UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Figuring Dárawatan, Dancing With the Tumándok

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

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September 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Saeamat guid sa tanan nga nagbulig sa eain-eain nga pamaagi agud ro unga sa ang tagipusuon nga ro damgo malang hay makasaut samtang gatangda sa mga bituon, sa mga tinaga, ag sa anang mga damgo, hay makasaut nga matsa daeaura, matsa pangsueat, ag matsa ginhawa (My gratitude goes to everyone who helped in any way so that the kid in my heart whose dream was to dance under the stars, in words, and in his dreams, would be able to dance like the clouds, like a pen, like the air one breathes).

Saeamat guid (My gratitude) to my Indigenous interlocutors, the Panay Bukidnons of Calinog, Iloilo, for welcoming me with open arms, and for supporting me all the way. I also thank the Maguindanaon Indigenous Peoples I have met, for it was under their care, that I was able to be carried through by ipat (healing ritual).

Saeamat guid to my folk dance company interlocutors, the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group and Parangal Dance Company, who walked with me every step of the way and for generously opening their doors so that I may learn through them and their voices, practices, and culture as a Filipino folk dance group.

Saeamat guid to my fantastic dissertation adviser, Dr. Anusha L. Kedhar, for seeing me through, for lifting me up, for allowing me to fly, and fall, and grow not just through this dissertation process, but in life. I owe you this, Anusha.

Abu man nga saeamat (Many thanks) to my amazing dissertation committee, Dr. Maria Firmino-Castillo, Dr. Sarita See, and Dr. Christina Schwenkel, for the gentle guidance, brilliance as experts in their own field, and for making sure that I thrive with the challenges they give me and what life may throw my way.

Saeamat guid to all my professors and mentors at the Department of Dance at the University of California, Riverside (USA), the College of Physical Education, Sports, Culture, Arts, and Recreation (PESCAR) at West Visayas State University in Iloilo City (Philippines), and the artists I have met in California from around the world, especially to Dr. Xochitl Chávez, Fidel, Jay Carlon, Malaya Filipino American Dance Arts, Dr. J Lorenzo Perillo, Dr. Sally Ness, Dr. Linda Tomko, Prof. Tagumpay De Leon, Prof. Toni Pasion, Rulan Tangen, Peter, Liza and the Malaya Filipino American Dance Arts, for all the learnings, words of wisdom, and encouragement, and being an example of how it is to be a grounded dance educator.

Saeamat guid to the Fulbright Program and Fulbright Philippines through the Philippine-American Educational Foundation (PAEF), its administration and staff, Executive Director, Ma'am Mila, Ms. Gigi, and the panel who screened my papers and interviewed me, for giving me this chance of a lifetime to study for a PhD in the US. I am also grateful to West Visayas State University, its administration, staff, and my former mentors, for instilling in me the core values of service for others, of love for my profession, and of soldiering on despite and inspite.

To all the special people I met in the US, Sir Jose Relson Banas, Ma'am Lanie Berrei, Dr. Irma Tandingan, and Dr. Jedeliza Ferrater, Jenice Defensor, my friends and mentors from FMA UCR and the UCR Dancesport Club, and the people who supported me from the Philippines, Ma'am Dang Tan, Tatay Reynaldo Cutanda, Dr. Rey Esguerra, Patrick Bautista, Lee and Jorja Querubin, the Resano family, Paclibar family, Barrera family, and Garcia family, abu guid nga saeamat.

Saeamat guid to all my colleagues and their partners who made sure I survive graduate school, who extended utmost help, especially in times when I needed assistance the most, Magnolia and Josh, Rosalia and Dan, Kendall and Ashley, Preethi, Sinjini, Dava, Irvin and Fonzy, Cuauhtémoc, Jose Eduardo, and Kevin, the amazing people at SEASGRAD, and to all the beautiful dancers I met in the MFA and PhD program of the Department of Dance at UCR.

Saeamat pa guid to Ma'am Elsie Lamingan Caballero, Ma'am Lordjane Caballero Dordas, Sir Jose Taton, Sir David Gowey, Sir Liby Limoso, Dr. Rossandrew Villaruel, Dr. OJ Serquina, and everyone who I met along the way which led me to learn more about the Panay Bukidnons.

To my inner circle of friends, Atsi Doc Vienna, Duday, Eli, Asya, Doc Ina, and Jayron; my alterego Dianne; and the special people in my life, Ma'am Laragene, Direk Kenneth, Sir Ryan, Sir Dominic, Sir Aivin; Caryl C., Dr. Lodi Basco, Sir Kleint; Hans, Lex R., Eric J.; Anthony, Ma'am Tin, Dodo, Jerick, Benneth, and Joseph of Project Kuris; Ate Tin, Robert Vonn D., and Rio Carl; and West Crew, saeamat guid.

And finally, to Nanay Nilda and to my only brother, Jemuel III, para kinyo ra (to you both I offer this dissertation). Palangga ko guid kamu (I love you both).

DEDICATION

For the Panay Bukidnons, Maguindanaons, and the Atis--- the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines that I have met, collaborated with, and grateful for.

To my Fulbright brother and dear friend and gifted comic illustrator/artist, Nguyen Viet Hieu Linh, I wouldn't be reaching this far without you.

To my mother Nilda, who sacrificed everything for me, and to my brother, Jemboy, who stood by my mother althroughout.

To my father, Jemuel Sr., who never made it to the dawn of this dissertation, para man kimu ra Tay (this is also for you, father).

To my former, present, and future students in dance, this is for all of you.

Ag para sa akun nga gintubuan nga pungsod (And to the country where I was born and raised), the Philippines.

To the Almighty, to You, I bring back all the honor and glory.

And to the Junjun who was dancing since you were 4 years old, you made it.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Figuring Dárawatan, Dancing With the Tumándok

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Critical Dance Studies
University of California, Riverside, September 2023
Dr. Anusha Kedhar, Chairperson

This Indigenous-driven and decolonial research, titled "Figuring Dárawatan, Dancing With the Tumándok," looks at how Indigenous expressive culture is shared by an Indigenous community and how folk dance companies learn Indigenous expressive culture primarily for the nurturance and propagation of Filipino culture through Philippine Folk Dance performance, but also for teaching, for entertainment, and for advocacy work. Focusing on the Panay Bukidnons, a Visayan Indigenous community, and their participation in a local government-sponsored festival; Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG), a state-sponsored Filipino folk dance company, engaging with the Indigenous research archive of its founder and a celebrated National Artist, Ramon Arevalo; and Parangal Dance Company, a volunteer-run, US-based diasporic folk dance group conducting immersive research with a Mindanao-based Indigenous community, I ask how national and diasporic Filipino folk dance companies research and learn Indigenous "folk" dances for audiences in the Philippines and the U.S. In particular, I

look at how Panay Bukidnons, Parangal, and ROFG negotiate presumptive questions of indigeneity, cultural appropriation, and representation in and through this process. How do Panay Bukidnons, in particular, experience dárawatan, or the circulation of Indigenous expressive culture? How do Parangal and ROFG engage with their respective dárawatan? I forward dárawatan as a decolonial praxis of sighting, citing, and site-ing of and by the tumándok. This multisited and multilingual research pursuit includes dance ethnography, Indigenous storytelling, and archival research as methods focusing on the experiences of my interlocutors with their respective non-Indigenous and Indigenous collaborators just prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. I contend that it is vital to illuminate the way that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups experience the sharing of Indigenous performance practices to shed light on and beyond the pressing questions of indigeneity, authenticity, and relationality among Filipino dancing bodies. By foregrounding Filipino Indigenous peoples' voices, their participation, and their 'presence' through dárawatan, we can better understand the role of indigeneity in the sharing and learning of Philippine folk dance in the homeland and the diaspora.

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Introduction

Turning to the Tumándok (Indigenous)

The Impetus.

Calinog, Iloilo, 2016—I was sitting in one of the swivel chairs in the conference room of the municipal hall as we deliberated the results of the annual Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival[1] in Calinog, a first-class town situated in the central portion of the Province of Iloilo in Western Visayas, Philippines. One of the festivity's highlights is the dance drama competition where different "tribes"[2] formed within the municipality perform on the streets and at various designated judging areas assigned around town. From the outset, it was clear to us judges (composed of various professionals and practitioners from but not limited to academia, tourism, music, dance, and performing arts) that some members of these so-called 'tribes' are the Indigenous Peoples (also IPs[3]) of Calinog known as Panay Bukidnons[4] or Sulodnon, a community that permeates the mountain ranges of Panay Island (part of the Western Visayas region). Panay Bukidnons

[1] Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival features a dance drama competition that has two portions, a combination of the pre-Hispanic celebration of the Sulodnons or Panay Bukidnons, and the Catholic tradition of giving tribute to Señor Santo Niño. It opens with the Suguidanon (storytelling) segment and ends in Hirinugyaw (celebration), hence the name Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay.

[2] The term "tribe", locally termed as tribu, is usually the assigned name for the various groups participating in the different Philippine dance festivals. It does not necessarily mean "Indigenous."

[3] The designation of the term "Indigenous Peoples" (IPs) or "Indigenous Cultural Communities" (ICCs) is established in the Philippines through the approval of Republic Act 8371 (R.A. 8371) also known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Tenth Congress of the Philippines 1997). I discuss this history in more detail later.

[4] The Panay Bukidnon, Suludnon, or Panayanon Sulod are known to be the tumándok or "native" inhabitants of the interior portions of Panay Island. Every Panay Bukidnon community from the four provinces of Panay Island practice a variety of traditions, including babaylan (shaman) led rituals, dance such as the binanog (hawk or eagle dance), and the chanting of their epics.

share a folk epic orally transmitted from one generation to another called Hinilawod[5] (tales from the mouth of the [Jalaud] river).[6] The tourism office of the local government unit of Calinog selects a chapter of the epic to be showcased in a dance drama competition. The first half of the performances features Indigenous practices and beliefs reflected in the stories (suguidanon), music (talda), attire (panubok), and dances (binanog) of the Panay Bukidnons. The second half showcases a contemporary choreography that depicts the Calinognon's (people of Calinog) devotion to Señor Santo Niño, or the Child Jesus.

In the five years that I have been judging the festivity, the organizing team (composed mostly of officers from the local tourism office and the local government who may not always be directly related to the Panay Bukidnons) would always discuss with the judges their struggle in integrating the town's cultural ties to its Indigenous community into the Catholic-oriented dance festival. They would seek the judges' feedback on the organization and conduct of the festivity, as well as the Panay Bukidnons' participation in the event. Specifically, they would ask us (judges) what we think about the integration of the Panay Bukidnons in the festival and how to best showcase their Indigenous culture as the municipality celebrates their patron saint, Señor Santo Niño. Since I have been invited annually, I was able to see how the Panay Bukidnons' role in the festival has expanded over time. Initially just sources of the Panay

[5] Hinilawod is a folk epic poem written by the early inhabitants from the Panay Bukidnons. This 8,340-verse epic is transferred orally from one generation to the next through chanting, locally known as suguidanon. When performed in its original form, it would take about three days to finish the epic, making it a literary masterpiece.

[6] Chi P. Pham, Chitra Sankaran, and Gurpreet Kaur, Ecologies in Southeast Asian Literatures: Histories, Myths and Societies (Vernon Press, 2019).

Bukidnons' binanog[7] or co-creators of the songs and music used in the festivity, they later became part of the main performance, usually assigned the role of doing the opening ritual and eventually becoming indispensable figures in every part of the competition, including concept, music, attire, props, choreography, and performance.

"So, Sirs and Ma'ams, paano ayhan namon makay-o ining festival nga ma-integrate namun maayo ang amun IPs kag ang ila mga cultural practices? (So, Sirs and Ma'ams, how do we modify our festival in such that we would be able to respectfully integrate more of our IPs [pertaining to the Panay Bukidnons] and their cultural practices?)", the moderator asked again after hearing no response the first time. As comments poured out from the considered "experts" (judges), I wondered, how do the Panay Bukidnons feel about being included in the festival every year? How are the Panay Bukidnons consulted? How are they selected (as part of a competing group) and what does their presence in the rehearsals signify? What power relations are present when people from the lowland barangays[8] of Calinog try to visit the tumándoks (native, Indigenous) and learn their culture through their songs, dances, and lifeways? What does dárawatan (sharing) mean for them?

[7] Binanog is a Panay Bukidnon dance that imitates the movement of the hawk or eagle (locally known as banog). As a partner dance, it features both dancers bouncing around each other, moving their arms in a flapping motion while their hands hold a pinanyo (handkerchief). The male banog usually responds to the movement of the female banog by matching the steps of the latter in a free-spirited manner while responding to the live music in the dance. The music comes from a combination of playing the agong (or gong, is a metal disk with a turned rim that resonates when struck), tambur (drum made of animal skin and serves as the bass music), and kubing (resembling a bamboo wind instrument)

[8] Barangay refers to the smallest administrative division of a place in the Philippines. It pertains to either a village, district, inner city neighborhood, or suburb. The municipalities and cities in the Philippines are subdivided into barangays. Literature sources pertain to barangay either as an Indigenous political organization or a Spanish invention from Spain's attempt to reconstruct Filipino communities.

Riverside, California, 2018—I was sitting in front of my laptop, enjoying the silence offered by the Rivera Library at the University of California, Riverside. While making a timeline of my interest in folk dance, I remembered that my first encounter with folk dance "literature"[9] was when I was 7 years old, unaware of the importance of what my teacher was holding. Then, when I turned 17, I was the one holding a folk dance literature sample for a class interpretation. And at 27, I was confronted with folk dance literature for a national accreditation designed for folk dance teachers. In all those instances, it struck me that I never asked about the very people that choreographed or restaged some of these folk dances. Furthermore, I was not aware of how the researchers of these folk dances worked with the Indigenous communities concerned. Upon further reflection, I recognized that my tension with the folk dances I encountered came from the way I felt about them being invisibilized in the process.

In Philippine folk dance literature, one may see the costumes of Indigenous peoples for a particular dance (oftentimes accompanied by an image of them) but rarely does one know what their attire means for those groups or what they felt when their photographs were being taken. As a folk dance student, performer, and choreographer, I have been taught to visualize the Indigenous communities' dances through a bracketed

[9] In the Philippines, a folk dance literature is a term that refers to the published/unpublished documentation of folk dances authored by researchers like Francisca-Reyes Aquino and Ramon Obusan. The literature is a descriptive notation of the Philippine folk dance's costume, music, formations, floor patterns, and choreography.

set of movement combinations called "figures"[10] but was never taught to think deeply about the actual Indigenous groups from which the movement sets of these figures came.

I have become familiar with the different Indigenous communities because of short historical descriptions of the dance and the details included in the dance documentation, but this information does not include the thriving culture of the Indigenous communities in the Philippine archipelago, including their ontologies, epistemologies, and lifeways. Nor does it include their plight to survive, their grounded and sophisticated knowledge systems and practices, only their names, faces, or essentialized description of the group. Not knowing the processes involved in how the Indigenous group's expressive culture was brought onstage nor having enough information to contextualize the Indigenous performance I am asked to watch as an audience member resulted in a normalized experience of enjoying the "spectacle." In the process, it made me feel like I have to validate my experience by searching for the "Indigenous." As audiences around the world watch Filipino folk dance performances that include dances from túmandoks (native or one who belongs to a place)[11] like Panay Bukidnons, what does it mean to center the processes that transpire in the sharing of Indigenous expressive culture, and in this case, Indigenous dance? What does it mean for non-Indigenous locals and foreigners alike to not just witness but also to consume

[10] A figure is a part of a folk dance literature that features the combination of steps, transitions, and variations present in a particular folk dance. It also highlights what the male and female dancers do individually or as a pair.

[11] Cathryne Enriquez, UP Anthropology Society, "On the Tumandok Massacre and the NCIP's Denial of the Tumandok's Indigenous Roots," Medium (blog), January 22, 2021, https://anthrosoc-up.medium.com/on-the-tumandok-massacre-and-the-ncips-denial-of-the-tumandok-s-indigenous-roots-b5e48e4b5331. Tumándok is a Hiligaynon (regional language spoken in parts of Iloilo Province and parts of Mindanao) word which means "native." It is also a term used by the Panay Bukidnons to refer to them as a people.

Indigenous dances as spectators? In the dance troupe's folk dance repertoire where they may perform a version of a sacred ritual, an excerpt from a durational Indigenous practice, or a site-specific or music-driven presentation, what difference does it make if the performance makes visible the processes from which it was learned as a community practice up to when it is rendered as a performance?

At some point during the performance of Panay Bukidnons in the festivity, it felt like the footnotes referencing Indigenous communities in Philippine folk dance literature just came to life— that Philippine-based Indigenous groups like the Panay Bukidnons, their inclusion, presence, and more importantly, their involvement in the formation of a dance documentation, choreography, and performance, have been everywhere but nowhere, visible yet invisible. The visibility and invisibility of Indigenous groups who were considered as sources of knowledge systems, practices, and expressive culture is palpable and lingered like an old melody through the years. So familiar that no one seemed to have questioned how Philippine folk dance has been able to center Indigenous groups through their presence but make them simultaneously so unfamiliar that they have to be continually reintroduced, searched for, and spectacularized over and over again through their absence. For these reasons, I wanted to better understand the processes that take place in the encounters between Philippine-based Indigenous groups and national/diasporic-based Filipino folk dance companies. In particular, how do they share the mediated space of dance and negotiate questions of indigeneity, authenticity, and

relationality in and through the multilayered dárawatan (process of sharing and the circulation of Indigenous expressive culture)[12]?

On Writing Choices and Conventions

There are three writing decisions I deliberately made that you may notice throughout my writing. First, I capitalized "I" in the term "Indigenous," including Indigenous names, terms, and phrases that need to be written beginning with a capital letter or which specifies a tumándok community, person, practice, and/or object in my study which my interlocutors themselves write in the same writing convention. Second, I chose not to italicize all Indigenous words or regional languages, phrases, or statements outside the English language. Finally, I used my interlocutors' hypocoristic names, maintained their Indigenous names, or used abbreviated names, as applicable, and more importantly, as agreed upon by my interlocutors. To guide my writing conventions, I engaged with the works of Opaskwayak Cree Nation member, Dr. Gregory Younging,[13] sociologist and senior research fellow, Dr. Janet Heaton,[14] and practice-based researcher and artist, Khairani Barokka.[15]

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[12] The use of the archaic term dárawatan was a response shared to me by one of my Panay Bukidnon informants to refer to the process of sharing their expressive culture. In the Akeanon language, dáwat means "to take, receive, get from above" and "to pass, give." In the Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a language, daláwat or dárawat means "to buy or sell (rice)." Another term that may be used aside from dárawatan is "holhogan." To articulate this process, my other key informant also suggested the use of other local terms like gintudluan (taught) or ginbahinan ka kinaaram (imparted with [Indigenous] knowledge).

[13] Dr. Younging is the author of Elements of Indigenous Time: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples (2018).

[14] Janet Heaton, "'*Pseudonyms Are Used Throughout': A Footnote, Unpacked," Qualitative Inquiry, Volume 28, Issue 1, (2022): 123-132, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/10778004211048379.

[15] Khairani Barokka, "BIO + CONTACT," http://www.khairanibarokka.com/bio.

On capitalizing the word "Indigenous" and other related terms. The deliberate decision to capitalize the term "Indigenous" is an outcome of how I acknowledged and recognized the historical weight, shared stories, and ongoing narratives of redress that is carried by identifiable Indigenous communities in the Philippines and in the different parts of the world. That "Indigenous" as a term, may flag a generic, obscured, and blanket word for real and specific, often minoritized groups and yet "Indigenous" may also be utilized to deeply honor Indigenous cultural communities, their expressive culture, and sophisticated knowledge systems and practices. Experienced both ways, I chose to uplift the tumándok communities I have worked with, including my interlocutors, and the ancestors that have paved the way for me to conduct the dissertation as a non-Indigenous Akeanon not just by capitalizing "I" in "Indigenous," but more so, using the name they identify with or call themselves as, made more evident during my interactions with them and throughout the writing of my dissertation. For Younging, part of his emphasis in the capitalization of the "I" in the word "Indigenous" is to create an "ongoing decolonizing discourse,"[16] "build a new relationship between Indigenous people and settler society," [17] and make permanent the significance of recognizing Indigenous names for how Indigenous communities wanted to be named by and called as, like my tumándok interlocutors, the Panay Bukidnons.

On not italicizing Indigenous terms or regional languages outside the English language. I decided not to italicize the tumándok terms I have used in the dissertation,

[16] Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Time: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Canada: Brush Education, Inc., 2018), 18.
[17] Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Time,* 18.

including local phrases, responses, and interview vignettes. In engaging with an Indigenous-driven and decolonial research, I realized that choosing to get away from the stylistic dictum to italicize regional languages and Indigenous words and phrases not only demonstrates the agency that languages outside English possess but more importantly, how I honor my own voice and that of my interlocutors in the process. While there are a lot of nuances in terms of how a word is perceived as it is written on a piece of paper, my encounter with Indigenous terms turned into short footnotes or italicized in writing paints a picture of an exoticized, reduced, and turned-into-decoration type of people. Such form of writing may also be perceived to have come from a place of privilege with regards to having the power to italicize words. Finally, by choosing not to italicize the local, national, and Indigenous words in my study, I position words like dárawatan with its own unique attributes, histories, and context on equal footing with the main language of my dissertation writing. I join movements around the world that choose not to italicize local languages, texts, and terms as a form of recognition, respect, and to continuously make right what Western scholarship deemed foreign or different.

On naming the names of my interlocutors. I used my interlocutors' Indigenous, affectionate, abbreviated, or real name, as they see fit. Heaton said that "given the personal, social, and symbolic meanings that names have in different cultures—as well as the acts of using associated honorifics and preferred pronouns (or not)—it is important that researchers attend more to these naming practices and their identity-framing and

positioning effects."[18] In retrospect, before I started doing my fieldwork, I ensured my interlocutors regarding their anonymity. However, I also made sure that in any way that I framed the identities of my interlocutors with their names, whether through the use of Indigenous names, preferred abbreviations, or how they were fondly called for by those close to them, completely anonymize their names for confidentiality reasons, or use their real names as they see fit, careful deliberation was involved and their permission was sought.

