated and identified with the not-so-known *lumads* or indigenous ethnic communities still hidden in some unknown regions. It is also known to have extended its helping hand in outreach programs, scholarships, opportunities, and livelihood programs for less fortunate but deserving members of some *lumad* groups including the *Abyan* of Camarines Norte, the *Matigsalug* of Bukidnon and the *Badjao* of Zamboanga.

Thirty-five years of dedicated efforts has rewarded me with a rich repository of the lumads living traditions - folk arts, songs, music, dances, costumes, accessories, weapons, tools, culinary art and the many other aspects of their folk life. I consider this long association with the lumads as the high point in ROFG's existence. It is in this vein that I thank our unselfish lumad friends for their unrelenting assistance in teaching us to live a simple and peaceful life. I further thank them for the part they play in broadening the foundation of the ROFG, for without them we would not have been able to present 100 unpublished dances.

Bulah-bulah/Silat. (Tausog -Jolo, Sulu). Tausog dances reveal the combination of human impulses to meet adaptive needs and give meaning to human tendencies for aesthetic creations. These tendencies are seen in highly stylized execution of techniques in forms, lines, curves and styles. It is in the dance that the Tausog, like all the Filipinos are able to interpret and manifest their abstract ideas of what is utilitarian and beautiful. There are remarkable differences in execution and interpretation but each dance is similar with just slight variations.

Bulah-bulah, a new addition to the ROFG repertoire is the result of one day with the indefatigable Ligaya Amilbangsa. *Bulah-bulah* are the cowry shells used as castanets in this dance. The gentle sway of body and arms is nothing less than hypnotic and trance-like - characteristic of the *pang-alay's* broken-arm movement found almost in all Tausog dances. Towards the end, the signature martial arts of the Tausog - the *silat*, an art form that developed sophistication probably in the ancient Filipinos quest for aesthetic preferences and their deep desire to perfect a craft is added. Even females share this martial arts version.

Living in islets in Southern Philippines have nurtured the long association of the Tausog with the sea around him. Even his exclusive musical instrument, the *gabang*, used to accompany dances like the *bulah-bulah* is in the shape of a boat.



Designed to appear as a village with colorful mats (the signature craft of the Tausog) strewn all over the place - ROFG's *bulah-bulah* is performed by over twenty poverty-stricken children (6 to 11 years old).



No special reason is given why the smokey mountain children were chosen to do the *bulah-bulah* and *silat*. The decision was purposeful in that they are recipients of ROFG's commitment to outreach to any group that wants to learn folk dancing. The children have been with us for four years now and it is our goal to help children appreciate their role in keeping alive Philippine traditions, especially dance, by learning even those that do not belong to their own milieu.

Bulah-Bulah/Silat.

Kasal/Kawin. Undoubtedly nothing can match the color and grandeur of a village wedding. In many cultures weddings are the most attended event which brings groups and personalities together, people who may never have met before. The ROFG puts to fore the most interesting weddings of at least four of the almost one-hundred ethnolinguistic groups found all over the Philippines.

A wedding is a complex social activity, primarily to unite two persons and with it an underlying effect of strengthening the natural interlinks of families and kindred. Indigenous ethnic weddings are consummated after long and costly discussions and preparations. Very special weddings are sometimes arranged in order to patch up tribal wars, communal conflicts, family feuds or even personal quarrels through cross-weddings, one from each warring faction.

It also means transfer of material culture in forms like the bride price, dowry, the exchange of weapons by the menfolk and exquisite weavings by the mothers.

On the other hand, a Christian wedding in the Philippines incorporates various folk trappings. It cannot claim to share the same orthodox practices in other Catholic countries. The veil, cord and *aras* (coins) parts are borrowed from the Muslims, likewise, the rice-throwing ritual has long been practiced by many pagan groups and the crossing of the bride under an elaborate arch after sipping sweet nectar is an off-shoot of tribal unions.



Pogkawin
Matigsalug wedding

Similarities in weddings among neighboring ethnolinguistic groups are common with variants that range from negligible to the obvious. The Manobo sub-tribes of Bukidnon, each displaying its own kind of wedding oddities, are similar in the featured feeding of the bride and the knocking of heads.

The remarkable ethnolinguistic group, *Matigsalug* (Manobo sub-tribe) of Bukidnon start their weddings with the couple's seated side-by-side, the heads covered with a tribal cloth. The underlying message of dominance is emphasized by the groom's right thigh resting on top of the woman's left thigh. As soon as the head cloth is ceremonially pulled away by an officiating datu, the couple stands, their heads gently knocked together, and the wedding solemnized. A bride and groom dance follows.

*Samsung
B'laan wedding*

Two unknowingly unborn children are contracted by their fathers to each other, as soon as their mothers get pregnant. Soon as the babies are born, the parents of the boy visits the girls' house and gifts its mother with a length of *tinak* cloth which she herself weaves. In exchange the boy's mother gets a gift of the same material. The next activities will wait until the children reach puberty age. The next part of the wedding commences with the exchange of cradles by the bride and groom's mothers. This happens on the day of the formal wedding, an act formally binding the two children.

Sokawin (Matigsajug)



Samsung (B'laan)

A B'laan wedding's several highlights is consummated by the groom's stepping on the bride's shoulders to establish his machismo superiority, but when the bride gets her turn to step on the groom's shoulders, she does this with a surprise kick to show disagreement with her parent's choice of the boy. The girl's action, though all for show, is expected in any B'laan *samsung*. When finally, the bride and groom calmly sit side-by-side, their heads are knocked together by an elderly man to consummate the union. A rooster-chasing-a-hen dance follows.



Intanag (Ifugao)



Intaneg
Ifugao wedding

Of the ten major communities dwelling in the Cordillera range, the Ifugao, the builder of the world famous rice terraces, is the only known group that ceremonially performs a wedding rite called *Intaneg*. Head ornaments such as the *kango* hornbill for the man and the *dangdong* brass statuette for the bride represent brawn and femininity respectively. The *Mumbaki* oversees the wedding amidst offerings of pigs, chicken and jars of *tapuy* (rice wine). A nuptial dance also called *Intaneg* follows. The groom imitates powerful high-flying bird, usually seen hovering over the terraces, while the bride stomps heavily, keeping close to the earth to emphasize her association with the life-giving fields.

Kasal
Pugot wedding

No other wedding is more horrifying than that of the *Pugot* or *Aeta* in Cagayan province. Each prospective union brings untold anxiety to the life of the bride and groom. This nerve-wrecking experience centers on a *pugot* suitor who must prove that he is sincere, with determination and ability to be a good husband and provider. In order for him to earn his bride, he must stand a good 10 to 12 feet away and shoot an arrow straight in the center of a section of a banana stalk held between the left armpit of his lady-love. Woe to the lover who misses, for his arrow fails and lands in the wrong place, his death certain in the hands of the girl's parents who stand behind him all the time. A triumphant groom, however, leads his bride to a dance with the public joining.



Kasal. (Pugot)

The documentation of these weddings are part of thirty-five years of unrelenting travels and research trips by Ramon Obusan and the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group members combing villages, towns, mountain slopes and forest clearings. There were some hostile encounters and suspenseful moments, but most of the trips bore lasting friendships. It is with extreme gratefulness that these precious traditions long preserved and treasured by indigenous ethnic communities are generously shared and allowed to be staged by the ROFG for the Filipinas and the world as well.