Despite the provisions of Philippine Republic Act 8371 that recognizes, protects, and promotes the rights, privileges, and recognition of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs), that the same law (RA 8371) also known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 functions for, translates to, and is being experienced differently on the ground by the Indigenous communities themselves. For example, Panay Bukidnons face struggles in terms of their ancestral domain claims, the continuous romanticization, appropriation, and extraction of their culture and traditions, and the difficult experiences they undergo to claim their rights and privileges often controlled by who is in power. Thus, I take this move of supporting how they are supposed to be acknowledged as people through their names, as it was from recognizing them for their indigeneity during my fieldwork that I was not just able to slowly begin to establish genuine relationships and gain trust from my Indigenous interlocutors, but also able to initiate a connection that goes beyond the researcher-interlocutor relationship, a

[18] Janet Heaton, "'*pseudonyms Are Used throughout': A Footnote, Unpacked," *Qualitative Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2021): 123–32, https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004211048379.

connection that enabled me to build lasting relationships with my Panay Bukidnon interlocutors, and a connection that I hope to maintain moving forward. That I embrace Panay Bukidnons not as how "society's history of regarding Indigenous Peoples having no legitimate national identities; governmental, social, spiritual, or religious institutions; or collective rights" [19] but for who they are, including their ontologies and epistemologies, and their lifeways.

Project Description: Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal

To shed light on these research questions, I examine three groups: the Panay Bukidnons of Calinog, Iloilo, Philippines, the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG) of Manila, Philippines, and Parangal Dance Company of San Francisco, California, USA. In this section, I will briefly introduce the two latter dance companies, how they are connected with Filipino Indigenous groups, and my positionality in relation to ROFG, Parangal, and the Panay Bukidnons.

Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG)[20] is a Philippine-based and government supported national dance company established on September 21, 1972. As a resident folk dance company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), ROFG received government support to work towards the nurturance and upkeep of Philippine folk

[19] Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Time,* 77.
[20] Founded in 1972, ROFG began with some thirty performers led by dance researcher Ramon A. Obusan. "Boasting of over a thousand performances in the Philippines and abroad, the ROFG is one of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' leading resident companies since 1986" (Cultural Center of the Philippines [CCP] 2011).

dances. In particular, ROFG "created a niche in the world of dance as forerunner of Philippine dance performed closest to its original form."[21]

Located in Pasay City, a highly urbanized city in metropolitan Manila, ROFG maintains a learning and archival space called Bahay ni Kuya (meaning "my brother's house;" "kuya" is a Tagalog word which means "elder brother," and "Mon" as a shortcut nickname for Ramon, and how ROFG dancers and alumni members address Ramon A. Obusan). Obusan's experiences as a teacher, anthropologist, and folk dancer led him to configure a dance research approach "that respects and represents the dance in its natural form as he originally saw it in the field." [22] From 1972 to the present, ROFG's dance research approach takes an "ethnographic-presentation"[23] that reveals the company's vision of representing the Indigenous Filipinos' dances, music, clothing, and aesthetics "based on 'actual' dance steps and body movements of local performers." [24] The company's presentation of Filipino Indigenous dances foregrounds their research experience of being 'with' a particular Indigenous community where ROFG takes note of the 'proper' execution, posture, attitude, and the uniqueness of the Indigenous community's local culture and tradition which, in Kanami Namiki's words, were "conscious imitations of the original." [25] In 1996, Ramon Obusan met Leopoldo Caballero, a culture bearer from the Panay Bukidnons, during the conduct of the Global

[21] C. C. P. Admin, "Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group," *Cultural Center of the Philippines* (blog), January 11, 2021, https://culturalcenter.gov.ph/resident-companies/ramon-obusan-folkloric-group/.
[22] Kanami Namiki, "Hybridity and National Identity: Different Perspectives of Two National Folk Dance Companies in the Philippines," Asian Studies 47 (2011), 54.
[23] Kanami Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino: A Study of Contrasting Representations of Philippine Culture" (master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2007), 92.
[24] Kanami Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino," 92.
[25] Kanami Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino," 93.

Indigenous Cultural and Youth Olympics hosted by Manila as part of the United Nations World Programme of Action event. Obusan then requested Caballero to stay with him for six months to share the Panay Bukidnons' culture (specifically the Indigenous group's rituals; up to the point of requesting Caballero to write 12 books about Panay Bukidnons). The following year, two senior members of ROFG visited the Panay Bukidnons to learn more about the Panay Bukidnons' local culture and tradition. Since then, the Bahay ni Kuya has kept an archive of images and texts of the Panay Bukidnons' music, dances, stories, and expressive culture.

Parangal Dance Company,[26] or simply Parangal (from the Tagalog[27] word "parangal" meaning "tribute"), is a San Francisco-based Filipino American folk dance group that aims "to serve as a bridge, inspiring and connecting Filipinos in diaspora to their roots to give them a sense of pride and identity, while educating diverse communities to foster awareness and appreciation of Philippine culture."[28] The dance company is composed of first, second, and third generation of Filipino Americans based in the U.S. Some of Parangal's members were formerly dancers of the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company[29] and others have been trained and/or

[26] Parangal Dance Company provide workshops in the use of ethnic attire, the way the music of particular Indigenous dances are played, and how the dances are being done from the Indigenous communities in the Philippines that they have worked with. Parangal also continues to engage with Philippine folk arts "to support and help preserve the [Indigenous communities'] respective cultural heritage and ensure [the] transmission of Indigenous skills and techniques to the next generation" (Parangal Dance Company 2020).
[27] Tagalog, a language widely spoken all over the Philippines, is considered as the basis for the country's national language, formally named Filipino (also the rendered name of its people). Tagalog is also the name of the ethnic people of Northern Luzon who speak the language with the same name.
[28] "About," Parangal, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.parangal.org/about.
[29] "Bayanihan, the National Dance Company of the Philippines takes its name from an ancient Filipino tradition called "Bayanihan" which means working together for a common good. In 1956, Dr. Helena Z. Benitez founded the Bayanihan Folk Dance Group of the Philippine Women's University.

following the teachings of Obusan as well. Parangal takes pride in creating dance pieces or productions that center the dance culture of the different Indigenous communities in the Philippines. Parangal relies heavily on the information shared by the Indigenous cultural leaders and cultural masters through interviews, documented rituals, dances, music, and attire details. [30]

As of September 2023, this diasporic-based dance company has worked with fifty-four Indigenous communities in the Philippines, including the Panay Bukidnons. Their actual immersive research practice with the various Indigenous groups in the Philippines usually spans one to two weeks during which they stay with a particular Indigenous group to learn the latter's local culture through their music, dance, cultural traditions, and lifeways, after which they continue to keep in touch with each of the Indigenous communities through the latter's culture bearers (elders) with whom they consult for Parangal's future staging of the Indigenous community's dance and music. Parangal's team, led by Eric Solano, has conducted fieldwork with Panay Bukidnons since 2017. Parangal continues to communicate with the culture bearers of Panay Bukidnons for Binanog (dance) consultation and acquisition (through purchase) of the Panay Bukidnons' panubok (dance costume) and musical instruments.

How I ended up choosing Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal in my study began when I was selected as a judge for a dance drama competition in the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival, a religious festival that integrated the participation of the locality's Panay Bukidnons from 2012 to 2016. In the process of gathering information

[30] "About." Parangal, 2023.

about Panay Bukidnons, I found out that one of them worked with the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. When I was a part of a community based performing arts guild from 2001 to 2009, I became a recipient of the scholarly works and choreographic process of ROFG through my former mentor who had training with the dance company and with the dance literature researched by Obusan. In following ROFG's work since 2007, I have learned the importance of detailing the process of one's fieldwork with Indigenous communities. The staging of their folk dance suite has also influenced the way I learn, interpret, and choreograph folk dances as a performer, trainer, and teacher of folk dance.

Back in the locality's festival in 2016, I met Eric, the artistic director of Parangal Dance Company, who was also invited to be one of the judges in the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival. Since then, I have followed the stage productions of Parangal and in 2018, I was able to conduct a mini-ethnographic work (related to a coursework research) with Parangal. Also, my capacity to be invited as a judge in the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival is due to my affiliation as a faculty of the College of Physical Education, Sports, Culture, Arts, and Recreation (PESCAR) at the West Visayas State University (WVSU) in Iloilo City, Philippines where I finished my bachelor's and master's degree. My previous work experience also gave me a platform to compete in various national folk dance competitions (open category), participate in regional and national workshops in folk dance, and judge in various festivals in Western Visayas.

I focus on dárawatan (also holhogan, an archaic Kinaray-a term meaning "to pass on, receive, share, or, accept"), a term that two of my key interlocutors shared with me when asked to name the process by which Panay Bukidnons share their expressive

culture with non-Indigenous Filipinos. Slightly puzzled, I had to clarify what dárawatan (also dárawat, pagdárawat) means for them since, in Aklan, where I grew up, I have encountered the words daeawat (also pagdaeawat), which is associated with purchasing a kilo or more of rice, depending on the money one has, or what the other person would have as an exchange (ex. best vegetable produce, a sack of fruits, a gallon of fermented vinegar, etc.). The experience of hearing dárawatan in another context, made me curious. "Ipasa Sir, galain-lain man depende sa konteksto (To pass on [that's what it means], and it differs depending on context), says Intaro, in a follow-up chat. My experience of pagdaeawat or daeawat (notice the slight change in spelling which signals a different pronunciation, but a striking similarity in meaning) is transactional in nature. My mother, when we would run out of rice, would ask me to go to a baraka (sari-sari store) or the market to "magdaeawat it bugas"(buy [a kilo of] rice), of buy and sell, with its most basic form called barter, a practice prominent in precolonial Southeast Asia where people did not only exchange goods but also their respective expressive cultures. Dárawatan may also include trusting one another and exchanging goods on one's capacity to return what was given, shared, or entrusted to them on a given or agreed period.

In this dissertation, dárawatan is used to describe the interstitial space of teaching, learning, choreographing, and staging Indigenous dances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Filipinos. In this process of sharing and learning folk dances among Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal with their respective 'collaborators', I parse out the meaning of indigeneity in constructions of Filipinoness. Since I will be looking at the relationship between the different Filipino communities involved in this project, I am also

interested in knowing the experiences of ROFG and Parangal as they worked with an extensive Indigenous archive and the Maguindanaon Indigenous group of Cotabato City in Northern Mindanao, respectively.

Existing literature on Philippine folk dance does not discuss how the Indigenous dances found in books or its accompanying recorded video presentations came to be. And although it seems that the Indigenous communities are represented and have become visible in the process, I think that the Indigenous peoples and their narratives are actually invisibilized in the materiality of every spoken, written, visual, and performative Philippine folk dance archive (i.e. dance notations, recorded songs and dances, reinterpretation of the Indigenous communities' dances) I have come across. The discourse of cultural appropriation of indigeneity of non-Indigenous Filipinos and Filipino Americans is a palpable issue that rendered Indigenous peoples as exotic objects, mere sources of entertainment, and in ways that were dominating, offensive, and imperialistic. Given this erasure, it is imperative that scholarship on Filipino folk dance re-center the Indigenous peoples, their voices, and their stories. Thus, I hope to position dárawatan as a response to/resistance against cultural appropriation. I am invested in nuancing the chains of dárawatan that transpire in the separate yet similar experiences of 1) the Panay Bukidnons who worked with the local government unit (LGU) of Calinog, Iloilo to stage a virtual festival in 2022; 2) ROFG as they digitized Ramon A. Obusan's research and also relied on the company's collection of archival materials from Indigenous communities to stage and perform their expressive culture for online audiences; and 3) Parangal as they immersed themselves in Northern Cotabato,

Mindanao, Philippines with the Maguindanaon Indigenous Peoples for a week in the healing ritual called ipat a kadsakay.

Contextualizing Philippine Folk Dance

In this section, I will focus on three major turning points in the history and development of Philippine folk dance in relation to the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the country deeply affected by legacies of U.S. imperialism. First, I will discuss the history and development of Philippine folk dance, with emphasis on the works of Francisca Reyes-Aquino. I will also briefly go through the history and politics of Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company,[31] or simply Bayanihan, in relation to their role as the Philippines' cultural ambassadors to the Brussels Universal Exposition (1958 World's Fair), the support they received from the Marcos regime during the country's Martial Law era, and the spectacle of the racial primitive and Indigenous appropriation as the country's national folk dance company. Second, I will outline the influence of Imelda Marcos, the policy of Filipinization, and the "ethnicization" of Indigenous communities in the Philippines. Finally, this section will lay the groundwork for articulating the vexed term "Indigenous."

Folk dances of the Philippines gained prominence when, in 1927, Dr. Jorge Bocobo, then president of the University of the Philippines (UP), sent Francisca Reyes-

[31] Arellano Law Foundation, "Republic Act No. 8626," The Lawphil Project, Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1998/ra_8626_1998.html. The Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company was only officially declared as the Philippine National Folk Dance Company on April 15, 1998, more than four decades since it was founded.

Aquino, [32] an anthropologist, to different provinces in the Philippines to research the country's folk songs and dances. Aquino had been interested and engaged in Philippine folk dances since 1921 when she was a student assistant in Physical Education in UP. She made folk dance the subject of her Master's thesis in 1926 and published "Philippine Folk Dances and Games" in 1927. "From 1929 to 1931, Aquino's teaching and research were interrupted by two years of study at Boston University as a UP Fellow. The experience broadened her professional interest in dance as an art form and also equipped her for more intensive field research upon her return."[33] The turn to the "folk" in the 1920s was in part due to the US government's push toward Filipinization at that time (and with it the assumed replacement of American superiors by Filipino leaders). It became the case, eventually, but in the process, the US-backed Filipinization project sealed its legitimate standing vis-à-vis the Filipinos. Nation-building became the focus, which arguably, is the U.S Empire's final move to seal their presence in the Philippines, albeit subtly. For Resil B. Mojares, "nation-making in the early twentieth century created the sense, space, and substance of nationhood more extensive than at any time prior to it, one that survives to the present day. The first decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a Filipino nationality - and what comes with it, a "national" language, literature, dance, music, painting, or architecture. A canonical nationalism, however, has its costs in terms of what— by reasons of class, ethnicity, religion, gender, or location—

[32] Francisca Reyes-Aquino finished her Bachelor of Science degree in Education (1924) at the University of the Philippines (UP) and her Master of Arts degree in 1926 in the same university.
[33] Dick Oakes. "Frances Reyes Aquino." Master Teachers. Folk Dance Federation of California, South, Inc., November 1, 2002. http://www.socalfolkdance.com/master_teachers/aquino_f.htm.

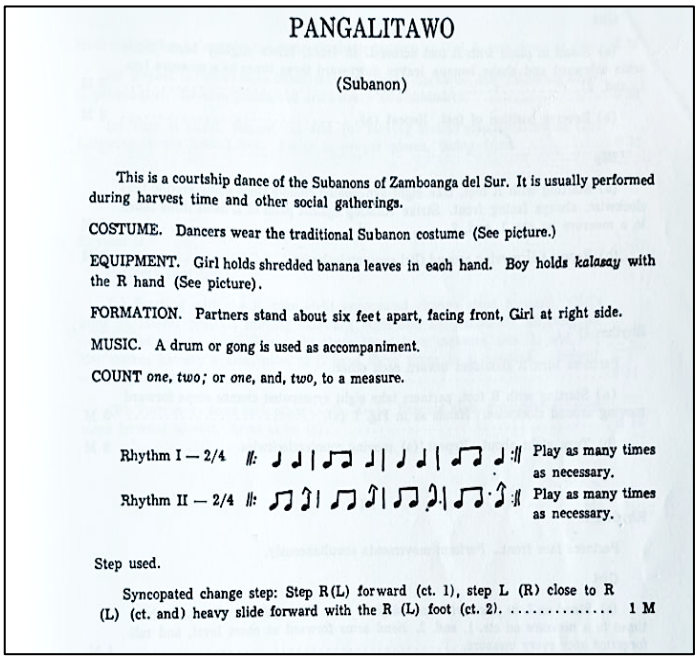
is obscured or suppressed."[34] Scholars have cited the role that colonial education and the enfeeblement of the nationalist opposition, Filipino training in American-style politics and the Filipinization of the colonial state have played in enabling Filipinos to identify much more closely with American rule,[35] which not surprisingly, trickled into the contemporary times where the U.S. have existing military basis and agreements with the Philippine government in terms of armed forces and military movement. American Filipinization made Philippine folk dance become a part of a nationalist agenda which may have resorted to the romanticization of Indigenous peoples and their expressive culture, which in turn, etched Indigenous historical and cultural inaccuracies, stereotyping and decentering Indigenous voices, and the simplistic characterization of the rather, rich, sophisticated, and organized knowledge systems and practices of Filipino Indigenous communities.

It was because of Aquino's influential and canonical work that Philippine folk dance has been classified and notated. Today, Philippine folk dance is divided into three categories: Indigenous (or ethnic) dances, rural (or countryside) dances, and social (or Spanish-influenced) dances. Indigenous dances are further classified as either ritual, lifecycle, occupational, or mimetic dances. The Philippine folk dance notation system, as a way of documenting dances, is a descriptive notation system that may contain the following information: researcher of the dance, the resource person who first presented

[34] Resil B. Mojares, "The Formation of Filipino Nationality Under U.S. Colonial Rule," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (2006): 11–32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/29792581.

[35] Patricio N. Abinales, "American Rule and the Formation of Filipino 'Colonial Nationalism'" (State Formation in Comparative Perspectives). 東南アジア研究 2002, 39(4): 604-621

the dance in a public workshop, and the dance's meaning, culture, place of origin, ethnolinguistic group, and classification. It also consists of a few paragraphs that describe the background and context of the dance, the basic movements/steps particular to the dance, and its dance properties (costume, count pattern, step pattern, and formations). The notation is composed of descriptive sentences for the figures that are made up of movement sequences, the music of that particular figure, and the number of measures that correspond to the music. After the figures of the dance, the musical notation follows.



PANGALITAWO

(Subanon)

This is a courtship dance of the Subanons of Zamboanga del Sur. It is usually performed during harvest time and other social gatherings.

COSTUME. Dancers wear the traditional Subanon costume (See picture.)

EQUIPMENT. Girl holds shredded banana leaves in each hand. Boy holds *kalasay* with the R hand (See picture).

FORMATION. Partners stand about six feet apart, facing front, Girl at right side.

MUSIC. A drum or gong is used as accompaniment.

COUNT *one, two;* or *one,* and, *two,* to a measure.

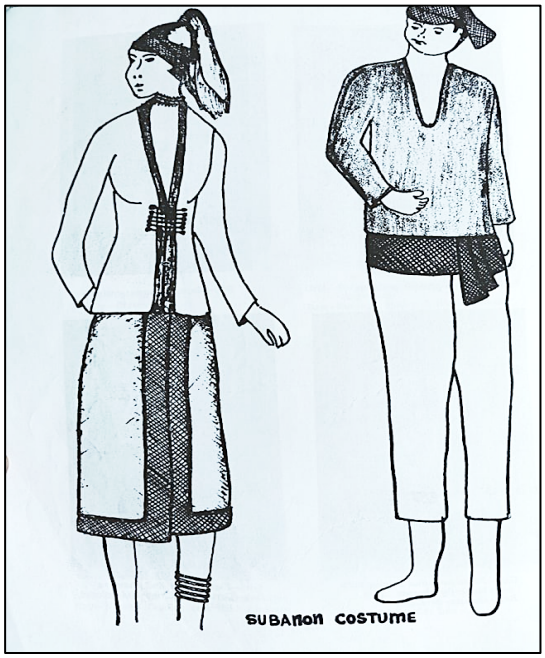
Rhythm I — 2/4 Play as many times as necessary.

Rhythm II — 2/4 Play as many times as necessary.

Step used.

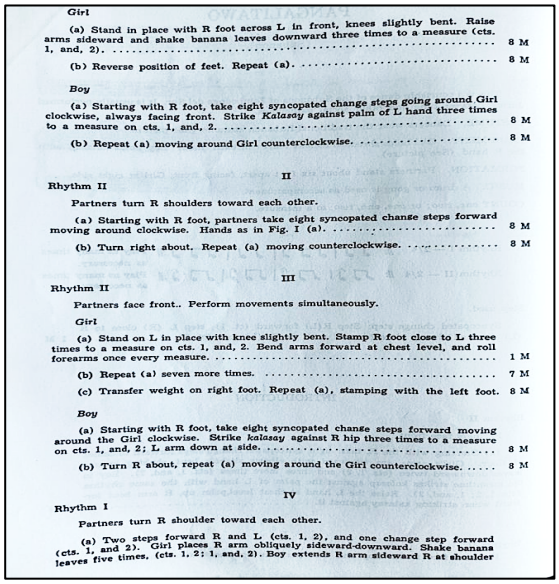
Syncopated change step: Step R(L) forward (ct. 1), step L (R) close to R (L) (ct. and) heavy slide forward with the R (L) foot (ct. 2). ..... 1 M

A



B

This is an example of a description of Philippine folk dance from the book Philippine Folk Dances.[36] The first photo (A) shows the dance description, costume, equipment used, dance formation, music, count pattern, and the dance steps. The second photo (B) presents a sketch of the Subanon[37] costume. The third photo (C) shows the "figures" of the dance that includes the movement and count pattern for girls and boys.



Girl

(a) Stand in place with R foot across L in front, knees slightly bent. Raise arms sideward and shake banana leaves downward three times to a measure (cts. 1, and, 2). ..... 8 M

(b) Reverse position of feet. Repeat (a). ..... 8 M

Boy

(a) Starting with R foot, take eight syncopated change steps going around Girl clockwise, always facing front. Strike *Kalasay* against palm of L hand three times to a measure on cts. 1, and, 2. ..... 8 M

(b) Repeat (a) moving around Girl counterclockwise. ..... 8 M

II

Rhythm II

Partners turn R shoulders toward each other.

(a) Starting with R foot, partners take eight syncopated change steps forward moving around clockwise. Hands as in Fig. I (a). ..... 8 M

(b) Turn right about. Repeat (a) moving counterclockwise. ..... 8 M

III

Rhythm II

Partners face front.. Perform movements simultaneously.

Girl

(a) Stand on L in place with knee slightly bent. Stamp R foot close to L three times to a measure on cts. 1, and, 2. Bend arms forward at chest level, and roll forearms once every measure. ..... 1 M

(b) Repeat (a) seven more times. ..... 7 M

(c) Transfer weight on right foot. Repeat (a), stamping with the left foot. 8 M

Boy

(a) Starting with R foot, take eight syncopated change steps forward moving around the Girl clockwise. Strike *kalasay* against R hip three times to a measure on cts. 1, and, 2; L arm down at side. ..... 8 M

(b) Turn R about, repeat (a) moving around the Girl counterclockwise. ..... 8 M

IV

Rhythm I

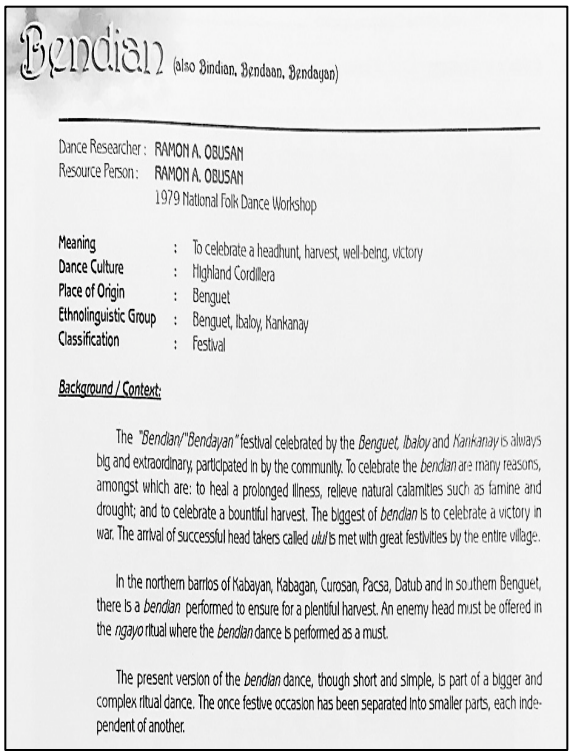
Partners turn R shoulder toward each other.

(a) Two steps forward R and L (cts. 1, 2), and one change step forward (cts. 1, and 2). Girl places R arm obliquely sideward-downward. Shake banana leaves five times. (cts. 1, 2; 1, and, 2). Boy extends R arm sideward R at shoulder

C

[36] Francisca Reyes Aquino, *Philippine National Dances,* Volume V, 1996.

[37] Subanon, or Subanen, is a group of Lumad or non-Muslim Indigenous cultural community in Zamboanga Peninsula, Mindanao, Philippines.



Bendian (also Bindian, Bendaan, Bendayan)

Dance Researcher : RAMON A. OBUSAN
Resource Person : RAMON A. OBUSAN
1979 National Folk Dance Workshop

Meaning : To celebrate a headhunt, harvest, well-being, victory
Dance Culture : Highland Cordillera
Place of Origin : Benguet
Ethnolinguistic Group : Benguet, Ibaloy, Kankanay
Classification : Festival

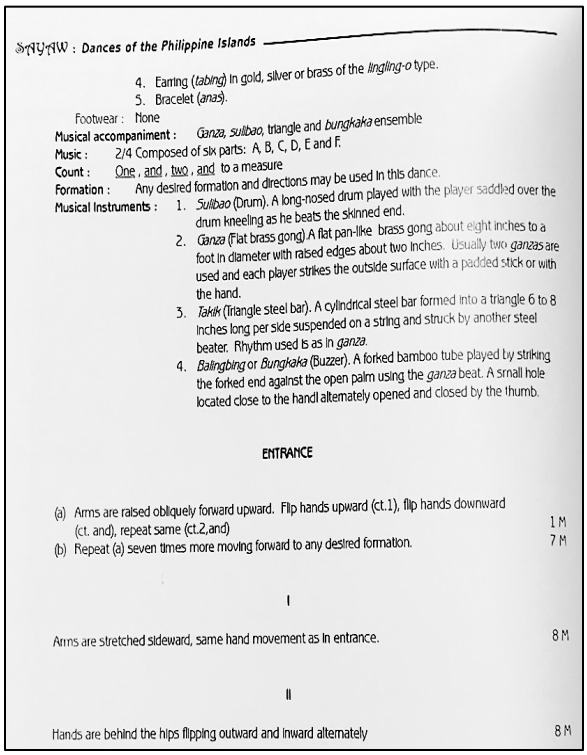
Background / Context:

The "Bendian/"Bendayan" festival celebrated by the *Benguet, Ibaloy* and *Kankanay* is always big and extraordinary, participated in by the community. To celebrate the *bendian* are many reasons, amongst which are: to heal a prolonged illness, relieve natural calamities such as famine and drought; and to celebrate a bountiful harvest. The biggest of *bendian* is to celebrate a victory in war. The arrival of successful head takers called *ulul* is met with great festivities by the entire village.

In the northern barrios of Kabayan, Kabagan, Curosan, Pacsa, Datub and in southern Benguet, there is a *bendian* performed to ensure for a plentiful harvest. An enemy head must be offered in the *ngayo* ritual where the *bendian* dance is performed as a must.

The present version of the *bendian* dance, though short and simple, is part of a bigger and complex ritual dance. The once festive occasion has been separated into smaller parts, each independent of another.

A



SAYAW : Dances of the Philippine Islands

4. Earring (*tabing*) in gold, silver or brass of the *lingling-o* type.
5. Bracelet (*anas*).

Footwear : None
Musical accompaniment : *Ganza, sulibao*, triangle and *bungkaka* ensemble
Music : 2/4 Composed of six parts: A, B, C, D, E and F.
Count : One , and , two , and to a measure
Formation : Any desired formation and directions may be used in this dance.
Musical Instruments :
1. *Sulibao* (Drum). A long-nosed drum played with the player saddled over the drum kneeling as he beats the skinned end.
2. *Ganza* (Flat brass gong) A flat pan-like brass gong about eight inches to a foot in diameter with raised edges about two inches. Usually two *ganzas* are used and each player strikes the outside surface with a padded stick or with the hand.
3. *Takik* (Triangle steel bar). A cylindrical steel bar formed into a triangle 6 to 8 inches long per side suspended on a string and struck by another steel beater. Rhythm used is as in *ganza*.
4. *Balingbing* or *Bungkaka* (Buzzer). A forked bamboo tube played by striking the forked end against the open palm using the *ganza* beat. A small hole located close to the handl alternately opened and closed by the thumb.

ENTRANCE

(a) Arms are raised obliquely forward upward. Flip hands upward (ct.1), flip hands downward (ct. and), repeat same (ct.2,and) 1 M
(b) Repeat (a) seven times more moving forward to any desired formation. 7 M

I

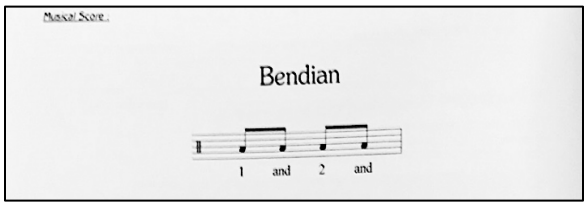
Arms are stretched sideward, same hand movement as in entrance. 8 M

II

Hands are behind the hips flipping outward and inward alternately 8 M

B

C



Musical Score :

Bendian

1 and 2 and

D

A counterpart to Aquino's published folk dances is the set of books called Sayaw: Dances of the Philippine Islands published by the Philippine Folk Dance Society in 2001. Inspired by Aquino's notation

system, this series of books extended Aquino's work by introducing more details like the dances' researcher, year it was shared to the public, classification, meaning, and context. Since the 1930s, Aquino's way of documenting Philippine folk dances has served as a guide for different dance companies in showcasing Philippine folk dances. For her efforts, Aquino was recognized in 1973 by then President Ferdinand Marcos as a National Artist for Dance.

Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, established in 1957, presented national and international Philippine folk dance repertoires primarily shaped by the pioneering research and fieldwork of Francisca Reyes-Aquino. While the group became the epitome of Filipino culture and the arts, especially in the field of dance and the Filipino Indigenous community's expressive culture, their appropriation of Indigenous dances made Bayanihan not only a much-sought-for dance company whose works were massively consumed in the West but they had to contend as well with their choice to stylize and transform Indigenous cultural creations and knowledge for stage purposes The dance company eventually shaped its performances by studying, adopting, and integrating Western theater conventions and possibilities to present Philippine-based folk dances purported to add value to the performance, and elevate its entertainment aspect. Scholar Kanami Namiki noted how Bayanihan used "the basics of ballet, such as foot-and-arm positions and body posture, [and] applied [ballet's rudiments] to local dance movements." [38] To a point, Bayanihan dancers who are photographed for publication

[38] Kanami Namiki, "Hybridity and National Identity: Different Perspectives of Two National Folk Dance Companies in the Philippines," Asian Studies 47 (2011), 68.

would seem to project a "body [that] is always pulled up, the chin kept up, and the toes frequently pointed," Namiki added. [39]

Bayanihan had its first international break when it was judged best among 13 national groups that competed in the 1958 Brussels Universal Exposition. The then newly-formed, school-based folk dance company from Manila, Philippines got the attention of the international community, specifically the media agencies in the US when the group mounted a production entitled "Glimpses of Philippine Culture through Music and Dance,"[40] a civic response to the Philippine government's appeal for a cultural program in the country's participation in the first major World Expo (also known as Expo 58) after World War II. The US tour of Bayanihan from 1958-1962 from the East Coast to the West Coast was tracked by journalists, reporters, and broadcasters as the group presented their repertoire rooted in the folk and Indigenous dance traditions of the Philippines.

Four years later, Bayanihan gained critically acclaimed performances in their Broadway debut with Sol Hurok's International Dance Festival at the New York's Winter Garden Theater (1959), San Francisco's Alcazar Theater (1959), the New York Metropolitan House (1961), San Francisco American Conservatory Theater's (A.C.T) Geary Theater (1961), their coast to coast tour under the management of Columbia Artists Management Inc. (CAMI) (1961-1962), and the Seattle's World Fair (1962),[41]

[39] Namiki, "Hybridity and National Identity," 72.
[40] Summer Gossette and Whitney Hale,
[41] "Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company," Accessed February 12, 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20071011015728/ http://www.culturalcenter.gov.ph/res-bayanihan.htm.

among other performances that they shared as part of charity/fundraising events, sponsored functions by the Philippine Embassy, non-government agencies supported programs, closed-door showings for private companies, and events for the Filipino-American community. Bayanihan was also presented by the Ed Sullivan Show thrice; in 1958, 1964, and 1971.[42] Their first appearance on television happened when Ed Sullivan and his team presented a film of what they covered when they attended Expo '58 in Belgium to film highlights of the World's Fair. The international event showcased the era of cultural exchange (from 1938 to 1987) which evolved from the first era of the International Exposition known as the era of industrialization (1851-1937).[43]

Since their U.S. debut, Bayanihan had to contend with the politics of the spectacle and the racial primitive in terms of not only how they chose to theatricalize their staging of Philippine "folk" dances (including Indigenous dances) but also how their audience, as shaped by the media, reinforced the racialized, gendered, and colonial reading of the company's performances. In other words, ideas about the racial primitive were perpetuated both by Bayanihan's staging of Indigenous dances and the way their audiences and the media read their performances. Many of the articles I perused from the *New York Times* that covered Bayanihan's tour of the U.S. used different phrases to evoke the dance company's performances. The articles, mostly penned by full-time dance critic John Martin, referred to the group's performance as "completely different…makes

[42] David M. Inman, *Television Variety Shows: Histories and Episode Guides to 57 Programs,* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2005).
[43] Tjaco Walvis, "Three eras of World Expositions: 1851–present, "Cosmopolite: Stardust World Expo & National Branding Newsletter, (Amsterdam: Stardust New Ventures, April 2004), 5.

for an evening of enchantment,"[44] "an engrossing evening of theatrical act,"[45] "exquisite dresses…gorgeous."[46] He also meticulously followed the repertoire presented by Bayanihan that would commence with the 'Mountain suite' featuring dances from the mountain ranges of Luzon. He also cited how the said suite is followed by the Spanish suite citing the heavy influence of Spaniards in the Philippines. And finally, he also mentioned how the third segment would showcase a 'Mohammedan milieu' with the Muslim suite. After the intermission, Bayanihan would then present the Rural suite that showcases the regional variations of rural life. American playwright John Shanley used descriptions like "remarkable timing and rhythm,"[47] "moved gracefully and nimbly between swiftly crisscrossing bamboo poles,"[48] and "gifted Bayanihan"[49] while writer Gerd Wilcke would describe the Bayanihan dancers as "some of whom are playing hooky from school,"[50] their music as "ancient musical instruments,"[51] and costume as "cut according to ancient tradition."[52]

The majority of advertisements of the *New York Times* would position an ad for Bayanihan's show side by side with either a ballet performance or a sports competition.

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[44] John Martin, "Dance: Filipino Troupe: Bayanihan Company at Winter Garden," New York Times, October 14, 1959, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/114854138/50EE7FE803924BB2PQ/2?accountid=1452.
[45] John Martin, "Dance: Filipino Troupe: Bayanihan Company at Winter Garden," 1959.
[46] John Martin, "Dance: Filipino Troupe," 1959.
[47] John Shanley, "Bayanihan Troupe," New York Times, October 26, 1959, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/114873627/50EE7FE803924BB2PQ /3?accountid=14521.
[48] John Shanley, "Bayanihan Troupe," Accessed February 14, 2021, 1.
[49] John Shanley, "Bayanihan Troupe," 1.
[50] Gerd Wilcke, "Filipino Troupe Whirls Into City: Some of 35 Dancers Play Hooky From School to See the Sights in U. S.," New York Times, June 21, 1958, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/114563448/50EE7FE803924BB2PQ /4?accountid=14521.
[51] Gerd Wilcke, "Filipino Troupe," Accessed February 14, 2021, 1.
[52] Gerd Wilcke, "Filipino Troupe," 1.

This decision in advertising the works of Bayanihan may have come from the publishing company's view of Bayanihan's dances being positioned as a spectacle, a source of entertainment, and the stereotyping of non-Western performances. Photographs of Bayanihan would typically be done in the studio and all of it would feature the presence of a smiling Filipina. The captions would straightforwardly say what the dancers wore or what the dance was about. At times, the advertisements would have caricatures of "tribal" warriors from Luzon to represent Bayanihan's performances. Most of *Los Angeles Times'* articles that cite Bayanihan were written by music critic Albert Goldberg. He wrote things like "Bayanihan company created a sensation,"[53] "stylized performance,"[54] and "performed with uninhibited joyousness."[55] American composer Walter Arlen used descriptions like "tribal dances and rituals of a surprisingly primitive cast,"[56] "spectacular sword dance,"[57] and "choreography has a nice flow...tight enough to give the entire show a good tempo."[58] There were fewer advertisements in the archive of *Los Angeles Times* about Bayanihan and the ads mostly feature "native dancers"[59] doing dance poses in a studio, either wearing a Muslim or a rural folk dance costume.

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[53] Albert Goldberg, "Andrea Chenier is Well Done at Shrine," Los Angeles Times, November 2, 1959, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/167625793/A108669D17D04371PQ/2?accountid=14521.
[54] Albert Goldberg, "The Sounding Board, Filipino Dancers Proved Engaging," Los Angeles Times, October 2, 1961, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/167929470/A108669D17D04371PQ/5?accountid=14521.
[55] Albert Goldberg, "The Sounding Board," 1.
[56] Walter Arlen, "Philippine Dancers Give Most Pleasing Program," December 3, 1959, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/167633710/A108669D17D04371PQ/6?accountid=14521.
[57] Walter Arlen, "Philippine Dancers," 1.
[58] Walter Arlen, 1.
[59] Tom Henry, "Quiz 'Em: Questions and answers from the news," Los Angeles Times, October 25, 1959, Accessed February 14, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/167531565/A108669D17D04371PQ/1?accountid=14521.

Although not bluntly stated, the choice of words in the articles written about the performances of Bayanihan show the traces of an imperial legacy that were muted to make the write-ups more objective, descriptive, and intricate in terms of giving value to parts of the performance like the music, the choice of costume, and the elaboration of movements. Upon further reflection, I argue that how Bayanihan was read in their U.S. debut tour brought back images of the 1904 World's Fair held in St. Louis, Missouri, where a village was constructed for over a thousand Indigenous people from Northern Luzon, Philippines who were considered as merely human exhibits. Bayanihan's first few years of performing in the U.S. allowed them to present Philippine folk dances as both real and constructed practices that brought together their research of the past and what they wanted to project at that particular time. I suggest that the company may have been torn between what they found in their fieldwork in the Philippines and what the circulating dance literature authored by Francisca Reyes-Aquino was pushing them to do. These factors and the expectations of the international audience made them create performances that touched on what they would claim as authentic, but also not static, folk dances of the Filipinos.

Bayanihan's performances in the 1950s memorialized Philippine folk dance in such a way that every time the Filipino dancing body is challenged, threatened, or questioned, a replaceable imagination carved by Bayanihan in the past is up for grabs, for recollection, for reigniting one's sensibility, and for creating a space where history, memory, and nation come together. For Filipino Americans, Bayanihan's performances filled their longing for creating cultural connections with the homeland. Their fondness

transformed Bayanihan's performances into representations of the "national corpus" and in effect, Bayanihan also catered to the needs of their audiences in the U.S., offering performances that were perceived as national despite the regional roots of the folk dances they were performing onstage, which Castro refers to as "performance[s] of modernism… a nostalgia for a pre-U.S. colonial past and a cooptisation of cultural hybridity from throughout the nation."[60] In particular, Tinikling, a dance inspired by a bird jumping between bamboo poles, usually performed by Bayanihan, became the go-to "folk dance" representation of the whole Philippine archipelago for Filipinos in the diaspora.

When the former President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. declared Martial Law in 1972, all artistic pursuits, especially those that allude to or speak against the Marcos administration were stopped, banned, or simply eradicated. Ramon A. Obusan, who was then a member of Bayanihan, got out of the company and moved to his house in Pasay, which eventually became the Bahay ni Kuya, a house turned repository of archival materials that Obusan gathered from his research pursuits since the 1970s. ROFG, was founded on September 21, 1972, at the same time Martial Law was declared in the country. During the Martial Law period, Bayanihan became the most sought after dance company by Imelda Marcos, former Pres. Marcos Sr.'s wife. She preferred Bayanihan's stylized, spectacular, and entertaining ways of performing Philippine folk dance. In a way, Bayanihan became complicit with the government's project of using the culture and the arts for its nationalist agenda.

[60] Christi-Anne Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19.

Obusan "became one of the earliest critics of Bayanihan as Obusan witnessed his researched dances being made more elaborate and theatricalized."[61] Obusan admitted that it was a challenge for his company to continue advocating for what seemed to be a quest for the "authentic" and the "traditional" because the national government, through then First Lady Imelda Marcos' preference, opted for grandiose and spectacular performances (ably delivered by Bayanihan) in contrast to ROFG's approach to staging. In trying to present a performance true to Obusan's research, ROFG's dances tended to be on the simpler side, not aiming to show off, but rather portray as closely as possible the dances that Obusan saw during his fieldwork that are mostly for the local people, for the community, and not meant for stage purposes. While ROFG did not get as much support from the Marcos government as what Bayanihan was able to achieve during that time mired by violence, silencing of the media, culture, and the arts, and the shutting down of any entities, groups, and outlets that wouldn't submit to the Marcos regime, ROFG was eventually influenced by Imelda Marcos's theater productions, and from being an optional dance company for state-sponsored performances, ROFG, slowly became integrated, and arguably, a core part of the Marcos regime's cultural "arm" in reaching out to the Filipino people through dance, Indigenous expressive culture, and the arts. However, as Namiki pointed out, Obusan claimed that he took a neutral stance, tried as much as possible to keep a distance from state politics, and worked on how it would be able to connect to the Filipino people without the backing of a dictator. [62] Regardless, the

[61] Namiki, 72.
[62] Kanami Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino: A Study of Contrasting Representations of Philippine Culture" (master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2007), 54-58.

influence of politics, and Martial Law, in particular, on Philippine folk dance and Bayanihan and ROFG, specifically, cannot be denied.

Significant to the history of Philippine folk dance is the Marcos regime's use of Philippine folk dance as "a powerful and effective political tool to convey and promote state ideology. Regardless of whether it was good or bad, it was the first time that the state invested in culture and arts in visible ways and presented a clear vision of 'national' arts and culture."[63] From 1972-1986, Imelda Marcos, former President Ferdinand Marcos's wife, became a staunch advocate of Filipino culture and the arts as her expression of being rooted in one's Filipino identity. "Under the patronage of Imelda Marcos, conscious hybridization of western/high arts and Indigenous/folk arts were carried out in search for national identity of Filipinos, and Bayanihan became one of her favorite dance companies as she liked grandiose and spectacular performances with world-class artistry."[64] The way Imelda Marcos viewed Bayanihan paved the way for the dance company to secure its prominence in the field of Philippine folk dance which then, in turn, made Bayanihan a model dance company for other folk dances companies in the Philippines and the diaspora to follow.

When the Marcos regime was ousted by the People Power Revolution of 1986, and Cory Aquino was put in place, she pushed for a policy of Filipinization. Primarily, Filipinization is the Philippine government's take on developing new artistic expressions based on Indigenous influences and foreign offerings that may greatly shape the way

[63] Namiki, 83.
[64] Namiki, 71.

Filipino self-expression was molded during that period, spearheaded by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP). This policy encouraged Filipino artists to focus on the creation and development of new works and art forms rooted in Filipino Indigenous lifeways with a consideration of foreign influences (in dance, these "foreign influences" include the aesthetic of costuming, integration of Western musical genres/instruments and dance forms) while continuously embracing the idea of Filipino cultural diversity in the promotion of aesthetic pluralism. Imelda Marcos left what People's Magazine's Carlos Lopez called an "Imeldific"[65] influence--- a lasting and often unchallenged framework that suggested that one would be able to find, strengthen, and nurture their Filipino identity by going back to one's Indigenous roots through Philippine folk dance and developing it within the construct of Western art.