Sounds of the Tuntungan. (Yakan - Lamitan, Basilan) The rhythmic resonance of the *tuntungan* syncopated by the *kulintang kayo* is heard throughout a Yakan village sitting in the mountainous terrain of Basilan Island to announce a *pagkawin* wedding. Preceded by the colorful *patji* and *lipas-lipas* banners, a *magludwas* parade heads towards the bride's house, where the groom is carried on the shoulders of his male friends while the bride is carried in an *usungan* from a neighbor's house. As the *ungsoa* or bride dowries are laid out, male relatives perform the *tumahik*, a frenetic warrior dance using a spear and a shield. After the wedding rites, the bride and groom perform the *pindulas*, a take-off of the Tausug *pung-alay* which is characterized by the broken-arm movement that imitates the undulation of fish. It displays an exotic facial make-up made up of dots and lines in various patterns creating the effect of formal and elaborate masks. The entire village celebrates in a *pansak* which literally means "to dance".

My wanderings brought me one day to this far flung coconut plantation in a very remote barrio of Lamitan where I was accompanied by Roxas Ajadas, father of two Yakan girls I sent to high school in Manila. Mr. Ajadas lined up many folk practices and local activities for documentation. The wedding of a 16-year old girl to a 17-year old boy was, I believe, the highlight of my Yakan stint. The entire village came out dressed in their most extraordinary vestiments to take part in the *pagkawin* or wedding festivities. I thought that was all I would see, but when the bride and groom's time came, they were both carried into the center of the festivities while all the musical instruments played in an ensemble and the *patji* banners unfurled. This occasion to me was an assault on my senses, and no better memory of a wedding can beat all of this.

Pagkawin. (Yakan)



Minandagit, (Isamal - Samal Island, Davao City). The *Isamal* community found living in Samal Island are descendants of the *Mansaka*, *Mandaya*, *Bagobo* and the *Kalagan*, ethnolinguistic groups still found scattered in big areas in the main island of Davao. For hundreds of years pirates came to plunder these tribal settlements over and over again, taking the men to far-off shores as slaves, while the women and children were brought to *Samal* Island, forced to tend to the pirates' private needs, keep house and cultivate the fields. Many years of intermarriage between pirates and natives that brought about the *Isamal*'s emergence and ultimate domination of the whole of Samal Island. Many *Isamals* unaware of their descendancy from the *Mansaka* of mainland Davao do not even care to know about their beginnings. All they care about is that Samal Island has always been home to them, rich in distinct traditions, culture, folkways, values and set of norms. The island's lush flora and fauna insured the survival and development of indigenous cultures, even facilitating the quick spread of art forms like music and dance. Mimetic dances are clear evidences pointing to the strong association of people and animals that move around the territory they occupy, thus fowls and animals movements are aplenty in their primeval theater and dance.

High-flying birds including the ferocious hawk became the fancy and inspiration of many *Isamal* dances. In the *minandagit* dance (*dagiti* is to swoop in the *Isamal* dialect), three hawks reconnoiter and glide over a fish-rich sea swooping time to time for a catch. Hawks ride the wind by glides and swoops, giving the impression of ease but when men attempt to imitate their flight, the result is a heavy and awkward interpretation, perhaps because humans can never fly like birds. The *Minandagit* solo girl successfully dives for a fish but she is unable to keep it from being snatched away from her by two erstwhile males. After much chasing and fighting, one male hawk finally flies away with the prized food clenched in its powerful claws. It takes powerful lungs and graceful limbs to interpret the movements accurately.

Big hanging gongs set in a harness, produce addictive music to which people move in leaps and turns. Other instruments include a set of standing drums, individual *agongs* and 2 wooden xylophones.



My heartfelt thanks go to Mr. & Mrs. Pete Durano, especially Susan who moved mountains to get me to Samal Island to see and meet the Isamal. At this age and time one need not go far to meet Iumad living the same friendly and accommodating way they did for thousands of years. We also thank Mayor . . . for his kind hospitality.



Kadal Taho.

Kadal Taho. (T'boli - Lake Sebu, South Cotabato). Believing in strong familial and kinship ties, the T'boli social organization expects each member of the tribe to extend the goodwill, company and protection to each member. Interlocking activities such as working in the fields, weaving, hunting and maintenance of economic resources are shared by everyone.

In the 1960's when I first visited the mission in Lake Sebu, there were more trees than people in T'bolland. Today the T'boli maidens have to dress lavishly to compensate for the decrease of color in its once pristine forests. Once butterflies and flowers danced in the wind, today it is the colorful maidens who flutter around.

Among the dominant accoutrement that composes a maiden's resplendent outfit are a colorful sun-hat; *singki*/brass anklets worn by the dozens so that they reach up to the knees; and interlocking brass belts with dangling, *sallyaw* bells. Dainty faces are framed by combs, bibs, necklaces, chokers and earrings of the finest glass beads glittering in all the colors of the sun. All T'boli maidens own a long-sleeved navy blue blouse fully embroidered with geometric and floral designs in the front, back including the sleeves. For her skirt she chooses a *malong* skirt of red, black, orange or green. A T'boli maiden compares to the most colorful of all Filipino women.

Festivals and other communal celebrations bring the T'boli together. It is here that their most remarkable art form - music and dance come to fore.

Kadal or *madal* to the T'boli means to dance. Such dances as *madalawas* (monkey), *blilah* (bird), *Alango* (crocodile), confirms the T'boli's keen association with the environment in which they live. Dances centering on the show-off of costumes and fancy movements are reserved to entertain and welcome guests. These are exemplified by *kadal taho* and *kadal saguayan*.

This version of *Kadal Taho*, translated as "traditional dance" is sort of a dance-drama centering on a bird with a broken leg, coached by the rest of the flock in an effort to try her wings and fly with them again. In the end, the flock of *Blilah* birds succeeds in a lift off.

Takiling (Western Kalinga - Tanudan, Kalinga). Warfare is highly institutionalized in all indigenous ethnic groups particularly in the Cordillera ranges. Warfare arises from the strong emphasis the village places on individual, familial and property rights. These rights are considered inviolable, backed by complex set of laws. Since kinship is pervasive the personal kindred is everywhere responsible for avenging an in-dying, death, or wrong-doing inflicted in any one of its members.

Headhunting or headtaking is resorted to as a means to avenge an offense or injustice committed to one's family, kin or village. Amongst the Kalinga, bravery is greatly valued and committing extraordinary deeds is highly rewarded with social status.

Takiling recreates the return home to the village of a group of headhunters after a *kayaw* or headtaking. Successful warriors, who were able to kill an enemy and take a head, are called *minger* and are bestowed with gifts of feathers (*lawit*), beads (*banger*) and colorful g-strings (*ba-agi*) by their female relatives, while the entire village sings joyous victory songs. *Minger* are allowed to dance with fists closed, unlike women, while unsuccessful members of the headhunting party, *bodan*, are seen in a different light, as they are relegated to playing of the *gangsas* and wear yellow g-strings to show their place in the hierarchy. This public display of gift-giving, dancing and music making serves to encourage all males to aspire to be a great warrior and to gain the respect of fellow villagers.



Takiling



Salip

Salip (Central Kalinga - Lubuogan, Kalinga). A generalized term meaning "to dance", *Salip* is a usual part of the village celebrations where other dances such as *Tadok* and *Torayan* are performed as well. In the traditional setting, male and females take turns dancing the *Salip* in couples, sometimes holding pieces of cloth called *allop*, which they manipulate while they dance. Their turn for dancing ends as the women accepts the offering of the male's cloth, and immediately another couple takes the floor.

In this staged ROFG version of *Saljo*, a single female carries atop her head not a *banga* (pot) filled with oil but firewood, a symbol of her passage from a girl to womanhood. The wood also symbolizes the role of wife and mother, and with this balanced she executes movements imitating birds: *dapah* (arms spread out) while four *tringer* aggressively stamp the ground like impassioned roosters, trying to gain the favor of the lone female.

Musicians provide the stirring beat for the dance to unravel, playing *tuppayar* or lap-style with the *gangsas* secured to their g-string and each of the gangs in the set of six (*pinakid*) having a specific part of the whole rhythm - the *babal*, *kadua*, *katle*, *kapat*, *pakpok* and *anongas*.