On the ground, the implementation of Filipinization received various responses of resistance and compromise. For example, Cirilo Bawer, one of Kalinga Apayao's[66] culture bearers (Kalinga-Apayao Indigenous community), remembered how their local culture's ritual dance was transformed into a choreographed performance devoid of its ritual meaning. The contemporary impact of Filipinization also becomes more evident when Indigenous dance became a platform for the creation of local dance festivals, just like in the case of Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival with the Panay Bukidnons. Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival started as Hirinugyaw Festival that only focused on

[65] Namiki, 71.

[66] Kalinga-Apayao was a province of the Philippines in the Cordillera Administrative Region in the island of Luzon. The Kalinga are an Indigenous people whose ancestral territories lie in the Cordillera Mountains of the northern Philippines.

the local community's Catholic celebration of honoring Señor Santo Niño. The inclusion of Suguidanonay, the epic chanting culture of the Panay Bukidnons, came in as the local government unit's response to the Philippine government's program of intensifying local tourism by integrating local Indigenous practices and traditions. For towns with Indigenous communities, the creation of a local festival has been complex— as in the case of Calinog, Iloilo. When Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay became a two-part dance festival in 2012, both the Panay Bukidnons and the local community of Calinog had to negotiate on various grounds what should be included in the festival, who gets to have the last word, and how the festival should be run. Most importantly, Filipinization also shifted the way Filipino folk dance companies approached learning dances from various Filipino Indigenous communities. After the 1920s' colonially exploitative approaches of "researching" Filipino Indigenous dances, Filipino folk dance companies beginning in the late 1980s started paying attention to their research process or the way they experience dárawatan from an Indigenous community in which the practice of giving back, consulting with the Indigenous community, and establishing long-term connections are prioritized.

The systematic and extensive "ethnicization"[67] of the Philippines peaked when the U.S. expanded its scope of economic, political, and cultural influence beyond the American border through the Pacific (and in the Philippines from 1898). Through ethnicization, ethnic identities and groupings are ascribed amongst Filipinos. The creation

[67] Ethnicization is a process developed by the Philippine government (that they learned from the Americans) to ascribe ethnic identities among Filipinos, to classify the existing communities in the Philippines, to encourage civic nationalism, and to eliminate ethnic power hierarchies within these communities.

of ethnic categories and constructs of race, gender, and sexuality were part of the state's political agenda to homogenize and normalize the resistant and disruptive (often revolutionary) Filipinos through the imposition of laws, language, and educational interventions (but also violence against the Filipino's defiance of the Empire).

U.S. imperial power triggered Filipino nationalism (patriotism and allegiance to the Philippines) and used the same allegiance and love for country against the Filipinos through the division of local and regional identities. The "regionalization" approach resulted to the "ethnicization" of the Filipino peasants and Indigenous groups — a classic 'divide and conquer' approach. With "ethnicization," largely populated ethnolinguistic groups were able to dominate the political, social, and economic situation of their localities. Instead of empowering Indigenous communities, "ethnicization" kept minority Indigenous communities disempowered and restricted their struggle for representation, legitimacy, and autonomy. Since Indigenous groups were considered minority in the bigger umbrella of ethnolinguistic groups, they then were not given priority in terms of government projects and their rights were also put to uncertainty.

A form of internal colonialism also developed where regions in the Philippines faced tensions within their communities. Through ethnic classification and categorization, the people of the Philippines (including peasants, commoners, and Indigenous peoples) were pigeonholed and became visible but also invisible in the eyes of the U.S. empire. One way that Filipinos became visible in the gaze of the U.S. empire was through the employment of the census, which as Benedict Anderson might argue, established the 'grammar' of nationalism and the scope that it brought forth to the

capitalist system— turning bodies into numbers, setting borders and limits, and atomizing heritage, cultures, and traditions.[68] On the other hand, the census made Filipinos invisible in the eyes of the U.S. empire as the numbers generalized the Filipino population and just placed them in what Anderson points to as arbitrary assignments (of color) and figures through the proliferation of hierarchical racial categories (ex. morenos [brown-skinned] and negros [dark-skinned]). Anderson stated that Filipinos were relegated to a "convention of namelessness" [69] that for the U.S. empire just became another set of people who have no trace of territorialism and have to be turned into docile subjects. Anderson suggests that U.S. imperialism of the Philippines through 'ethnicization' "created amnesias and estrangements" [70] from which emerged the narrative of the nation. Through the reemergence of the dynamics of "ethnicization" of the 1900s in the Philippine government's program of Filipinization in the 1980s, Filipino ethnolinguistic groups felt distant from each other as each community strived for the curation, establishment, and nurturance of their own "ethnic" identities. Specifically, Indigenous peoples have had to contend with local political violence, resist the "Indigenous" programs of the government, and strategically position their indigeneity for the benefit of their community.

In the Philippines, "Indigenous" is a contested term where colonial histories, power dynamics, and imperial impositions intersect. Who gets to be called, classified,

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[68] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), xiv.
[69] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 37.
[70] Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons,* 57.

and labeled as "Indigenous" depends on historically complex legal and social formations. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, the sixth constitution drafted and adopted since the Philippines' proclamation of independence on June 12, 1898, was the first of the various iterations of Philippine constitutions that utilized the term "Indigenous." Although the term "Indigenous" first emerged in 1646 when European colonizers differentiated the "proper natives of America"[71] from their enslaved Black peoples, the inclusion of the term "Indigenous" in the state policy of the 1987 Philippine Constitution began with the recognition and promotion of the Indigenous Filipinos' rights within the purview of the Philippine government.

How the word "Indigenous" ended up in the 1987 Philippine Constitution is not yet clear to me. What is clear though is that the supreme law of the Republic of the Philippines was ratified and approved after the fall of the Marcos regime. During his presidency from 1965-1986, more than three thousand members of two collective ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines were murdered, massacred, and suffered the terror and brutality of the Marcos martial rule.[72] Ten years later, Republic Act 8371, also known as the "Indigenous Peoples Rights Act" (IPRA) defined "Indigenous Peoples (IPs)" as a term interchangeably used with "Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC)."[73] Specifically, based on Chapter II, Section 3 of R.A. 8371, IPs or ICCs refer to Indigenous

[71] Kent Mathewson, "Drugs, Moral Geographies, and Indigenous Peoples: Some Initial Mappings and Central Issues." In *Dangerous Harvest: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes*, (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13.
[72] Rachel A.G. Reyes "3,257: Fact Checking the Marcos Killings, 1975-1985." The Manila Times. April 12, 2016. https://www.manilatimes.net/2016/04/12/opinion/columnists/3257-fact-checking-the-marcos-killings-1975-1985/255735/.
[73] Tenth Congress of the Philippines, Republic Act 8371.

groups who identify "by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as an organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, [and] traditions."[74] From this definition of Indigenous peoples, the term "Indigenous" serves as a qualifier that tries to empower and protect Indigenous Filipinos in theory but ironically and problematically relegates Filipino Indigenous communities to the past and reiterates the colonial imposition of its subjects. So even though IPRA was regarded as one of the first laws in Asia that recognized the Filipino Indigenous communities' rights, how such provisions were experienced by Filipinos Indigenous groups were far from the intentions of IPRA.

Colonialism is a social disease that has deeply affected Filipino Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities worldwide. Mignolo and Escobar (2013) refer to this social disease as the simultaneous disqualification and appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and genocide.[75] In 2019, forty-three Filipino Indigenous people were murdered in a single year, a record for the highest number of Indigenous activists in Asia who lost their lives asserting their right to self-determination and protecting their ancestral lands.[76]

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[74] Tenth Congress of the Philippines, 2.
[75] Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London, UK: Routledge, 2013), 303-388.
[76] Global Witness. "Defending Tomorrow." Accessed September 16, 2020. https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defending-tomorrow/.

Panay Bukidnons are not exempt. Reports made by the International Solidarity Mission (ISM)[77] cite how those who have resisted the building of the Philippine government financed Jalaur River Dam "were threatened and intimidated by state forces."[78] To this end, terms like Indigenous groups, tribal groups, native Filipinos, ethnic communities, and sometimes, ethnolinguistic groups, are questionably conflated to mean inhabitants, peoples of the uncolonized uplands, or most of the time, primitive. Local collective terms like Igorot[79] and Lumad[80] complicate "Indigenous" as an umbrella term. Thus, I posit that the term "Indigenous" when used in the Philippines is an inefficient, unsustainable, and problematic label rather than an empowering one. It is so contested; Indigenous communities are careful when such term is being used. Alternatively, and as what my interlocutors mentioned, Indigenous groups should be called by their names (ex. Panay Bukidnons, Maguindanaons). Where there is a need to specify my interlocutors, or when they requested it, I used the term Panay Bukidnons or Panay Bukidnon Indigenous Peoples throughout my dissertation. I also consulted my interlocutors and secured their permission as to the use of their Indigenous names in my writing.

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[77] The International Solidarity Mission (ISM) composed of researchers from Belgium, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and the Philippines, was put up by the Jalaur River for the People Movement. The team pointed out that the government's project of building the Jalaur River Dam will expectedly displace 17, 000 tumándok individuals and will submerge their (Panay Bukidnons') houses and agricultural lands.

[78] Karlo Mikhail Mongaya, "Jalaur Mega Dam in the Philippines Threatens to Displace Indigenous Peoples." *Intercontinental Cry* (blog), August 17, 2016. https://intercontinentalcry.org/jalaur-mega-dam-philippines-threatens-indigenous-peoples/.

[79] Igorot as a collective term, conflates the eight Indigenous groups living in the Cordilleras of Northern Philippines. It was also taken from the Spanish given name "Ygollotes" meaning "people of the mountains."

[80] Lumad as a collective term, conflates the 15-30 Indigenous groups living in Mindanao, Philippines. It is a term adopted by Indigenous groups like Subanen, B'laan, and Higaonon to distinguish themselves from other Mindanaons, Moro, or Christian. They were considered as "infielies" during the Spanish period (Ulindang 2015).

Dárawatan as a Two-Pronged Theoretical Intervention

Dárawatan (also holhogan) is an archaic Kinaray-a term meaning "to pass on, receive, share, or, accept." It is a term that two of my key informants shared with me when I asked them to name the process by which Panay Bukidnons share part of their expressive culture to others outside the community. Dawata, the verb form of daeawat, is an act that functions both ways, meaning to "pass on" and "accept" or "give" and "receive." Thus, dárawatan as a process not only metaphorically captures the complexity through which Indigenous expressive culture is learned, transformed, and staged for various purposes; in the context of the tumándoks, dárawatan is also an act of cultural sharing, partaking, and engaging with Indigenous expressive culture and a site for performing Filipinoness.

My theoretical intervention forwards dárawatan in two ways. First, I position dárawatan as a transpacific lens to examine how Filipino folk dance companies in the homeland and the diaspora contend with indigeneity in their role as culture bearer counterparts and performers of Indigenous expressive culture from the locality to the world stage to the digital space. Second, I forward dárawatan as a decolonial praxis of sighting, citing, and site-ing of and by the tumándok. In this way, I position dárawatan as a tool to rethink and resist cultural appropriation.

Dárawatan as a Transpacific Lens

The engagement of local and diasporic Filipino folk dancers to learning, staging, and presenting Indigenous expressive culture is also fleshed out in dárawatan which

reveals the multiple ways in which folk dance companies engage with tumándoks, including their expressive and material culture. As dárawatan was made manifest in the various spaces of this multisited study, I forward the balay/bahay/panimalay (home) as a tumándok framework that facilitates the transpacific flow of dárawatan, a choreographic circulation of placemaking from the locality to the world.

I draw on Anthony Shay's argument that the power of folk dances does not lie in their content but rather "in their potential capacity to represent, describe, and embody the essentialized identities of millions of inhabitants of a specific nation-state in the course of an evening performance."[81] He goes on to say that national and regional stereotypes are ingrained in the choreographies of folk dance performances, which may be deliberately or unintentionally designed to augment the idea of a positive, united, and strong national image. All the state folk dance companies that Shay includes in his work (ex. Moiseyev Dance Company [USSR], Ballet Folklorico [Mexico], Bayanihan [Philippines]), present their dominance in their stage performances while the Indigenous groups that they portray experience underrepresentation, stereotyping, and spectacularization.

For me, the case of Philippine folk dance companies turns complex when these groups try to capture or establish an identity for a multiethnic nation state that attempts to portray what Shay calls a "rainbow diversity"[82] within the country's specific political and social environments. Part of my research is to flesh out what it means for these Filipino folk dance companies to choreograph Indigenous dances for stage or tour purposes.

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[81] Anthony Shay, *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 228.
[82] Shay, *Choreographic Politics,* 228.

Shay's work offers conceptual lenses to understand what representation means for the different national folk dance companies he cited to develop a new work that signals the political, social, and economic changes that also transpire in each of their respective countries. Through my project, nuancing dárawatan from the lens of ROFG and Parangal may offer alternative ways of engaging with Filipino Indigenous communities and their expressive culture through choreography and performance.

Dárawatan as a Decolonial Praxis

The Panay Bukidnon's participation in the production of digital content for the celebration of Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival, both as performers, and I would argue, as "producers" of knowledge, centers the tumándok and their primacy as highly revered culture bearers of Panay Bukidnon suguidanon, binanog, panubok, and talda—making their presence in dárawatan absolutely vital. As such, it is important to flesh out the Indigenous-driven and decolonial ways that the Panay Bukidnons assert themselves through the process of dárawatan.

I draw on the work of various scholars of decoloniality and postcolonialism to forward a decolonial-postcolonial theoretical approach that responds to what Gurminder Bhambra points to as the scantness of research that brings the various trajectories of both postcolonialism and decoloniality together.[83] Bhambra focuses on the disciplinary, geographical, and analytic differences between decoloniality and postcolonialism. She

[83]Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues." *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 115–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2014.966414.

defines postcolonial "as a theoretical provocation [that] always consider[s] the colonial in our analyses of the present"[84] and the decolonial as the "ongoing work necessary for decolonization."[85] She also articulates the "radical potential [that lies] in unsettling and reconstituting standard processes of knowledge production"[86] through decoloniality and postcolonialism. This section explores the potential of combining postcolonial and decolonial scholarship to create a radical epistemology for the analysis of the Indigenous, national, and diasporic Filipino dancing bodies.

First, I engage with Brendan Hokowhitu's "Indigenous existentialism."[87] I reflect on Hokowhitu's work which focuses on the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples through an analysis of their genealogy and their immediacy.[88] Hokowhitu's approach places contemporary experiences of Indigenous communities at the forefront, including their current lifeways, and their processes of understanding the world. Hokowhitu's take on "Indigenous existentialism" as the theorization of the Indigenous body and the centering of the Indigenous contemporary condition releases Indigenous peoples from the colonial stereotypes attached to them and opens the possibility for Indigenous communities to be recognized in their 'presence'. [89] Hokowhitu also argues that by maintaining the specificity of an Indigenous culture to its local context, Indigenous peoples would be able to theorize their existence through an exchange of grounded/rooted

[84] Amrita Ghosh, "On Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies: An Interview with Gurminder K Bhambra" (Inverse Journal, March 22, 2020).
[85] Ghosh, "On Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies."
[86] Ghosh, "On Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies," 115.
[87] Brendan Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism and the Body," *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 101–18, https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2040.
[88] Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism," 101.
[89] Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism," 103.

knowledges among different Indigenous communities. As such, theorizing the Indigenous community's 'here and now'[90] activates the Indigenous community's materiality in resistance to Western-imposed binaries of the body. Through "Indigenous existentialism," my project forwards the contemporary experiences of Indigenous groups, such as the Panay Bukidnons, including their current lifeways, their processes of understanding the world, and their responses when various non-Indigenous groups tap them as sources of Indigenous culture or when their expressive cultures are documented. Because there is a danger that conjuring 'preservation' takes away the focus on the immediacy of the Indigenous body's experience, Hokowhitu suggests a process of decolonization that centers the will of Indigenous consciousness to resist the colonizer's projects and avoid the danger of romanticizing Indigenous peoples' experiences as coming from an 'authentic', precolonial period.[91]

Indigenous groups in the Philippines like the Panay Bukidnons are stuck in this narrative of always dwelling in the past, and that they have to be protected because they carry an "authentic Filipino culture" (especially in terms of dance). Because of this, the Panay Bukidnons' dance and cultural practices were colonially documented; this sealed their practices in a specific temporality and never allowed the Panay Bukidnons' perspectives to change, be in flux, or have the capacity to adapt. Johannes Fabian[92] challenged this "stalled" assumption, that the subject lived in the "there and then." As

[90] Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism," 101.
[91] Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism," 103-105.
[92] Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. Columbia University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.7312/fabi16926.

such, theorizing the Panay Bukidnons' "immediacy" centers their corporeality. Further, it empowers Panay Bukidnons as active entities who can take responsibility for their actions and experiences within and outside of the colonial order.

As I forward dárawatan as a decolonial praxis of sighting, citing, and site-ing of and by the tumándok, I think about the many ways dárawatan render itself as a flexible and adaptive process that may go beyond what transactional nature it is known for. By sighting, tumandoks assert that dárawatan may be made visible so that collaborations would be more meaningful and make what Muyco asserts as sibod, or the flow of things. By citing, Panay Bukidnons believe that upholding Indigenous peoples as authorities of their expressive culture, before, during and even after dárawatan, helps in maintaining power dynamics amongst groups that come together to learn Philippine Indigenous dance btu also that Indigenous knowledge systems and practices may be rendered with the legitimacy it deserves especially in the sharing of their intangible heritage. By site-ing, Indigenous peoples do not lose the agency that their expressive culture contains, that whenever it is shared, performed, or taught outside the community, the connection of the Indigenous people to their expressive culture, if possible, has to be sustained, not only to make it relevant but to support, respect and honor towards Indigenous peoples.

Methodological Approaches and Epistemological Limitations

In this project, I used an Indigenous-centered and decolonial dance ethnography through a combination of a contextually specific approach to participant observation; intimate conversations with the different members of the Panay Bukidnon community;

and an analysis of the spoken, written, visual, and performative archive that cover their dances (including their chants and music). I also immersed myself with ROFG and Parangal to understand their experiences, reflections, and thought processes on their relationship to indigeneity. By "immersion," I asked permission from the Panay Bukidnons, ROFG and Parangal to allow me to be with their community for a certain period of time (3 months for each group), explaining my purpose, intent, and plans regarding my dissertation. Specifically, I stayed with a Panay Bukidnon family which allowed me to witness and experience a part of the Panay Bukidnons' everyday life. I also became a part of ROFG and Parangal's community projects, looking at the ways that they maintained their connection with Ramon Obusan's Indigenous archive and Parangal's annual immersive research with various Indigenous groups in the Philippines to get a sense of these folk dance companies from the ground and to experience their daily practices as Filipino folk dance groups.

Knowledge production in Philippine folk dance that foregrounds the voices of Filipino Indigenous communities has been problematic and limited, if present at all. Through my project, I respond to the clear need for Philippine folk dance research that highlights Filipino Indigenous frameworks and Indigenous ways of thinking and 'doing'. My research contributes to Philippine folk dance research by emphasizing the value and agency of the way Filipino Indigenous communities, in general, and Panay Bukidnons, in particular, reflect on their experiences and understanding of the world through their own ontologies and epistemologies. The centering and integration of the Panay Bukidnons' critical perspectives on the discourse of race, indigeneity, and national/diasporic identity

offers a radical, alternative to Filipino research that challenges theoretical approaches and methodologies that privilege traditional Western research paradigms which in turn exploit, misappropriate, and invisibilize the shared knowledge, participation, and experience of Filipino Indigenous communities in the process. I strive for self-reflexive attention and action in the stages of my research theorization, fieldwork, and analysis that places the Panay Bukidnons' narratives at the heart of my research process. In other words, my project centers the experiences of Panay Bukidnons in their encounters with Parangal and ROFG by drawing attention to the Panay Bukidnons' knowledge, values, protocols, and methods as a Filipino Indigenous community. Furthermore, my project departs from Francisca Reyes-Aquino's research legacy that paved the way for the involvement of the Filipino Indigenous peoples who in good faith shared a part of their culture, only to be relegated as mere footnotes in the archive that emerged out of the state-supported research endeavor which Aquino led. Philippine folk dance was mobilized to construct a unified national Filipino identity in response to U.S. imperialism. The embodiment of national identity through folk dance used Indigenous peoples as sources of folk dance material but erased their bodies. Through my research, I strive to recenter Indigenous peoples in the Philippines by focusing on one particular group, the Panay Bukidnons, their rich culture and traditions, and their narratives as an Indigenous community.

This dissertation is also multi-sited and multi-lingual. By being multi-sited, I combined fieldwork in different sites with in-depth analysis to forward epistemologies that honor local Filipino contexts and cultural dynamics in various spaces. In contrast to a

single, site-specific research, my multi-sited fieldwork enables for the potential of a robust understanding of Filipino national, diasporic, and Indigenous identity as it circulates in the different places where Filipino dancing bodies move, interact, and share spaces through their dance collaborations. It is through this multi-sited approach that I hope to glean valuable insights in my intimate and close interactions with the Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal and to make sense of the larger discourses of race, national/diasporic identity, and indigeneity for Filipino dancing bodies.

My multi-sited project also offered an opportunity for a multi-lingual approach. I maximized my ability to articulate, speak, and see through five languages— English, Filipino, Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, and Akeanon (the last three being spoken as regional languages in Western Visayas, Philippines)— to establish an understanding of the spoken and subtle meanings that may arise in my conversations with Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal. With multi-lingual research, my dissertation accommodates the Panay Bukidnons', ROFG's, and Parangal's multi-lingual dance practices. More importantly, my multi-lingual approach revealed the importance of this project that values the transnational flow of Filipinos in the homeland and the diaspora and the expectant flow of their identities, languages, and viewpoints. This multi-lingual research practice held the space for the complex, personal, and culturally sensitive experiences of the Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal and its implications for my capacity to articulate, understand, and interpret my collaborators' experiences, views, opinions, and beliefs.

My prior experience with Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal served as my research entry points. I first met the Panay Bukidnon Indigenous community of Calinog,

Iloilo in 2012 when, as I mentioned earlier, I was invited to be one of the locality's judges for the annual Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay Festival. As part of my preparation to know more about the lives of Panay Bukidnons, I sharpened my awareness of the Panay Bukidnons' genealogy, their cultural practices, and their documented chants, songs, and dances. I engaged with the pioneering works of Felipe Landa Jocano (1968) and Alicia Magos (1996), the two most prominent Panay Bukidnon cultural anthropologists and recently, with Maria Christine Muyco's ethnomusicology-based work (2016). I have also learned from the artistic pursuits of ROFG through the books they published, their performances, and workshops where they served as performers or speakers. Meanwhile, I conducted an initial ethnographic work with Parangal in 2018 and have collaborated with the company's artistic director, Eric Solano, since 2017. Additionally, I have been in constant communication with Parangal through social media, emails and phone calls. Whenever possible, I attend Parangal's live and online workshops, which happened more often during the pandemic. It is in the virtual space where Parangal continues to share their research on Philippine folk dances and continuously engage with their audience from all over the world.

My fieldwork is shaped by a combination of ethical values, standards, and principles developed from Dwight Conquergood's "dialogical performance,"[93] Margaret Kovach's miyo ethic (giving back, collective responsibility, relevancy)[94] and the Panay

[93] Dwight Conquergood, "Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance." *Literature in Performance* 5, no. 2 (1985): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/10462938509391578.
[94] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2009), 149.

Bukidnon Indigenous peoples' concept of sibod (the process of syncing the self with the community).[95] For Conquergood, "dialogical performance" is the facilitation of an open and ongoing dialogue between the ethnographer (myself) and the collaborators (Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal). It "struggles to bring together different voices, worldviews, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another."[96] In my ethnographic project, I facilitated a "dialogical performance" through my process of visitation, intimate conversations, and "immersion" (staying with) 'with' Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal. I strive for an ethnographic fieldwork that nurtures a space for intercultural understanding, respect for differences, and the valuing of the Filipinos' multivocal experiences.

Through Kovach's miyo ethic, which she stressed as "a relational research approach [that] is built upon the collective value of giving back to the community"[97] my dissertation centered the shared stories of the Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal. Miyo ethic also helped me think about my process of community feedbacking (the process of sharing with my communities the final draft of the dissertation) where I ensured that it is accessible, useful, and primarily grounded in the needs of the community. Kovach also pointed out that giving back means "creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research"[98] which, for me, already began the moment I was

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[95]Maria Christine Muyco, *Sibod: Ideology and Expressivity in Binanog dance, music, and folkways of the Panay Bukidnon* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2016), 33.
[96] Conquergood, "Performing as a Moral Act," 9.
[97] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2009), 149.

[98] Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies,* 149.

able to establish contact with a culture bearer from the Panay Bukidnons. I have also come to believe (having been raised in a Filipino household) that giving back means being aware of every word (promise) that I share with the community, being sensitive about the dynamics of the conversation (including the subtle meanings, the gestured thoughts, and the silences), and making sure that my dissertation is a community-engaged project, one that is clearly a collaborative pursuit between me and my collaborators.

Finally, the Panay Bukidnons' sibod which pertains to the Indigenous community's communal belief "of achieving an ultimate state of workability by involving the self and the community,"[99] is how I tried to contextualize and think through every step of my fieldwork with Panay Bukidnons in mind. Sibod for them (the Panay Bukidnons) constitutes the importance of both the "process and destination."[100] Sibod, in Akeanon, Hiligaynon, and Kinaray-a means "sync." In the context of the Panay Bukidnons, sibod should always be employed in the mind, the body and to their Kalibutan (world).[101] Thus, sibod should always be a part of my internationalization as a non-Indigenous dance scholar who strives to collaborate with the Panay Bukidnons so that I may be able to respond accordingly to the externalizations (gestures, movement, stories) that the Panay Bukidnons may share with me in my fieldwork.

At the nexus of my dissertation were three decolonizing methodologies that I engaged with to conduct an ethical and grounded research with the Panay Bukidnons,

[99] Muyco, *Sibod,* 16.
[100] Muyco, *Sibod,* 36.
[101] Muyco, *Sibod,* 38.

ROFG, and Parangal. First, "Indigenous storywork"[102] forwards Indigenous oral narratives as a vital source of Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems and practices. Using Archibald's frame of how stories are utilized for holistic meaning-making, I forwarded a platform for the Panay Bukidnons to voice themselves, be listened to, and be understood from their ontologies and epistemologies. More importantly, Indigenous storywork as a methodology creates a space for contesting and challenging colonial research conventions.[103] This methodology aligned with my intent to disrupt Eurocentric approaches in qualitative, ethnographic research processes. Within the First Nations context, Jo-ann Archibald shaped "storywork" through the principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy that forms the theoretical framework of meaning-making based on Indigenous voices.[104] In the same fashion, I strived to understand the process of storytelling from the perspectives of Panay Bukidnons. As pointed out by Maria Christine Muyco, Panay Bukidnons have an oral tradition called sug[u]id, which literally means "to tell."[105] Extending how Muyco views sug[u]id "as a practical device in knowledge transmission," [106] I engage with the role of sug[u]id in terms of how Panay Bukidnons draw from their experiences, worldviews, and lifeways to develop modes of Indigenous resistance, resiliency, and survival. By understanding the storytelling process of Panay Bukidnons, I enrich how Archibald views

[102] Xieem Archibald Q'um Q'um, Jo-ann, Lee-Morgan, J. B. J., and De Santolo, J., eds., "Introduction" in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd., 2019.
[103] Xieem Archibald Q'um Q'um, Jo-ann, Lee-Morgan, J. B. J., and De Santolo, J., eds., "Introduction," 8.
[104] Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2008), ix.
[105] Muyco, *Sibod,* 1.
[106] Muyco, 1.

"storywork" as a decolonial research methodology. For Archibald, "Indigenous storywork seeks to rectify the damage and reclaim our ability to story-talk, story-listen, story-learn, and story-teach."[107] I assert that the Panay Bukidnons' suguidanon is an example of the Indigenous community's agency that allows them to thrive despite the colonial and imperial contentions that they have to deal with inside and outside their community. Thus, by analyzing the Panay Bukidnons' suguidanon, I center Indigenous voices, experiences, and epistemologies as a decolonial pathway for understanding and engaging with Filipino Indigenous communities.

Second, I continuously wrestled with the critique of the mainstream 'ethnographic process' rooted in "colonial anthropology"[108] by forwarding an Indigenous-centered and decolonial dance ethnography in my research. An ethnographic approach that disregards its colonial foundations is problematic as it conjures a space for the reiteration of the normalization of the violence, oppression, and inequality suffered by Filipino Indigenous peoples. I avoid the harm that a scholarly work can bring to the lives of Indigenous peoples, and any "othered" collaborators for that matter, as a product of ethnographic work, by constantly and critically engaging with the process of fieldwork. I relentlessly center an Indigenous and decolonial research process that is multi-sited, multi-lingual, and grounded in the body. By having a multi-sited focused ethnography, I strive for a nuanced understanding of how dárawatan impacts Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and

[107] Xieem Archibald Q'um Q'um, Jo-ann, Lee-Morgan, J. B. J., and De Santolo, J., eds., "Introduction," 7.
[108] Carolina Alonso, Bejarano, Mirian A. Mijangos Garcia, Lucia Lopez Juarez, and Daniel M. Goldstein. *Decolonizing Ethnography: Undocumented Immigrants and New Directions in Social Science*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 1-16.

Parangal and, in turn, sheds light on the questions of race, national/diasporic identity, and indigeneity. By giving importance to my multi-sited approach, I also explore the flow of Filipinoness among Indigenous, national, and diasporic Filipino dancing bodies in its different spatiotemporal formations.

My multi-sited approach is inspired by J. Lorenzo Perillo's multi-sited work with Hip-hop dance communities in the Philippines and the diaspora where he "highlighted the deep roots of performative euphemism to see anew the complicated and vexed cultural relations"[109] between Filipinos in the homeland and the diaspora. I extend Perillo's bilingual approach by going multi-lingual where I take with me the languages that I am fluent at (English, Filipino, Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, and Akeanon) in relation to my collaborators to enrich my conversations and experiences with Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal. I also engage in the foundational contributions of Deidre Sklar's dance ethnography.[110] Sklar's dance-centered ethnographic approach blends "the felt dimensions of movement experience through the researcher's own body and bodily memory."[111]

My dance-centered ethnographic approach extends Sklar's work by first grounding myself in the ontologies and epistemologies of my primary collaborator, the Panay Bukidnons. As a non-Indigenous researcher, a critical aspect of my work begins with an acknowledgment that I will never be able to speak for the 'lived experiences' of

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[109] J. Lorenzo Perillo. *Choreographing in Color: Filipinos, Hip-Hop, and the Cultural Politics of Euphemism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 23.

[110] Deidre Sklar, "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography: Dance Research Journal" (Cambridge Core: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 75.

[111] Sklar, "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography," 75.

the Panay Bukidnons as I have not 'lived' them. But my vision is to be able to be guided by Indigenous understandings of Panay Bukidnons in relation to the voices of ROFG and Parangal to produce a dance ethnography that critiques the academic placement of Eurocentric-influenced research, aligns with the diverse struggles of Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal, forwards reflexivity as a critical component in my research process, and makes power and voice visible for the Indigenous, national, and diasporic Filipinos.

Finally, my archival research process is inspired by the meticulous examination of the visual, textual, and performative archive by Filipino American scholars such as Sarita See (2009) and Nerissa Balce (2016). Borrowing from See, I delve into the Paley Center for Media (Beverly Hills, CA), the home base of Parangal in San Francisco, CA, the Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA) in Washington, DC, the Cultural Center of the Philippines (Manila, PHL), the Bahay ni Kuya (ROFG archive in Manila, PHL), and the University of the Philippines Visayas Center for Western Visayan Studies (Iloilo, PHL) that contains the photographs, articles, books, news clips, and recorded dance/music performances of Panay Bukidnons, ROFG, and Parangal. Using See's approach, I look for the "kinetic, embodied, and theatrical"[112] memories embedded in the process of capturing the ephemeral Filipino 'performing' body. I also draw on Balce who uses every narrative, image, photograph, and written article published relevant to U.S. expansion in the Pacific to examine how the U.S. empire reduced the Filipino people to being docile

[112] Sarita Echavez See, *The Decolonized Eye: Filipino American Art and Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), xxvii.

bodies through a choreography of false altruism and 'heroic' narratives of irrefutable atrocities.[113]

Precarity and Protocol: Doing Research During the Pandemic

The precarity of the situation for my trip to Mindanao was made more apparent when my flight was cancelled, rebooked, rescheduled by the airline, moved to a different time, and eventually transferred to a different airport destination, as Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) cancelled hundreds of its flights nationwide because of manpower shortage during the second week of January, with reports of the Omicron virus looming over the main airport terminals in Manila. Despite the mishaps, I was able to land at the General Santos International Airport through the help of Makasi and Fai. After a four-hour van trip, I was able to reach North Cotabato, and met with Makasi and a few members of the Maguindanaon indigenous group. By then, I knew that he already worked with the people I just met for the first time on a prior community immersion trip with Parangal Dance Company. After being with Maguindanaons for a week and a trip back to Davao City for the next leg of the trip, I took a routine COVID-19 test. My result came back through email with a heavy red text written on it which said "SARS-COV-2 VIRAL RNA – DETECTED." My world turned upside down as I did not expect to have the COVID-19 virus; primarily because I just had my third dose almost a week prior to my flight to Mindanao and I was not exhibiting any symptoms at all

[113] Nerissa Balce, *Body Parts of Empire: Visual Abjection, Filipino Images, and the American Archive* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

towards the end of the community immersion. After a few phone calls with the Bureau of Quarantine in Davao City, and in coordination with the hotel staff, I was picked up by three health workers in full white COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) to an ambulance positioned at the back side of the hotel where I was staying. I felt the rush of emotions and I cannot believe what was happening to me was possible. I felt like I was in the middle of a movie, and I can't help but fear for my life. I shed a tear on the uncertainty of what will happen to me in a place where I just came to be in for the first time, let alone be identified as positive for the COVID-19 virus. I was brought to Davao City's COVID-19 facility near the airport which required me to quarantine in isolation for nine days as supervised by the Department of Health's Bureau of Quarantine personnel. Since I do not know anyone in the area, I was in constant communication with Makasi who did not have COVID-19 that time and did not hesitate to be fully hands-on in helping me with my needs as I was caught unprepared for my quarantine. He also decided to cancel his other scheduled immersion trips because of the tightened protocols as the number of COVID-19 cases soared in the area. As I was lying down on the bunker bed and staring at the low ceiling, listening to footsteps outside my room and the occasional arrival and departure of motorcycles outside the facility, I thought I could do some more journaling with the experiences I had with Makasi and the Maguindanaons despite of my runny nose. But the next few days kept me wondering and anxious of what will happen to me. Looking back, I can't help but be amused that while I was thinking about my research, I was also thinking about my life.

Positionality Recalled: As a folk dancer, non-Panay Bukidnon, academic researcher

My vision of a dance studies dissertation that is Indigenous-centered, transpacific, and decolonial will not materialize if I do not examine how I am implicated in this research process and how I am circulating within the immersive experience of fieldwork. My experience as a folk dancer, trainer, researcher, and a nationally accredited Level B folk dance teacher in the Philippines has in part influenced my ethnographic process. My training in and understanding of Philippine folk dance are influenced by the legacy of Francisca Reyes-Aquino. My knowledge on folk dance has been challenged, modified, and overhauled by my academic training in the field of Critical Dance Studies, with a designated emphasis on Southeast Asian studies. While I am an Akeanon— a native of Aklan province, the Philippines— by ethnicity, I am not classified as Indigenous in the context of how Indigenous communities are positioned in the Philippines. Furthermore, I am privileged to be regarded as a researcher, judge, consultant, and community-project lead from a recognized state university in Western Visayas, Philippines. Finally, I am a scholar of the U.S. Department of State and the Philippine American Educational Foundation. My multiple and intersecting identities shape my positionality as someone who continuously contends with the privileges, limits, and challenges that come with being an insider-outsider dance researcher. Reflecting on my positionality, I dedicate my work as a non-Indigenous dance scholar to becoming an ally to the Panay Bukidnons by foregrounding a fieldwork approach that respects Indigenous communities, treats Indigenous spaces and voices with reverence, ensures greater reciprocity towards Indigenous communities, and upholds the responsibility for Indigenous relationality and

community engagement. The clarity that I seek in the interrogation of these ambivalences in my positionality is inspired by how Kamala Visweswaran (1994) forwarded the importance of positioning oneself. Visweswaran emphasized that a continuous conversation with one's positionality is key to her understanding of how feminist ethnographers theorize and take on a discourse of identity politics, the intersectionality of race, and the relationships of power between cultures. By being attentive to these ambivalences, I strive for a dissertation that safeguards and centers the Panay Bukidnons.

Chapter Overview

Throughout the three main chapters of this dissertation, I forward an Indigenous-centered and decolonial dance ethnography that includes interview responses from my interlocutors, field notes, archival data, participant-observation, and performance analysis to expound on the circulation of dárawatan amongst my interlocutors.

In Chapter 1, I briefly reintroduce the Panay Bukidnons of Calinog, Iloilo through a historical tracing of the community's name and their relationship to the word "Indigenous." I explore what takes place in the Panay Bukidnon's invocation of a flexible stance in dealing with non-Indigenous others who want to collaborate with them to learn the Panay Bukidnon's expressive culture. I examine the circulation of the Panay Bukidnon's corporeal improvisation in relation to their flow within and around the balay. I elucidate how Panay Bukidnons purposefully navigate their longstanding embodied responses to the legacies of colonialism and extractive capitalistic processes as they partake in the dárawat. I further argue that Panay Bukidnons engage in humor,

performance and hinun-anon to enrich their dárawatan experience. To elucidate this point, I forward the ways that Panay Bukidnon Indigenous Peoples lead and take part in the dárawatan. The constant motion to be visible in the expression of their songs, chants, music, and the invisibility that it ironically brings once these tumándok expressive cultures become normalized, is what confronts Panay Bukidnons on a daily basis. Through their performance in and out of the balay, the Panay Bukidnons sustain themselves despite the precarity of the beaurucratic processes that govern them.

Chapter 2 critically examines "authenticity" for the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, one of the two national dance companies of the Philippines known for their "close to original" approach in staging and performing Philippine IOndigenous dance. In this chapter, I argue that the contemporaneity of the dance company's performance through their signature approach of being 'close to the original' in dance production maintains and sustains what people view as the living testament of Obusan's legacy through ROFG. The dance company's continuous engagement with Indigenous archive through their performances during the pandemic may be read as their way of keeping dárawatan alive. While it was challenging for ROFG to keep their part of the dárawatan going in terms of connecting with their Indigenous collaborators during the onslaught of COVID-19, the dance company made sure to seriously delve through the unique and diverse qualities of the communities they work with by engaging with Obusan's archive and consider the Indigenous groups that Obusan met, together with their expressive and material culture, as part of a distinct but intimately connected circles.

In Chapter 3, I examine the San Francisco Bay Area-based Parangal Dance Company and their immersive experience working with the Maguindanaons of Northern Cotabato in Mindanao, Philippines. Through Parangal's initiative, Filipinos and Filipino Americans in the diaspora get to center the world views, lifeways, and expressive culture of Indigenous Filipinos. While the kind of relationality Parangal establishes and maintains with various Indigenous groups in the Philippines may be seen as an effort on their end to break the privilege of their positionality as Filipino-Americans, it is also perceived as the nurturing of genuine and sustainable relationships with different Filipino Indigenous groups that go beyond just knowing them and learning their expressive culture. As Parangal continue to find and develop ways to mold reciprocal practices towards Filipino Indigenous cultural groups, with an emphasis on working with the latter's culture bearers, Parangal approaches the restaging and choreography of Philippine Indigenous dances with groundedness and confidence knowing they have the guidance, blessing, and support of the main creators and practitioners of Indigenous expressive culture themselves, the Indigenous peoples, as represented by their elders or culture bearers.

Chapter 1

Padag-padag (Stomping) with the Panay Bukidnons

Pangulohan (Introduction)

> Nagragumo ang salog sa padag-padag ka tiil kang manugsaut. Gamit ang patik nga may puti nag tela sa punta, dayon nga ginpatukar sang mga magurang ang tambol kag agong. Sa pagtunog kang lanton, ang isa nag-intra kag ginbayaw ang iya mga kamot nga daw nagalupad.. Ang mga manugtukar nagatulok sa ila samtang sila naglagsanay nga nag-irik-ikanay. Sa una ko nga adlaw, binanog[114] kang mga Panay Bukidnon[115] ang nag-abiabi kanakun. Ari na man guid ako ah.
>
> The bamboo floor crackled as she stomped her feet, dancing her way in. Two elders played the támbol (drum made from deer skin) and ágong (wide-rimmed gong) using a patík (stick) with a piece of cloth tied around one end. A young boy joined in and raised his arms like a bird, flying, and in time with the resounding instruments played a bit louder and faster. They both intensely looked at the musicians while the musicians watched them dance. They glided around each other as they tried to follow each other's footsteps, smiling, almost laughing. On my first day with the Panay Bukidnons, I was welcomed with a binanog dance. I am home.[116]

I still feel ecstatic whenever I think about the binanog (eagle) dance I experienced during my visit with the Panay Bukidnons (also Sulodnon), in Brgy. Garangan, Calinog, Iloilo in December 2021. I was talking about my research with some of my interlocutors in the balay (home) of one of my main interlocutors when she asked one young girl to join the young boy already dancing. I already had a hint that it was the hawk/eagle dance

[114] Binanog, the Panay Bukidnon's gendered dance, is inspired by the movements of the eagle/hawk called banog, usually accompanied by bamboo, gong, and drum musical instruments.
[115] The Panay Bukidnon, Suludnon, or Panayanon Sulod are known to be the tumándok or "native" inhabitants of the interior portions of Central Panay. Panay Bukidnons practice a variety of traditions, including babaylan (shaman) led rituals, dance such as the binanog (hawk or eagle dance), and the chanting of their epics.
[116] Field notes of the author, written in Kinaray-a and personally translated in English, December 2021.

they were performing but I tried to keep my cool as it was my first time to experience binanog dance up close.

I got to see binanog dance, albeit from afar, for the first time when I was invited to judge the 2012 Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival,[117] where I was seated on a stage. In the five years that I judged the festival (2012-2017), the organizing team from the local government unit (LGU) of Calinog would always discuss with the judges what we think about the integration of the Panay Bukidnons in the competition while maintaining a Catholic-oriented dance festival. "So, Sirs and Ma'ams, paano ayhan namon makay-o ining festival nga ma-integrate namun maayo ang amun IPs kag ang ila nga mga cultural practices?" ("So, Sirs and Ma'ams, how do we enhance our festival and still respectfully integrate the Panay Bukidnons and their cultural practices?") would usually be a question thrown in the air. Since I have been invited annually, I have been able to see how the Panay Bukidnons' role in the festival has expanded over time. Initially just sources of the Panay Bukidnons' binanog[118] dance or co-creators of the music used in the festivity, the Panay Bukidnons, albeit only a selected few, later became part of the performances, usually assigned the role of doing the opening ritual and being part of the music team or as one of the cast with distinct roles as Panay Bukidnons doing the chanting, the storyline, or one of the major characters in the legend they are presenting during the competition.

[117] Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival is an annual celebration that highlights the people's devotion to the Child Jesus. The fiesta includes a food fest, a beauty pageant, and the street dance and "tribes" competition.

[118] Binanog, the Panay Bukidnon's gendered dance, is inspired by the movements of the eagle/hawk called banog, usually accompanied by bamboo, gong, and drum musical instruments.

What did it signify for them to participate? How did Panay Bukidnons handle the power relations amongst 'collaborating' Calinognons?[119] How did Panay Bukidnons decide what to share on and off stage? What were the stakes when Indigenous Peoples shared their expressive culture? What was the role of indigeneity in the construction of Panay Bukidnon's Filipinoness? These questions lingered in me not knowing that, ten years later, I would be asking myself the same questions in my dissertation.

In this chapter, I critically examine how the Panay Bukidnons engage in the process of dárawatan (archaic Ligbok[120] word, meaning "to give, pass on") or the sharing of their expressive culture, including suguidanon (chanting), binanog, and panubok (traditional embroidery) with the local government unit of Calinog, Iloilo (LGU-Calinog). I examine the ways in which Panay Bukidnons share their attire, songs, dances, and stories with LGU-Calinog for the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival to gain a deeper understanding of their ways of doing and being in the world.