Pangamate (Talaandig, - Talakog, Bukidnon). In the vast mountain-side and flatlands of Bukidnon are small settlements of Talaandig. It is a rarity to encounter the Talaandig, an exceptional people, who have preserved the traditions in which they were nurtured, despite clamorous competition from the mainstream of popular culture. To capture their true-life colors is to examine their animo-deist tradition, their socio-cultural life and observe the incomparable attention they give to their ceremonial customs and rituals.

Folk tradition is very much alive in every Talaandig village, creativity found in every work and folk art, filled with self-expression. And because they know no other way of life, they show an amazing aptitude and skill for blending mortal art with godly essence. A high percentage of Talaandig are farmers, their fields planted with staples like corn, rice and root crops.

Although back-breaking fields work take much of the Talaandig's day, the evenings are lighted with command socials that center on real-life dramas put into what we may consider as folk theater. These gathering are where individuals express personal experiences as he goes through life.

Contrary to the claim of historians and traditionalists, the Filipinos did have their own dance theater, very much alive today in the dances of ethnic communities. Drawn from real life experiences, these dances serve to express one's emotions encompassing socio-cultural, magical-shamanistic aspects as well as entertain one's self and the community. Put to music and dance, a drama where people can relate to and recognize themselves in the actors that perform, as though looking at a mirror readily becomes an accepted tradition. *Pangamate* is a Talaandig popular dance drama known to have simple variants.

Tiring in tending to her camote patch, a Talaandig wife heads for home. Unnoticed by her is another lady impatiently watching her and anticipating the wife's departure. Stealingly she gets herself to the patch and starts digging for the camote. Many times she gets up looking hurriedly about. She is frightened, scared to be caught and moves her basket from place to place. Excitement got the better of the thief, not noticing the wife's return. The woman is caught red-handed and the two start an altercation, - one afraid, one angry. The woman provokes, pleads, wags her digging stick, and goes through the motion of asking for forgiveness. She is refused and then demonstrates how hungry she is, but alas, she is unforgiven. The argument goes on while the husband of the lady farmer steps in. Learning what transpired, he asks his wife to forgive and let go the thief. She, of course, refuses, causing the man to confront the thief. After a few questioning looks he notices the woman's beauty. She realizes the man's softened stance and takes advantage of the situation, initiating the "dance of flirtation", scratching her butt and in the process playfully raising her skirt a bit.

Angered, the wife tears her husband away from the thief, grabs him back as he packs up the basket and gives it to the thief. With one arm around the thief he shoos off his wife for the other. A weeping wife looks longingly at a loving couple depart - with basket and all.



Tarok (Palawan - Guezon, Palawan). The Palawan-on are an almost unknown group tucked away in the backwoods of Tumibong, Guezon of Palawan. Detached from its main group lying in nearby Brookspoint, this community consisting of less than a hundred households, actively hand crafting small items like knives, baskets, walking sticks, lime containers and various bamboo musical instruments. For tourist centers in Puerto Princesa, items of great value are small boards with burned outline of a pre-hispanic syllabary called *Surat Palawan* (Palawan syllabary of Sanskrit origin) one of the only two existing pre-conquest writings in the entire country, the other being that of the Mangyan of Mindoro. With no concept of time, the Palawan shuffles between his handicraft and his field in order to survive the hardness of his life.

When not stripping bamboo for art crafts, or weeding fields, the Palawan-on brings out his musical instruments for a *tarok* session. *Tarok* is a dance which requires an *agong*, drum and a set of *kulintang* musical instruments not owned by one but has to be borrowed from distant villages. It takes hours of walking before all instruments are gathered in an ensemble. The *kulintang* (an 8 gong set) is tuned to the Malay or Chinese pentatonic scale where melodies familiar to both Tausug, Sama-Laul and Palawan-on are played. Marang and Maguindanao traders known to penetrate the thickest of Palawan's forest brought the *agong* and *kulintang* to Tumibong. *Agongs* are treasured items to the owners stating his status in the community.