Though one can count on two hands how many Panay Bukidnons participate in the festival, I argue that the Panay Bukidnons' participation counts, that their involvement matters. Specifically, I contend that by putting strategies in place in terms of how they participate in the mounting of the festival, the Panay Bukidnons are able to

[119] Calinognons, refer to the people of Calinog, either local or a tourist, whose roots come from the locality. It may also be a microversion of Filipinoness; of what it means for the Panay Bukidnons to be Calinognons.

[120] Lord Jane Caballero-Dordas, "Hinun-Anon: Panay Bukidnon Traditional Stories for the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Curriculum," Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 22, no. 1 and 2, (2017): 19-28, https://pjssh.upv.edu.ph/vol-22-no-1-2-2017/. Ligbok, also sometimes called Binukidnon, is considered as the literary language present in the Panay Bukidnon's suguidanon. While suguidanon is popular, the Panay Bukidnons also use Ligbok in their hinun-anon, which are traditional bedtime stories amongst the Panay Bukidnon community.

assert their visibility, but this also makes them complicit by risking being invisibilized in the process. The paradox of visibility and invisibility in the Panay Bukidnon's performance during the locality's annual festival then becomes an important phenomenon that the Panay Bukidnons themselves always have to contend to in the sharing of their expressive culture as they think about which side to pull and push in the possibilities and risks that holds both ends of their indigeneity, their being Panay Bukidnons.

Finally, I invite a re-thinking of the Panay Bukidnon's dárawatan (culture sharing) experience in the balay, simultaneously a balay-baratunan (receiving space) and balay turun-an (learning space), as a metamorphic space that underpins how the Panay Bukidnons' involvement in the dárawatan corporealizes both a tactical and strategic indigeneity that ensures their survival while continuing a flexible approach, depending on the people they collaborate with, the stakes of the collaboration, and the eventual impact on them as a community.

Throughout this chapter, I channel the constant physical, spiritual, and performative lifeways of suguidanon, binanog, and panubok in the formation of Panay Bukidnon aesthetics. I argue that Panay Bukidnons reclaim their visibility despite the risk of rendering themselves invisible in the process. Panay Bukidnons deploy tactical (short term) and strategic (long term) maneuvers when asked to share their expressive culture, which may happen separately, but most of the time materializes simultaneously. Consequently, it renders their indigeneity visible, invisible, and sometimes both visible and invisible at the same time. Finally, I position how the dárawat is constantly reframed in and through the balay, not just as an act of sharing involving dancing bodies but also as

an alternative site where Panay Bukidnons sustain themselves and their expressive culture both in the short and long term. Throughout the chapter, I trace the different articulations of their indigeneity in the ever-shifting power relations, normative ideologies, and, risks imposed by cultural hegemony, capitalism, and the legacies of coloniality.

Ang Tumándok: The Panay Bukidnon Indigenous Peoples

The National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the Philippine government's arm responsible for protecting the rights of state recognized Indigenous peoples, acknowledges the name "Panay Bukidnon." But this wasn't always the case. While generally regarded by lowland Christians as Bukidnon (meaning "mountain dwellers"),[121] in 1955 Dr. F. Landa Jocano, an eminent anthropologist, tentatively chose "Sulod" (also Sulodnon, meaning "inside, or the interior") to denote where they come from. However, sociocultural anthropologist Dr. Alicia Magos, who had done decades of research with Panay Bukidnons since 1993, stressed that the Bukidnons of central Panay, do not think of themselves as Sulodnons. Dr. Magos, after clarifying that Bukidnons also call themselves tumándok (native), taga-Pan-ay (from Pan-ay; also Pan-ayanon), suggests using the generic term Panay Bukidnon "to refer to the upland dwellers of Central Panay."[122] She also noted that as the nomenclature "Sulodnon" continues, this does not

[121] Felipe Landa Jocano, "The Sulod: A Mountain People In Central Panay, Philippines," Philippine Studies 6, no. 4 (1958): 401–36.
[122] Alicia Magos, "Notes on the Sugidanon Among the Bukidnons of Central Panay, Philippines," Facebook (uploaded by Fuji Teodosio), April 26, 2012, https://www.facebook.com/legacy/notes/294613990619845/.

bother the Bukidnons for they know who they are as a people.[123] Ethnomusicologist and Philippine studies scholar Dr. Christine Muyco agrees with Jocano, observing that "people are used to living in areas where the sources of food are available and plentiful."[124] When she had a conversation with Jocano, he said that the use of "Sulod" is a general term and he only borrowed it from the people living adjacent to the Tumándoks of Calinog, Iloilo.

Acknowledging an Indigenous group through their name communicates who they are as a people, where they come from, and its significance to the lifeways of a particular community. Moreover, it serves as an act of establishing connections through the group's culture and traditions handed down from one generation to another. On the side of the government, identifying an Indigenous group by its claimed name makes them subject to the laws of the land, including the rights and privileges bestowed upon them as Indigenous communities. Ironically, the paradox of naming puts the Indigenous group in a position of power to claim certain rights and privileges but also makes them vulnerable as the state gets to monitor their presence as they avail of what the state has to offer them. Such has been the case for Panay Bukidnons of Calinog, Iloilo, who gets to be in a state of precarity in their participation to the annual festivity.

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[123] Other nomenclatures were also suggested by Dr. Magos like "Iraynon" (also, "Irahaynon," meaning "interior or away from the sea,"Kinaray-a Bukidnon" (with Kinaray-a, the language that Bukidnons speak), and "Ligbok-Bukidnon" (believed to be the former unifying language of central Panay People).

[124] Maria Christine Muyco, "Binukot at Nabukot: From Myth to Practice," Humanities Diliman: A Philippine Journal of Humanities 13, no. 2 (June 14, 2016), https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/humanitiesdiliman/article/view/5161.

Hala Bira!: Into the Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay Festival

In Calinog, Iloilo, the Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay festival started in 1988. In the 1970s, former President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. pushed the country's promotion efforts to take advantage of Expo '70 which was held in Osaka, Japan.[125] He revamped the 1950 low-impact Philippine tourism program to a massive initiative "[where] the local celebration was transformed from a small-town fiesta into a much-publicized [festival] in the country's tourism calendar"[126] that encouraged all municipalities to create their own local festivity.

Calinog, Iloilo celebrates the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival annually during the last week of January. The LGU selects Panay Bukidnons to join the various competing groups mostly represented by non-Panay Bukidnon elementary and secondary school students in the locality for the dance competition. The competition features street dancing in between the judging areas and the main arena "tribes" [127] competition set in front of each judging area strategically located around the town plaza. In the "tribes" competition, the tribu (a term for "group") performs a two-part performance which opens with the Suguidanon(ay) (literally, chanting), through an interpretation of a chapter from the 8,340-verse and 12 volume-epic Hinilawod.[128] The second half of the competition

[125] Oscar S. Villadolid, "The Philippines Maps Plans To Boost Tourism," The New York Times, April 19,1970, https://www.nytimes.com/1970/04/19/archives/the-philippines-maps-plans-to-boost-tourism.html.
[126] Lou Antolihao, "From Fiesta to Festival: Tourism and Cultural Politics in the Philippines," Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia, March 25, 2014, https://kyotoreview.org/yav/from-fiesta-to-festival-tourism-and-cultural-politics-in-the-philippines/.
[127] The term "tribes", or tribu (local term), pertains to the "group" participating in the festivity and usually comes before the name of a specific group. One tribe that made a name in the festivity is Tribu Burulakaw (meaning, the "Comet Tribe"). The use of tribu is very common in most cultural dance festivals in the Philippines.
[128] Hinilawod is a literary masterpiece written by the early inhabitants of the Panay Bukidnons.

showcase features Hirinugyaw (meaning merry-making, jubilation, or revelry), a Catholic celebration in honor of Señor Santo Niño, hence the name Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay for the festivity.

However, for the first decades of the festival, the Panay Bukidnons as a people never really figured in the festivity. Father Tomas Delicana, the parish priest of the Immaculate Concepcion Parish in Calinog, Iloilo established Hirinugyaw Festival in 1988.[129] The incorporation of Panay Bukidnon's culture and tradition only started after Federico "Tuohan" Caballero received the Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan (GAMABA) or the National Living Treasure award in the year 2000 for being a master epic chanter and pioneer advocate of the first School of Living Tradition (SLT)[130] in the Visayas. In 2005, vice mayor Dr. Rene Hurtada decided to incorporate the Panay Bukidnon's oral tradition, suguidanonay, into the festivity. In 2006, the Bukidnon's binanog [tiglalaki] steps were added to the festivity. In 2008, suguidanonay became part of the criteria, and the hiring of Panay Bukidnon chanters was allowed "because of the complexity of wording and tone."[131] In 2011, the integration of a two-part choreography in the "tribes" competition commenced, with the first part as suguidanonay and the second, hirinugyaw.

[129] Municipality of Calinog Tourism Site, "Hinugyaw-Suguidanonay Virtual 2022," Facebook, January 29, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/100064001736704/videos/463264111969407. Before Hirinugyaw Festival, it is called as Sirinayaw (to dance).

[130] Elsie Caballero-Padernal, "The Panay Bukidnon Sugidanon (Epic) and Prototype Glossaries for Epic Excerpts," Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 22, no. 1 and 2, (2017): 29-38, https://pjssh.upv.edu.ph/vol-22-no-1-2-2017/. The School for Living Tradition (SLT) or Balay Turun-an is where the Panay Bukidnon culture bearers and elders teach the community's young people and children to learn about the Indigenous group's songs, chants, dances, epics, embroidery, and musical instrument making and playing. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) used to give funding for culture-related research and activities in the SLT.

[131] Municipality of Calinog Tourism Site, "Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Virtual 2022," video, 6:32.

The first book from the Hinilawod epic, Tikum Kadlum (meaning "black dog") became part of the festival's suguidanonay portion in 2012. When the pandemic continued in 2021, a virtual celebration was produced and shown online. A year later, a virtual documentary was created by the tourism office of Calinog, Iloilo[132] and was shown on Facebook. All this time, only a select few Panay Bukidnons were asked to participate in the dance festival. Their culture is represented in the festivities, but, for the most part, not by them. However, the Panay Bukidnons were never effaced.

Pagtabok sa Ilaya: My Journey with Calinog's Tumándoks

I find myself listening to Amang Baoy,[133] a Panay Bukidnon culture bearer and master chanter, as the magurang[134] (elder) chant parts of Hinilawod[135] (epic). Unlike my experience of being a judge in the annual dance competition of Calinog, Iloilo's Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay Festival[136] where I would usually watch Amang Baoy together with other Panay Bukidnons perform and at the same time take in a panoramic view of everything that is going on— the musical instruments playing, the dancers

[132] Municipality of Calinog Tourism Site, video, 9:35.
[133] Amang Baoy (pronounced ah-mang-ba-oy), is a Panay Bukidnon master culture bearer, chanter, and one of the members of the Council of Elders of the Panay Bukidnon Indigenous Peoples in Calinog, Iloilo.
[134] Magurang means elder (an adult). In this sentence, it refers to Amang Baoy.
[135] Felipe Landa Jocano, Hinilawod: Adventures of Humadapnon (Tarangban 1), Chanted by Hugan-an (Quezon City, Philippines: Punlad Research House Inc, 2000): 2-4. Jocano employed the term Hinilawod (as opposed to Sugidanon) as used by the chanter he collaborated with during the conduct of his fieldwork.
[136] Panay News, "Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival of Calinog: An Ingenious Fusion of Faith and Culture," Panay News, February 7, 2020, https://www.panaynews.net/hirinugyaw-suguidanonay-festival-of-calinog-an-ingenious-fusion-of-faith-and-culture/. The last in-person event for this festival was held in 2020, a month prior to the Philippines' pandemic lockdown last March 15, 2020. Since then, Panay Bukidnons were able to participate as performers in the virtual celebration of the said festival.

transitioning from one movement combination to another, and the audience cheering for the performing group— here I am, seemingly drawn to Amang Baoy, with undivided attention, under the roof of the community's balay. My mind was grasping every Hiligaynon[137] and Kinaray-a[138] languages I could muster while I felt my body pulsate to the rhythm of Amang Baoy's archaic Kinaray-a chanting and that of the children of Brgy. Garangan, Calinog, Iloilo who were attentively standing around him and echoing his words. I remembered how my body felt while I was focused on Amang Baoy's words, as if I was sitting on a swinging hammock, feeling relaxed despite not understanding the phrases. When Amang Baoy finished chanting, I was puzzled by how I was able to comprehend the meaning of some sections of the Hinilawod. Amang Baoy then clarified the meaning of the chant, alluding to the archaic words in the phrase and the highlights of the story, as if he heard my thoughts asking for some clarification. And, just like that, I heard more sugidanon[139] and witnessed binanog[140] from my key interlocutors.

When I asked Panay Bukidnons about their participation in the locality's annual

[137] Advameg, Inc., "Hiligaynon - Introduction, Location, Language, Folklore, Religion, Major Holidays, Rites of Passage," accessed March 6, 2021, https://www.everyculture.com/wc/Norway-to-Russia/Hiligaynon.html. Hiligaynon, commonly spoken in Iloilo Province is one of the regional languages of Panay Island, Western Visayas, Philippines.

[138] Simon Ager, "Kinaray-a Alphabet, Pronunciation and Language," hosted by Kualo, accessed March 6, 2021, https://omniglot.com/writing/kinaraya.htm. Kinaray-a, coming from the word iraya (mountain dwellers), is a widely spoken language in the Province of Antique in Panay Island, Western Visayas, Philippines. The Panay Bukidnons speak a mix of Kinaray-a and Hiligaynon languages. Kinaray-a is believed to be where Hiligaynon was derived.

[139] Sugidanon (or suguidanon) means "epics" and is an oral tradition that is not only featured during the celebration of the locality's festivity, but more so, as part of the Panay Bukidnon's everyday life.

[140] Elias C. Olapane, Lalaine E. Ricardo, and Jenewel M. Azuelo, "Cultural Preservation of Panay Bukidnon-Halawodnons Amidst Emergent Society," Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies 3, no. 11 (November 19, 2021): 41–56, https://doi.org/10.32996/jhsss.2021.3.11.4. Binanog, meaning "way of the hawks," is the courtship dance of the Panay Bukidnons. It comes from the root word banog which pertains to a 'dapay', a kind of bird endemic in Panay.

festival, it was as if some of them could not help but switch to sugidanon mode or would automatically show me, and even invite me to dance with them. When asked about their presence in the videos circulating online of the festival's virtual celebration last January 2022, every Panay Bukidnon that I interviewed would, at times, gaze into a space— looking at their fingers, or a table, or up in the air— and then they would proceed to tell me stories that flowed and branched out in different directions, save a few welcomed interjections from the other elders who could not help but join and share their thoughts. Was this a reflection of how Panay Bukidnons interact with outsiders like me? Were they conditioned to being "researched on" by others? Is this how they reconfigured and survived their working relationship and subjectivity as Indigenous Peoples (IPs)[141] of the state? I was thinking through these questions when I was with Amang Baoy in the balay.

In a sit-down interview with Amang Baoy where I asked him how they teach or transfer their knowledge on a particular expressive culture to a learner, he mentioned to me that:

> …kun ano ang ginkabuhi ka mga mal-am sang una, amu ang ginapanudlo ko sa mga kabataan. Diin sanda nagabasi kay waay sang calendar? Sa bitúon. Man-an ka mga mal-am. May pito ka bitúon nga nagahulag sa langit nga palatandaan ka mal-am kun ano dun nga bulana kag kung ano sanda maumpisa. Halimbawa, sa bulan kang Enero, paano mo maman-an kay waay ti calendar? Mamulak ang labog nga native, sigurado, Enero guid daa. Sang una gapamangkot guid ang mga kabataan kung paano mabuhi ang mga mal-am kang una. Manakon ang mga mal-am, kasi magmayad tyempo, nagatangra guid ra sa langit, [sa] nagahulag dyan nga bitúon.

[141] GOVPH, "Republic Act No. 8371," Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, accessed February 3, 2021, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1997/10/29/republic-act-no-8371/. Section 3h of Republic Act. 8371 extensively defines the term Indigenous Peoples (IPs) or Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs).

> …the lifeways of my ancestors, that's what I teach kids [that go to the School of Living Tradition (SLT)[142]]. Where [do you think] they would base time since they do not have a calendar? By looking at the stars. They [ancestors] would know. There are seven stars that move in the heavens which help our elders know what month it would be and when they would start [working]. For example, how would you know that it is already January? The native plant labuag (also, labog; Hibiscuss sabdariffa) will have blooming yellow flowers by then and that marks the month of January. Kids would ask how our ancestors would survive back then. Whenever the weather is fine, our elders look to the heavens, to the movement of the stars.[143]

The Indigenous practice of pagtangra sa mga bitúon (looking at the stars) as seen from one of the Indigenous community's balay is just one of the many deeply rooted knowledge systems that Panay Bukidnons uphold whenever they are asked about their expressive culture. In his pioneering work Balatik: Katutubong Bituin ng Pilipino,[144] Philippine ethnoastronomer Dante Ambrosio points out how pre-colonial Filipinos mapped the sky through a matrix of stars that form constellations. "They [Indigenous Peoples] have, thus, claimed the sky as their own and put their own distinctive marks on it. As they made the sky part of their culture, it, in turn, influenced the way they think, act, and live," he wrote. "When the ancient Filipinos looked up to the heavens, they did not just see the sky. They also saw their own civilization, especially where stars are

[142] The School of Living Traditions (SLT) was a program created by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in the Philippines to stand as a community-managed learning center where classes pertaining to the learning of the community's culture, traditions, and practices may be held.

[143] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. The English translation and insertion of missing words/context relative to the quoted texts underwent consultation and verification from the participant concerned.

[144] Danny L. Ambrosio, "BALATIK: Katutubong Bituin ng Pilipino," Recent Studies in Philippine History, Eds. Laura Samson and Ricardo Jose, Philippine Social Sciences Review 57. Nos. 1-4, The University of the Philippines Press, (2005): 1-28, https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/pssr/article/view/1287. Balatik refers to the constellation Orion. Locally, it points to a trapping device employed by hunters.

concerned," he added. "Like other cultures, they mapped onto the sky their own uniqueness. They claimed the heavens as their own."[145]

Not only does the reading of the stars play a vital role in the Panay Bukidnon's lifeways but navigating the world with the help of the stars has also become a part of the Panay Bukidnon's suguidanon.[146] Whenever they are asked to share a part of their culture, the richness of their expressive culture and Indigenous worldviews comes forward as intertwined practices, much like the constellations they see from the night skies. These community beliefs, practices, and lifeways passed on from one generation to the next are the lifeblood of the Panay Bukidnons— a source of indigeneity, agency, and Indigenous sovereignty.

The narrative of Amang Baoy offers just a glimpse of the stories I have encountered and the experiences I had while researching the Panay Bukidnons and their participation in the mounting of a video performance in December 2021 and the production of a video documentary in December 2022, which took place during the pandemic. Both online iterations of Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival involved months of planning, execution, and post-production by the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Calinog, Iloilo, specifically the Tourism Office, which took charge of the whole production. For 2021, the local government of Calinog requested the assistance of Panay Bukidnons who the LGU also handpicked to join as performers together with the

[145] Danny L. Ambrosio, Balatik Etnoastronomiya: Kalangitan sa Kabihasnang Pilipino, The University of the Philippines Press, 2010.

[146] Some of the interviewees in this study would respond to my questions in the regional languages of Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a and would use archaic language when engaging with the Indigenous community's most prized epic, the Hinilawod.

locality's selected students, working professionals, and cultural advocates for a two-day shoot. For 2022, LGU-Calinog created a video documentary, the materials (photos, video features, speeches) of which were handled by a committee from the locality's Tourism Office. The documentary also involved clippings from the 2021 production of Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival. Unbeknownst to some Panay Bukidnons, they appeared in the documentary. Some were upset while others did not take issue with this matter as long as "mapakilala kami nga mga Panay Bukidnon kag ang amun duna nga kultura" ("we get to be known as Panay Bukidnons and our rich culture").

In the subsequent sections, I present an analysis of my immersive experience with the Panay Bukidnons of Brgy. Garangan, Calinog, Iloilo from November 2021 to March 2022, to show how the Panay Bukidnons' embodied presence thrives in a challenging system of governance by employing strategies, sharing tactics, and cautiously navigating processes that demand their labor, artistry, and more importantly, their authentic indigeneity. Specifically, I examine the various ways in which Panay Bukidnons share their dance culture with non-Indigenous Filipinos, including their chants, music, attire, and epics, and theorize it through the local term dárawatan, a Panay Bukidnon word that means, "to pass on, receive, share, or, accept." In the flexibility of the word dárawatan, I think about the maneuvers that Panay Bukidnons have to enact to assert their agency as Indigenous peoples, to generously extend their rich knowledge systems and practices through dance and performance, and to fulfill their part in the completion of the dárawatan, securing their needs as an Indigenous community while at the same time maintaining their ties with their non-Indigenous counterparts. To strengthen my claims, I

draw from various interview transcripts that came out of my semi-structured conversations with the ten pre-selected[147] Panay Bukidnons who took part in the 2021 virtual performance and were part of the 2022 virtual documentary of the Hirinugyaw-Sugidanonay Festival together with select archival research about the Panay Bukidnons. It is within this context that I elucidate the realities that the Panay Bukidnons face when their indigeneity is centered in the dárawat with non-Panay Bukidnons (in this case, with the local government unit).

Panimád-on sa Dárawat: Illuminating Panay Bukidnon's Fabric of Indigeneity

When the selected Panay Bukidnons were asked to participate in the 2-day video shoot, they joined without hesitation, as they do with most requests they receive. Sandigan,[148] the datu of the Panay Bukidnons of Calinog, Iloilo, said that "Tatlo kami ka mga utod ko nga nag-chant sang portion sang twelve ka epic, [ginhambalan kami nga] portion lang kang epic, bulos bulos kami, alternate" ("Me and my two brothers were asked to chant portions of the [Hinilawod] epic. We would do it in turns, alternately. Each of the Caballero brothers [including me] would be assigned four epics to chant.") In contrast to the leeway that Panay Bukidnons have when they participate in the in-person celebration of the locality's festival, Sandigan indicated that they had already been pre-

[147] The interlocutors of the study were "pre-selected" during one of the online meetings with Panay Bukidnons' Council of Elders and the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples. More so, it was determined that the participants should have been part of the virtual presentation of Calinog's Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay Festival in 2021.

[148] Sandigan, the tribal name of one of my interlocutors, means "prince of the IPs" which translates to the one being depended on by the Panay Bukidnon Indigenous community.

assigned to share specific parts of the Hinilawod epic curated by the production team of the LGU. They were not consulted further as to how the whole virtual show would run. In fact, their role was already indicated in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that they signed with the LGU. May MOA [man] kami. Virtual lang [ang pag-recording] kay bawal man [may mga tawo tungod sa] social distancing. May gamay nga mga municipal official nga naglantaw kag mga estudyante. May mga estudyante man nga nag intra sa performance, pero sa chanting kami guid ka mga utod ko" ("There was a MOA that was signed prior to our participation. The celebration was done virtually since, at that time, social distancing protocols were being enforced [e.g., no gatherings were allowed because of the pandemic]. There were a few municipal officials and students who attended the recording of the virtual event. There were also high school students from the local community who were selected to perform, but [the major parts] including the chanting, were given to me and my brothers.")

The creation of an MOA including its ratification and eventual signing between the Panay Bukidnons and the other party involved is usually done in collaboration with the involved Panay Bukidnons led by the Indigenous group's Council of Elders, composed of prominent magurangs and barangay officials, and supervised by the NCIP management. The MOA also contains a standard template that indicates the duration of the transaction, benefits to be received by the involved party, statements for the presentation and production of the output, and the clauses on consent and confidentiality of the data. Such a document trail, although binding, may be revisited in the project implementation period, and honored throughout the process.

Days after the 2021 virtual performance for the festivity was aired on social media, unknown to some Panay Bukidnons, my interlocutors continued to expressed their various contributions and experiences in participating in the virtual iteration of the locality's Catholic-oriented festival. Dapuan, a binanog dancer for 14 years who learned binanog in SLT, pointed out how he performed a lupit-style[149] of binanog with some of my other interlocutors, including Suay, Awat,[150] Muray,[151] and Intaro[152] during the virtual festival. In the lupit style, a male and two female dancers move in a circle while alternately swinging their arms, as if flying, flipping their wrist up and down, and their feet doing the sadsad (shuffling through the floor), while the male dancer hovers around two female dancers, usually with a handkerchief to portray a courtship dance in the tune of a tikumbo (zither-percussion) and sumbing (jaw's harp). While dancing lupit, Suay said that "Sadya! Sadya kun maupod mo sila. Sang time to, daw di mu ma hambal ang kalipay nga upod mo mga katigulangan mo to nga gasaut pag virtual. Daw kalipay lang kay siyempre, [hasta] ako napilian man magsaut upod sila" ("It was fun. It was really a joyful experience to be dancing with the elders of my community. That time, I cannot really explain the joy that I felt to be performing alongside Panay Bukidnon culture bearers. It was such an honor because I was chosen to perform binanog with them.")

[149] Parangal Dance Company, "Merrie Monarch Ho'ike," accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.parangal.org/hoike. Panay Bukidnon's binanog has three style, tiglalaki (a courtship dance between a male and female dancer), tigbabaye (a dance between two female dancers), and lupit (a courtship dance between a male dancer and two female dancers).
[150] Awat, an indigenous set designer, originally came from the Mangyans of Mindoro, until he began searching his ancestors and found his uncle from his father's side amongst the Panay Bukidnons in 2007. Since then, he stays with Sandigan and Intaro.
[151] Intaro, also called "Mommy," is the wife of Sandigan, the Panay Bukidnon community's chieftain.
[152] Muray, the daughter of Tuohan (a GAMABA awardee), is also a panubok master culture bearer.

Awat, whose inclination is into set and costume design and was also asked to dance binanog, added that "Nalipay guid ako tungod [sa] mga tawo nga gatan-aw kanamun tungod nga manami kami mag kiay kiay bago nila makit-an ang ginatawag nga binanog. Nalipay guid ako tungod nga ang Panay Bukidnon ginakilala guid" ("I am very happy because the people [both online and in-person] who watched us saw that we are good at what we do, that we can move our hips gracefully, prior to them watching us perform a binanog dance. My heart is full of joy that Panay Bukidnons were given recognition through the festivity.") Despite the joy they felt, participating in the festivity was not always easy.

Muray, daughter of Tuohan (the only Panay Bukidnon GAMABA awardee as of 2022),[153] shared with me in detail how their participation to the festivity began. She told me that

> Ginsugat kami di [ka] salakyan. Sang gainulin sadto, basa kami. Pero siyempre, committed ka mag ano, kay invited kamu. Practice man lang first night namun. Waay gani ko mag expect nga abi ko ya mapuli na kami pagka aga, gali timu, pagtapos sang praktis namun sa gab-i, nagtulog kami abi after mga 11:00 [sa gab-i], pagkaaga gali, wala naman kami, kaun lang kami. Ginpakaun naman kami to sa anu, waay lang guid anay kami sa bilog nga adlaw, pahuway, kay ginapreparar ang amun nga… Nagsugod guro kami mga 6:00 or 7:00 [sa gab-i], pero, ang amun gani nga part kay sa ano pa guid [sa punta pa guid], dira lang anay kami sa ano eh, gab-i na guid, kay amu na ya sa program, kay sundon mo, batang batang lang anay kami dira sa gym. [Sang nagsaut na kami], siyempre, maano sa imu nga himuon mo guid imu nga best, nga para mapakita mo guid ya nga amu na, proud ka, nga Panay Bukidnon ka.

[153] The Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan (GAMABA), also known as the National Living Treasures Award, is given to a person or a group of artists acknowledged by the national government to have contributed to the country's intangible cultural heritage. Institutionalized in 1992 through Republic Act No. 7355, this award is given by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and patterned according to UNESCOS's criteria of Living National Treasures.

> We were picked up by the LGU's vehicle. It was raining that time and we were wet but we were committed to perform since we were invited. On the first night, we had a rehearsal. I did not even expect that we will stay there for a while and I thought we will go home the next day only to find out that we have to be there for another day. After the first night's rehearsal, we slept around 11:00 in the evening. The next day, to my surprise, we were not called to rehearse, so we just ate the whole day. We ate at the… we were never asked to rehearse again for the whole day, so we used the time to get some rest. I think our performance venue was being prepared during that time. We started around 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening for the video shoot of our performance, but because the part where we get to dance was still on the last sequence, we just laid down in various spaces inside the gymnasium, until our part in the program was about to commence. When we danced, of course, I realized I must perform at my best, so that I would be able to showcase to everyone that I am a proud Panay Bukidnon.

The uncertainty of their participation, the sacrifices that the Panay Bukidnons have to make, and the decision-making processes that they have to quickly deploy makes them vulnerable every step of the way, but it also gives them the chance to assert themselves in various ways. The Panay Bukidnons contend not just with bureaucratic processes imposed by the state through their various offices like the NCIP, but they also must deal with the short and long-term impact of their decision-making processes as a community in terms of 'collaborating' with government entities since such interactions may dictate their very survival as a government-recognized Indigenous community. Throughout their experience in the production of the virtual festival in 2021, my Panay Bukidnon interlocutors pointed out how they were confronted with situations that sometimes required their immediate attention. A tactical deployment of their indigeneity comes in handy for Panay Bukidnons when sudden changes prompt them to call the shots, whether it is in terms of what specific expressive culture needs to be shared, the verbal and written transactional agreements between parties, or the degree of effort that

needs to be extended for things to happen. For example, one of my interlocutors was expecting to perform a longer version of an epic but was told to only perform within a specific time period, leaving my interlocutor the liberty to select which part of the suguidanon should be highlighted. On the contrary, a strategic deployment of their indigeneity requires Panay Bukidnons to think about the impact of their decisions in the long run, the effect it will have in the interrelationships they form with the local government, and the stakes that may be risked whenever a call to action is necessary. One of my interlocutors mentioned something about the situation they might be in if they choose not to participate just because the details of the event were not clear or what is in store for them were not disclosed. That they would rather help out than not help at all as in both cases, they bear the consequence. For example, they may not get paid for their service but their involvement may mean leverage for a request that the community has been needing for a long time.

Evident in my interlocutors' stories are fragments of the state's acts to homogenize Indigenous communities and the hegemonic rationality of the LGU towards the Panay Bukidnons. That is to say that Panay Bukidnons have been "conditioned" to enact their indigeneity through their participation in the preparation, the conduct, and even in the aftermath of festivity. As a prominent and recognized Indigenous community in Calinog, Iloilo, a level of readiness is expected of them as the steady growth of regional, national and international opportunities come their way in which they find themselves being asked to share their culture with no end in sight. Sometimes, visitors come unannounced. At times, they would be requested to gather a group of Panay

Bukidnons to perform a binanog number. I was interviewing some of my interlocutors for the day when a national government agency dropped by to take photos, ask questions about the Panay Bukidnons, and conduct a needs assessment. They had to ask me to wait, as they had to prioritize the group of people who arrived on the same day I was there with them. Trapped in what may be read as acts of capitalist accumulation of Panay Bukidnon knowledge systems and world views, Panay Bukidnons have a rather unstable hold on their capacity to control the situation, as their authority, at times, is usurped by the state, albeit in subtle ways.

In his study on the Panay Bukidnon's cultural production of music in the mainstream, ethnomusicologist Jose Taton Jr. pointed out that "Since the recognition of Federico "Tuohan" Caballero as the Gawad Sa Manlilikha Ng Bayan (GAMABA) [or the National Living Treasures Awardee][154] in 2000, local and national invitations to perform in highly urbanized areas have been situating many Panay Bukidnon culture bearers at the nexus of tradition and modernity."[155] My interlocutors have shared how they benefit through monetary compensation, but in turn, such transactions then oblige them to occasionally compromise their needs, and even to some extent, their worldviews. For example, some Panay Bukidnons I talked to must work with the budget given to them if there is no opportunity to negotiate with the other party involved in the transaction. As most of those requested to perform are elders, Panay Bukidnon magurangs must endure

[154] Office of the President of the Philippines, "Executive Order No. 236," Manila: Malacañang Records Office, 2003.
[155] Jose R. Taton, Jr., "The Panay Bukidnon Talda: Expressing Sentiments in Shifting Music Ecologies," Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 22, no. 1 and 2, (2017): 47-54, https://pjssh.upv.edu.ph/vol-22-no-1-2-2017.

late-night rehearsals, at the expense of their health. At times, Panay Bukidnons tasked to do the suguidanon had to cut parts of retelling the Hinilawod to fit their narrative into the given time frame. Undoubtedly, certain groups within the Panay Bukidnon community were not only exposed to state programs that allow them to travel, perform, and serve as resource persons in various capacities, but also that, through their participation, they end up "enduring" less than ideal conditions so they can complete a particular transaction.

In negotiating their indigeneity, Panay Bukidnons find themselves, on the one hand, visible in the gaze of the state whenever their representation, aesthetics, and expressive culture is needed and, on the other, invisible when they are left with no choice but to give in to processes that assume their authenticity, erase their labor, and where they are easily replaced and easily represented by others, when needed. This juxtaposition requires Panay Bukidnons to always stay on their toes while being constantly on display.

My analysis parallels the extensive work of Southeast Asianist Oona Paredes whose research with the Higaûnons[156] of northern Mindanao, Philippines foregrounds the minoritized Indigenous group's experiences and conceptions of indigeneity. While the work of Paredes complicates how the state's presence affects the ways in which Higaûnon oral traditions forwards "acute internal concerns about identity, indigeneity, and cultural heritage preservation,"[157] I complicate how indigeneity, representation, and folklorization circulate amongst Panay Bukidnon dancing bodies and the people they

[156] Oona T. Paredes, "Higaûnon Resistance and Ethnic Politics in Northern Mindanao," The Australian Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (1997): 272. Higaûnons, alongside other non-Muslim groups, are the Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao, also known as Lumád/s.
[157] The Department of Asian Languages et al., "Oona Paredes," Asian Languages & Cultures Department - UCLA, accessed July 6, 2022, https://www.alc.ucla.edu/person/oona-paredes/.

'work' with, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Paredes' research advances the Higaûnon's direct perspectives of indigeneity in conversation with the Indigenous group's struggle for land rights, the red tagging of their people as terrorists,[158] and the implementation of the government's projects that gradually seize their ancestral domains. This inspired me to put the story of the Panay Bukidnons front and center in this study. As Paredes points out, "much of who they [Higaûnons] are today as a people, and their present place in the larger world, is often explained in terms of this struggle. In other words, just as the struggle over [the] land brings together various Higaûnon acts of aggression into a meaningful framework, it also brings together the different threads of Higaûnon political and social history."[159]

Given the political and social climate in the Philippines in the early 1970s, when Marcos Sr. assumed his second term as President in the face of violent demonstrations against the elite, insurgency, and the unresolved agrarian reform,[160] it is no coincidence that the Panay Bukidnons also share the struggle of the Higaûnons. By the 1980s, the Panay Bukidnons had been dealing with continuous violence as their community experienced the impact of militarization and government-led developmental projects. The recognition of the Panay Bukidnon Indigenous Peoples in 2000 as a group from the Visayas with a wealth of world views, knowledge systems, and Indigenous practices resulted in back-to-back invitations, guestings, and performances. In this process of

[158] Nick Aspinwall, "In the Philippines, Activists Increasingly Face a 'Living Hell.'" Accessed March 3, 2021. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/philippines-activists-increasingly-face-living-hell.
[159] Paredes, "Higaûnon Resistance," 271.
[160] Juan Aguas Y Quijano, "The Philippines in The Twentieth Century: Social Change in Recent Decades," Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects, Paper 1539625429, 1987, doi.org/10.21220/S2-1Z70-0118.

sharing and showcasing their expressive culture, the Panay Bukidnons found themselves constantly navigating the ways in which they present, project, and perform themselves as Panay Bukidnons.

Such is the case for the Panay Bukidnon's participation in the virtual programming initiated by LGU-Calinog. The virtual "tribe"[161] performance opened with a music video featuring Calinog, Iloilo's tourism site, culture, traditions, and best practices led by the LGU. It then transitioned to a pitch-black screen as the sound coming from the rhythmic playing of bamboo instruments filled the virtual space, with the spotlight slowly fading in as the camera zoomed towards an elevated platform positioned at the center of the rectangular dance floor. The spotlight reveals performers in hues of white and red Panay Bukidnon regalia that feature their Indigenous practice of panubok embroidery. From the Kinaray-a archaic word tubok which means "to embroider," the performers' attire was adorned with tinubkan (embroidered) designs representing nature and the characters and events in Hinilawod. The male dancer's all-red sopa (long sleeves) and pants had sudlikama (the pattern of which was taken from the skin of the magkal or python snake), matang punay (depicting the punay bird or yellow-breasted Fruit Dove), and tuko tuko (a type of big gecko living in houses). The female dancer's white saypang or blouse and checkered red skirt were designed with pako pako (patterned after an edible

[161] The "tribes" competing in the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival are composed of local groups of students representing their respective high schools combined with a distributed number of Panay Bukidnons for each competing group. In my observation, the Panay Bukidnons are usually assigned as part of the musicians for the performing group, part of the opening performance (the Suguidanonay part of the competition), and at times, some of them are brought back again on the last 8-16 counts prior to the final pause of the performance. This is a prerogative usually taken by the tribe's choreographer (at times in consultation with Panay Bukidnons).

fern called pako or Fiddlehead fern), linabog (a rounded flower design from a Hisbiscus species called labog or Roselle), and girigiti (vine design on the edges of one's clothing). The Panay Bukidnon performers on the riser slowly took a kneeling pre-set while they intently looked at the lone performer standing in the middle. A voice-over narration echoed in the air saying "Kag naghapon ang banog sa bato nga binanogan agud ang sugidanon liwat mabatian" ("And the banog bird perched on a rock so that it can hear the epic stories once again.")

The first Panay Bukidnon tumándok stood and spoke. The performer on his feet was Suay, one of my interlocutors. In a Facebook conversation on December 21, 2022, Suay shared with me what he was chanting during the video shoot: "Hmmm, turok kamo bonteraw pamati panurunggan sa kahangulang tawo sa karakung alawon kunina Ka surundon ada Ka sugidanon e boyong Labaw Donggon kag boyong Humapdapnon" ("Hmmmm, I invite everyone to watch me and listen, every one of you who are here, to the story of Labaw Donggon and Humadapnon.") He starts chanting an introductory invitation to the audience in archaic Kinaray-a, his all red handmade panubok ensemble popping out of the blue background. Suay, an all-around[162] Panay Bukidnon, and the youngest of my interlocutors also commented that "may mga parte ako, ginpa-chant, pahuni ka budyong, amu na gintao kanakon nga parte ni SB. Sanda lang tana, ginahingyu lang nanda ako nga matukar, or ginalimitahan lang man ang pagsuguidanon mo, hasta diin lang nga part, kay daw naka-script lang ila proseso" ("I was requested to do the

[162] Suay, as an "all-around" Panay Bukidnon, is one of the very few Panay Bukidnons of Calinog, Iloilo who is highly skilled to play musical instruments, do the chanting, dance the binanog, and showcase panubok embroidery.

chanting, or play the budyong,[163] or whatever is assigned to me by the municipal official. They decide, and then they just ask me to play, or remind me as to the limits of the chants that I can do, up to what part, as it seems that they already have the script for the show.") Suay is aware that he is partaking in a virtual performance where he is asked to only share specific parts of the Panay Bukidnons' expressive culture following a script already laid out by the organizers. On the other hand, when Suay was asked regarding his in-person experience of being involved in the festivity prior to the pandemic, he pointed out that he was given the chance to personalize the suguidanon, where he chose to stick to the story. Suay mentioned that:

> Kung sa Hirinugyaw Sir, ang isa sa ginabasehan ko kung ako ang nagalantaw kang flow kang sugid'non, nagastick guid ako sa istorya. Kay kung kaisa ang istorya, ang interpretasyon kang istorya, lain ang paghangup nanda. So nakun, ang basehan natun ang original. So nagabase ako sa chant. Kay dayan, sa chant, sa sugidanon, detalyado ang pagsaysay sang istorya. Bisan pagtindog ka datu, pagpungko ka datu…
>
> In the Hirinugyaw [Festival], one of my bases when given the opportunity to check the flow of the epic chanting, is to rely on the story of the sugidanon. Because sometimes locals tend to have a different interpretation of the story. So, I encourage them to check the original version [of the epic]. I base it on the chant, because in the sugidanon the details are intricate. Even just the way the chieftain stands up or how he sits, it is all described in the sugidanon.

For Suay, there were times prior to the pandemic that his agency in terms of sharing his expressive culture was given more value. That he was empowered to decide which approach would work, which detail needs to be enhanced, and which context needs

[163] Earl, "Budyong (Panay Bukidnon)," MusiKoleksyon (blog), March 11, 2014, https://museomusiko.wordpress.com/aerophones/whistle-flutes/budyong/. Budyong, is an open flute played by cupping the mouth on one end and blowing which produces a trumpet-like sound. This short length bamboo, although has opening on both sides, do not have holes in its body.

to be laid down for the audience to understand. Suay went further to describe what it was like to partake in the festivity prior to the pandemic. “Manami guid tana ya face-to-face kay siyempre, ginapalantaw sa akun ang mga props kung nagakabagay bala…. Kun insakto bala ang dalagan ka istorya, kun liwaton pa. Kun sa music tana, ginamangkot man ako. Sa virtual indi dun timu kadugang kag kabuhin. Sang wala ya COVID-, pagusto lang tamun kung ano himuon namun” (“It was just more exciting to participate in the face-to-face iteration of the festival as back then, I would be asked to be a consultant from the brainstorming of the concept to the music used, and even the movements for the dance. The production group that I am assigned to would directly ask me questions regarding the performance, whether it was respectful and in line with and attuned to my [Panay Bukidnon] culture. In the last virtual experience I had, you could not add or deduct anything. Prior to COVID-19, we could do whatever we wanted in terms of interpreting the sugidanon [through dance drama].”) Suay’s complex experience of participating in the LGU-led virtual iteration of the Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival and even his prior stint in the in-person celebration of the festivity shows the breadth of negotiations that Panay Bukidnons navigate whenever they are tapped as “collaborators,” considered as “participants,” or sourced out as “performers”. Not only do Panay Bukidnons have to be flexible when events pop up requiring their services on a particular day, but in my analysis of their narratives, it occurred to me that they are always expected to easily adapt to the situation at hand (e.g., be prepared to share their culture on short notice) and produce performative works branching off from their suguidanon, or binanog dancing.

In this sense, Suay embodies the improvisational quality of the suguidanon, and I would add, the binanog dance. Sociocultural anthropologist David Gowey's research with Panay Bukidnons in 2017 points to the improvisational quality of suguidanon (chanting) which revolves around various plotlines, "leaving room for individual chanters to tailor their performance to their respective audiences and venues."[164] In other words, the chanter has every opportunity to immerse themselves in a particular way of preparing their voice and body and attune themselves prior to engaging with suguidanonay. For Dr. Muyco, this process is called the mangalimog (manner of "tuning in").[165] By "tuning in," it is not only the chanter that gets to explore ways of centering themselves but also the binanog dancers. The dancers complement their musicians by allowing themselves to "tune in" with the rhythm, fueling their binanog (eagle) steps with varying degrees of inflections for their padag-padag (stomping of the feet) and paglupad-lupad (flying by using their arms and hands) to be in sync with the music.