Tarok is a very sensuous dance involving a man and several ladies. Throughout the *tarok* the man teasingly chases the women with malicious pelvic thrusts and very sensual suggestive passes. This causes the women to scamper in whichever way to evade the man's advances. Having had enough of being chased, the women group as one body, and charge the man, thrusting and bumping him in all sides. Soon as they have him surrounded the happy group close ranks and hit the man with the palm leaves in their hands and give him hip pushes from all directions. Excessive laughter and joking, both dancers and crowd adds merriment to the occasion. While all these happens, the women swish young *palaspas* coconut fronds in gay abandon - waving over their heads, beating the man to discourage his advances or simply use as an accent their hopping about. For variations, one woman "lassos" the man with a *malang* (tubular skirt) and the covered man playfully docks pelvic and butt thrusts of his enemies. To free himself he gives each lady a hip push escaping from his enclosure. Man finally reigns supreme when the ladies, accepting his machismo and superiority of strength willfully raise the *malang* over his head as a canopy. The dance ends informally gaining nothing but pure entertainment for both performers and audience as their intentions are clean and pure, and as long as they see the *tarok* as the bond that keep them together, without prejudice or malice.

Our research team came across this simple living but light-hearted Palawan in the 1980's when the National Commission for Culture and the Arts' Manlilikha ng Bayan committee was in search of that year's candidates. My purpose then is to bring to the attention of the Filipinos that there still exist a pre-conquest syllabary that would merit the awarding of a master for having preserved a national treasure. There were other priorities for that year, but I encouraged Baks, the writer, to continue to burn his *Surat Palawan* in soft boards while he danced his woes away with the *tarok*.



Tarok



Sagayan

Sagayan. (Maguindanao - Datu Plang, South Cotabato). Several versions of *sagayan* are performed during special Maguindanao and Maranao celebrations. The Maguindanao *sagayan* traditionally seen in weddings, parades, post-healing activities and in big affairs like *Eid'l Fitr* and the celebration of the *Ramadan* after the month of fasting or *bulan puasa*, are dressed in three-tiered skirts, mirrored decked headgear embellished with all the imaginable colors of twine formed into flowers, balls, sunbursts etc. Add to these long, yellow playful tassels that almost hide the face. The *sagayan* is never complete without a shield elaborately embellished with curli-cures, rounds, twirls, mirrors and shell noisemakers and a double-bladed sword of metal or wood. Flights and kicks are better emphasized when the *tubao* tied on handles of both shield and sword fly as well.

Exaggerated twirls, skips, jumps and vigorous hand and head shakes make up an impressive *sagayan* performance. This is because the smoke of the *kamanyang* induced a hypnotic trance and the *sagayan* must now go through a make-believe fight with their unseen adversaries, the *tunang* spirits.

In a parade, the boisterous *sagayan* bolts about while shaking his head, shield and sword in an effort to impress people he means to drive away especially children to clear the parade's path. Young males 12 to 15 participate in the energetic *sagayan*. The ear-shattering rhythm played on a gong and drum ensemble is one kind of music the *sagayan* has to interpret with knee turns, high jumps and double pirouettes. This is accompanied by shouts of excitement.

The frequent pilgrimage of Muslim Maguindanaons to the Middle East resulted in the creation of the *Unta* (a cross between a deer and a camel) that has joined some *sagayan* ensemble. An *unta* is made of bamboo frame in the shape of an animal big enough to hide a man to manipulate a papier mache head. Acting as a friendly pet to the many *sagayan* warriors, the *unta* perform with the *sagayan*.

I send thanks to the Maguindanao groups at Datu Plang for coaching us on the nuances of the sagayan.

The UNPUBLISHED DANCES OF THE PHILIPPINES Series 4

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