Suay's corporeal improvisations in the suguidanonay and binanog brings me to Indigenous research Professor Brendan Hokowhitu's assertion of "Indigenous existentialism,"[166] which focuses on the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples through an analysis of their genealogy and their immediacy.[167] Hokowhitu's approach places contemporary experiences of Indigenous communities, such as that of Suay and the rest

[164] David Gowey, "The Problem of the Visayas in Southeast Asian History and Historiography," Presentation, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, October 20, 2017.
[165] Maria Christine Muyco "Mangalimog Ako: Finding One's Voice In Suguidanon (Epic Chanting), Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia, ed. Nicole Revel, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2013), 59-72.
[166] Brendan Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism and the Body," Cultural Studies Review 15, no. 2 (2009): 101–18, https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2040.
[167] Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism and the Body," (2009): 101.

of the Panay Bukidnons, at the forefront, including their current lifeways, and their processes of understanding the world. Hokowhitu's take on "Indigenous existentialism" as the theorization of the Indigenous body and the centering of the Indigenous contemporary condition releases Indigenous peoples from the colonial stereotypes attached to them and opens the possibility for Indigenous communities to be recognized in Hokowhitu's assertion of 'presence'.[168] Hokowhitu also argues that by maintaining the specificity of an Indigenous culture to its local context, Indigenous peoples would be able to theorize their existence through an exchange of grounded/rooted knowledges among different Indigenous communities. For Panay Bukidnons, while they take the risk of being invisibilized by the state by being complicit with state-projects that need their 'authentic' Panay-Bukidnonness to be the front act, the Panay Bukidnon's 'presence' grounds the Indigenous community in the immediacy of their experiences in the dárawat (cultural sharing).

Drawing on Hokowhitu's "Indigenous existentialism," my analysis forwards the contemporary experiences of Panay Bukidnons, including their current lifeways, their processes of understanding the world, and their responses when various groups (in this case, the local government of Calinog, Iloilo) tap them as sources of Indigenous culture or when their expressive cultures are documented. Through negotiations with their non-Indigenous counterparts, the Panay Bukidnon's will and Indigenous consciousness to resist capitalism and avoid the danger of romanticizing their experiences takes them a step ahead of how they may be read on or off stage. As such, theorizing the Panay

[168] Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism," 103.

Bukidnons' "immediacy" centers their corporeality. Further, it empowers Panay Bukidnons as active entities who can take responsibility for their actions and experiences within and outside of the colonial order. Finally, it centers the Panay Bukidnon's agency within structures which deprive them of that. Suay's 'presence' in the virtual festival, and that of the selected Panay Bukidnons, while they may be few, not only grounds them to 'maneuver' their agentive indigeneity through "Indigenous existentialism," but with their every move, they also carry the voices, knowledge systems, and shared traditions of the whole Panay Bukidnon community in Garangan, Calinog, Iloilo.

In the Circle: The Multiplicity of Dárawatan Experience

How Panay Bukidnons become flexible in an instant is something that intrigued me. Is it binanog (eagle dance) that shapes how they 'maneuver' themselves in the balay? Or is it the Panay Bukidnon themselves and their worldviews? Is it the Panay Bukidnon's relationality with their balay? What I learned being with my interlocutors was Panay Bukidnons heavily rely on their longstanding knowledge systems and worldviews to navigate the precarity of being subject to the demands of the state. As the Panay Bukidnon's sovereign authority through its customary laws and traditions is challenged by bureaucratic processes, the culture bearers make sure that they never stop telling their stories, to an extent where they magnify their expressive culture through animated actions, various voices, and changing how they share it, to make sure that the next generation holds on to the suguidanon, panubok, and binanog traditions of the Panay Bukidnons. Amang Baoy, in another talk with her daughter Lord Jane, shared that:

> Isa daya sa mga pamaagi kang mga mal-am amo ang sige-sige pagsugid ukon paghinun-anon agud mapasa nanda ang andang naman-an kag kinaaram sa andang mga kabataan. Ang mga istorya pasulit-sulit nga ginahinun-anon ukon liwat-liwat nga ginasugid agud indi malipatan sa andang paino-ino. Ang bata nagakakunyag pa gid adlaw gab-i kag pati man gani tanan nga miyembro kang panimalay nanamian man magpamati. Waay nagakataka ya mga mal-am sa paghinun-anon tungod tanan sa pamilya naluyag magpamati. Dugang pa ang hinun-anon ginakabig nga pamatay oras kag kalingawan kaangay kang drama sa radio kag teleserye sa telebisyon nga ya mga magurang bilang manugsugid kang istorya mayad sanda magpalabor-labor kag mag-arte. Kon parti sa paghigugma ginapalulo ukon ginapanubo ya limog, kon parti sa away ginakambyo i limog nga daw akig kag kon kaharadlukan ginapatunog pa gid."
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> One of the elder's ways of passing information and Indigenous knowledge to their children is through constant storytelling starting from [a] very young age. These stories are told repeatedly to instill knowledge so it will be retained in the young minds of children. The children get more and more excited and interested to listen at night, and even during the day. Actually, it is not only the children who get excited but all the members of the household. The elders never get tired telling stories because the whole family loves to listen, just like the way dramas are heard over the radio or watched over TV. In addition, hinun-anon [storytelling] serve as our past time and entertainment just like a radio drama or TV teleserye [drama series], with the elders as storytellers and also as commentators. If it is about love, they would soften their voice and speak tenderly or softly. If it is about action, they would raise their voice in anger, and if these are horror events they would even make their voice louder.[169]

During my fieldwork at Brgy. Garangan, Calinog, Iloilo, children numbering from five to twenty would always flock to the balay of Sandigan and Intaro, especially on weekends, to take part in the suguidanon and other activities related to the nurturance and upkeep of Panay Bukidnon culture and tradition. In the past, it was a program supported by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, but recently it is the Panay

[169] Lord Jane Caballero-Dordas, "Hinun-Anon: Panay Bukidnon Traditional Stories for the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Curriculum," Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 22, no. 1 and 2, (2017): 19-28, https://pjssh.upv.edu.ph/vol-22-no-1-2-2017/.

Bukidnon elders who continue this tradition, despite meager resources. For the magurang, the suguidanon is their entry point into the imagination of the next generation of Panay Bukidnons, who from a young age, are exposed to their community's wealth of expressive culture. Passed down from generation to generation of Panay Bukidnons that settled in Calinog, Iloilo, the suguidanon features the 28,000 verse poem of Hinilawod (epic). In its original form, Hinilawod would take three days or more to perform in its entirety and is primarily delivered through suguidanon. Elsie, Amang Baoy's daughter, points out that "the suguidanon are long narratives reflecting the existing customary laws, beliefs, practices, and values of the Panay Bukidnon ancestors."[170] In her research, Padernal emphasizes that the chanting of the suguidanon, usually spoken in archaic Kinaray-a language (Ligbok), can be difficult to comprehend for the trained ear, let alone those who hear it for the first time. So, to enhance the experiences of anyone trying to learn more about them, what I noticed is that Panay Bukidnons would enhance their suguidanon with live music (using, bamboo, gongs, and drums), the use of mixed Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a languages, the donning of their everyday wear adorned with the different motifs of panubok and by showcasing binanog, all in the balay.

The Panay Bukidnons contend not just with the bureaucratic processes imposed by the state but also with the short and long-term impact of their decision-making processes as a community in terms of 'collaborating' with government entities. Based on their experience, such interactions may dictate their very survival as a government-

[170] Elsie Caballero-Padernal, "The Panay Bukidnon Sugidanon (Epic) and Prototype Glossaries for Epic Excerpts," Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 22, no. 1 and 2, (2017): 29-38, https://pjssh.upv.edu.ph/vol-22-no-1-2-2017/.

recognized Indigenous community. In this case, the balay becomes a transformative space for their children, young people, and even elders, to gather, to learn from each other, to perform in a safe space, and to showcase their expressive culture without inhibitions. As Panay Bukidnons 'dance' within and beyond the matrix of the balay they find themselves taking an orientation that is committed to the needs of their community. The uniqueness of the Panay Bukidnon's traditions and the complexity of their Indigenous ways of being and knowing reflected through their balay make them very much visible and in demand to outsiders who want to 'collaborate' with them. In turn, their continuous exposure makes them invisible and prone to complicated bureaucratic procedures resulting in the Panay Bukidnons being systematically ignored and often exploited. In this lingering juxtaposition, the Panay Bukidnon's balay moves with them, providing pa-iraya (to the mountains) and pa-ilawod (to the seas) pathways.

For Panay Bukidnons, engaging with the local government unit of Calinog together with other non-Indigenous stakeholders through the dárawatan is a delicate process that they have to take as, for, and with the community. Asserting their agency through the Panay Bukidnon's annual participation in the Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay Festival not only allows them to display to the public their rich culture and traditions as Panay Bukidnons, but more importantly, they use the platform to articulate their Indigenous agency. By strengthening the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the dárawatan, the experience of collaborative partnerships between Indigenous and non-indigenous groups can be elevated, especially for minoritized communities such as the Panay Bukidnons. Through dárawatan, I found out that Panay Bukidnons, despite the

discomfort, doubts, and distress that they encounter at times, would rather push through with their participation not only so they can showcase their songs, dances, and crafts and Indigenous ways of living, rights, and practices, but also because their participation in the dárawatan brings recognition to their sophisticated world views, generational stories, and deeply rooted culture, and gives them an opportunity to assert their agency as Panay Bukidnons. Dárawatan, as an Indigenous-driven critical framework, is an ongoing process not only during the sharing of Panay Bukidnon expressive culture, but more so afterwards, when other opportunities open up for Panay Bukidnons to once again lead in the creative practice of negotiating and navigating their presence, participation, and power when working with non-Indigenous peoples and asserting what agency was taken away from them through the years, and reclaiming cultural ownership.

Chapter 2

(Live)Streaming ROFG: A Journey to Bahay ni Kuya

Panimula (Introduction)

In this chapter, I argue that Ramon Obusan's seminal life work and philosophy are deeply corporealized in ROFG's process of choreography and performance of Philippine folk dance. The embodiment of Obusan's framework and approach towards engaging and sharing Philippine folk dance, and in particular, Filipino Indigenous dances, creates an impression and establishes a reputation of "performing close to original" which generates positive implications for how ROFG is read as a dance company on and off stage. On the other hand, the same impression of being "close to original" [171] may render the dance company's branding vulnerable to issues of authenticity and exoticization of Indigenous culture. As a result, ROFG's staging and choreography, if not contextualized, nuanced, and rooted not just in the access and showcase of the archived research of Obusan but in continuous, ongoing, and relevant research with and for Indigenous communities, may send a red flag to the people who support their causes or to the concerned Indigenous peoples themselves that ROFG represents in their repertoire.

As such, I argue that ROFG's engagement in the dárawatan, as a process of learning Indigenous expressive culture from the culture bearers themselves, relies on the group's faithful engagement with Obusan's Indigenous archive to continue preserving,

[171] Kanami Namiki, "Dancing in the Margins: The Politics of National and Local Identity Among the Maranao and Kalinga," (Ph.D. thesis, National University of Singapore, 2016), https://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/handle/10635/ 137745, 1.

nurturing, and sharing the rich culture and traditions of Indigenous peoples and thus, begs for another engagement with dárawatan, another turn to the tumándok themselves, if the goal is to forward the Obusan archive to its fullest potential and sustain ROFG's brand of being "close to the original." In other words, if ROFG wants to maintain their brand of being "close to original," then they should not just keep engaging with Obusan's archive. More importantly, they need to have an ongoing, constantly expanding, and critically reflective dárawatan with the source of Obusan's archive, the Indigenous communities themselves.

By remaining "close to the original" of what Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities have shared with Ramon Obusan and everyone who has been part of helping him document folk dances across the regions from the 1970s to the late 1990s, ROFG has become a vehicle for reclaiming narratives of indigeneity, and even Filipinoness by presenting the country's folk dance culture, and in particular, Indigenous aesthetics through dance. I contend that such corporealization of Obusan's work in the creative dynamics of ROFG confirms the impact of what Japanese scholar and dancer Kanami Namiki asserts is the development of a "multi-kinetic body" by being exposed and trained in Obusan's "ethnographic presentation" and "folkloric" style of performance.[172] More importantly, I argue that the continuous maintenance of this process of "performing closest to original" in the dance company's choreography and performance helped sustain ROFG from when it was founded in 1972. More so, imbibing

[172] Kanami Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino: A Study of Contrasting Representations of Philippine Culture by the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group and the Bayanihan Philippine National Folkdance Company," (Master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2007), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48624566.pdf, 92.

Obusan's dance research philosophy in the working dynamics of its members helped the group became an ally for and a representation of various Indigenous communities in the country. The contemporaneity of the dance company's performance through their signature approach of producing performances "closest to the original" in dance production maintains and sustains what people view as the living testament of Ramon A. Obusan's legacy through ROFG.

Furthermore, by digitizing Ramon Obusan's dance research, a project that the group pursued in partnership with a Philippine government agency, I posit that ROFG's attempts to preserve Ramon Obusan's pioneering and formative dance fieldwork both visibilized and invisibilized Filipino Indigenous communities and their expressive culture. Such is the case for other non-Indigenous groups like those who participate in the Pilipino Cultural Nights (PCN) presented in the U.S. who, according to comparative cultural studies scholar Theodore Gonzalves, may also be complicit in forwarding an invented tradition through the fabrication of a national repertoire in their Filipino-inspired performances. Gonzalves argues that participating in the PCN, and, I would add, the inclusion of Filipino Indigenous people's expressive culture and traditions and the stereotype of the "multitalented" Filipino and Filipino-American, contributes to the reproduction of an "authentic past," "static" culture, and the "seemingly unchanging"[173] narrative of the Filipino, both in the homeland and the diaspora.[174] While ROFG dances

[173] Theodore S. Gonzalves, The Day the Dancers Stayed: Performing in the Filipino/American Diaspora, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010, 116.
[174] Abigail De Kosnik, "Perfect Covers: Filipino Musical Mimicry and Transmedia Performance," Verge: Studies in Global Asias 3, no. 1 (2017): 137–61, https://doi.org/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.3.1.0137.

indigeneity in their performances, there also remains a tension that the group has to contend with whenever they are viewed as a representation of an Indigenous community. For one, ROFG have to always make sure that what they perform for the public to see are not romanticized representations of the Indigenous peoples they have collaborated with. Second, despite the presence of Indigenous expressive culture onstage as shown by ROFG, the dance company's reliance to Obusan's archival material makes them prone to the production of contextualized repertoires that ironically may reinscribe an ostensibly romanticized performance of Philippine dance, especially their renditions of Philippine Indigenous dances, that may be addressed with ongoing research and not just reliance on Obusan's research legacy. With that said, I forward ROFG as an entity whose approach to connecting with Indigenous communities, although at the time of my dissertation, was leaning towards an engagement with the Obusan archive, still considers the fluidity and constant movement of people, ideas, and cultures. For ROFG, the Indigenous groups they work with are not stationary but a dynamic and ever-changing network of relationships that fosters cultural exchange. On one hand, ROFG's engagement with the Obusan archive may be their way of sustaining the process of dárawatan, albeit in relationship with the material archive, including the songs, dances, regalia, and lifeways of the Indigenous communities Obusan has been in touch with since the 1970s. Conversely, such unique ways of connecting with the Indigenous peoples through the archive may also render an overreliance to the materiality of Indigenous peoples' expressive culture that may be seen as static, unchanging, and timeless, and thus position the archival way of dárawatan contradictory to what my ROFG interlocutors assert that dance is dynamic

in as much as the Indigenous peoples' culture is also changing and responding to the times. Just like Panay Bukidnon's sense of self and worldview are altered by migration, communication, transportation, and exchange of people and goods, ROFG exists in a complex network of relationships formed within the company, between ROFG and ROFF Inc., the various agencies they collaborate with, and most importantly the dance company's ties with Filipino Indigenous communities. Given that the framework of archipelagic thinking values communities for their unique contributions, I use it to analyze ROFG and the ways in which they collaborate with Indigenous peoples. As the members of ROFG humanize the collaborative experience by bringing in various approaches into working with Indigenous groups, I argue that the circulation of performing bodies not only inspires the next generation of ROFG dancers, musicians, and production team to keep going, but it also holds them intact, as the Bahay ni Kuya keeps calling them back to its open arms to dance.

In order to lay down the context of and further articulate my arguments, I first trace the beginnings of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group and the dance company's choreographic process. I use my fieldwork interviews, engagement with the archive in Bahay ni Kuya, and the related literature and studies I gathered to supplement how I bring the Manila-based national folk dance company to light. Then, I proceed to ROFG's digitization project with the Cultural Center of the Philippines, how ROFG dealt with the overwhelming arranged and unarranged archive of Ramon A. Obusan, and the circulation of dance labor in-person, online, and through hybrid formats for those who were involved in the few performances and dance company events ROFG was asked to participate in. I

present conversations with my ROFG interlocutors, and my experiences of being exposed to ROFG's online meetings, virtual performances, in-person events, and the archival materials I was given permission to engage with. I also reflect on Ramon Obusan's archival work in connection with ROFG's archival process through synthesizing the experiences of ROFG dance masters and dancers, the public materials regarding the dance company that are available for the public, and the various research projects that have been conducted with ROFG. Finally, I interrogate the complex ways in which ROFG engaged with Philippine-based Indigenous groups during the pandemic through dance and Kuya Mon's archive. In particular, I use an analysis of my ethnographic interviews with the interlocutors I worked with in ROFG and the way the dance company presented itself through Kuya Mon's archive, the Bahay ni Kuya, and the online pandemic performances they staged.

Sayaw sa Saliw: Retracing the Footsteps of a National Folk Dance Company

> Hindi ko alintana ang panakha-nakhang pag-ulan nang mga oras na iyon. Pagdaop ng aking mga paa sa lupa, binuksan ko agad ang aking payong habang suot ang aking face mask, face shield at dala ang isang maliit na bag. Bumungad sa akin ang karingalan ng bahay ni Kuya Mon. Sa labas ay nakaukit ang mga salitang Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group na tila pinaglumaan na ng panahon. Pero sa patuloy kong pagtitig dito, kalakip ang nakita kong mga banga sa gilid at at ang detalyadong ukit ng mga haligi sa puting bahay, ramdam kong pinagtibay din ang mga ito ng panahon. Huminga ako ng malalim dahil di ko mawari ang halo halong nararamdaman ko— kaba, pananabik, gunamgunam, at ang mga katanungang tumatakbo sa isip ko. Andito na nga ako sa muog ng ROFG, ang Bahay ni Kuya.[175]

[175] Field notes of the author, written in Tagalog and personally translated into English, January 2022.

> I did not mind the drizzle at that time. I opened my umbrella as soon as I stepped down from the taxi, wearing my face shield and face mask, and while I was carrying a small sling bag. When I looked up, what unfolded in front of me was the silence embracing the white-painted house of Ramon A. Obusan. A few meters away from the veranda was a signage that says Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group seemingly weathered by time. But the more I look at its facade, including the big earthen jars lined up on the sides and the intricate carving in the foundations that made up the white house, I also felt that everything I just saw also withstood time. I inhaled and exhaled deeply as I cannot explain what I was feeling— the anticipation, excitement, deep thoughts, and questions that were running through my mind. I can't believe that I was in front of ROFG's stronghold which is the Bahay ni Kuya.

I was invited to attend a video shoot where selected alumni and current members of the ROFG were invited to speak about their experiences being part of one of the country's national dance companies. The Ramon Obusan Folkloric Foundation Inc.'s (ROFF Inc.) Executive Director, Tita Bing, on her invitation, shared that this event might be a great opportunity for me to have a glimpse of ROFG through the life stories of its members. The video output produced in two parts for the 49th anniversary of the founding of ROFG, was made available to the public via YouTube entitled "Ugat at Ugnayan" (translated as "Roots and Relations").[176] I thought "Why not?" although, at the back of my mind, I was unsure how I would be able to handle being with the alumni and present members of ROFG. Such is the reputation of ROFG in my mind that every attempt to email Tita Bing or reach out to my interlocutors takes so much out of me. As I look back at it, it was almost the same experience I had with my other interlocutors in the various sites I visited. At the same time, I literally switched my communicative language and also

[176] Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, Ugat at Ugnayan: Unang Yugto, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jPAfbKz8z0.

getting the sense of how a particular group I am collaborating with generally go with their thought process and decision-making processes.

I first heard about the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group through my former artistic director in 2002 when I was a high school dance theater member of a community-based performing arts guild based in Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines. I then found out that ROFG[177] is a Philippine-based and government-supported national dance company established on September 21, 1972. As a resident folk dance company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, ROFG shares the government support that the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company receives as both continuously work towards the nurturance and upkeep of Philippine folk dances. In particular, ROFG "created a niche in the world of dance as a forerunner of Philippine dance performed closest to its original form."[178] Located in Pasay, a highly urbanized city in metropolitan Manila, ROFG maintains a learning and archival space called Bahay ni Kuya. My interest back then was piqued when I found out from the archives that Kuya Mon struck a chord for Philippine folk culture after seeing a wedding from the province where I grew up, Aklan. Obusan's experiences as a teacher, anthropologist, and folk dancer led him to configure a dance research approach "that respects and represents the dance in its natural form as he originally saw it in the field."[179] ROFG takes pride in presenting Filipino Indigenous dances that articulate what the company members saw and experienced from

[177] Admin, "Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group," January 11, 2021. ROFG began with some thirty performers led by dance researcher Ramon A. Obusan. "Boasting over a thousand performances in the Philippines and abroad, the ROFG is one of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' leading resident companies since 1986."
[178] C. C. P. Admin, "Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group."
[179] Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino: A Study of Contrasting Representations," National University of Singapore.

collaborating with Indigenous communities in the Philippines; from the 'proper' execution, posture, and attitude of how dance is performed to the uniqueness of the Indigenous community's expressive culture.

I found myself slowly entering the first floor of the two-story home of Kuya Mon, immediately recognizing the living room which also serves as a dance studio for the group's rehearsals which was reduced, if not fully halted by the ongoing pandemic. Sitting in one corner, under the shade of a tree, I then got to see how the back part of the house transformed into a mini studio where a production set was put together by ROFG alumni and current members. Every now and then, various people would check on me to make sure if I feel fine or if I have eaten, which by the way is a very typical demonstration of Filipino hospitality, or see if I wanted to join them.. Perhaps, some of them were also getting used to my presence; they did not know me yet but had been expecting me, as I was told by Tita Bing whom to contact, what to expect, and who to familiarize myself with, which also made me think that she already informed them of my visit. As the sun took its journey throughout the day, one after another, selected alumni and active members arrived, were oriented, got dressed, and then engaged in the interview process where ROFG members coming from various generations responded to my questions about what they remember about the group and their experiences with ROFG.

Christine Carol Singson, one of the resident-artists in the Bahay ni Kuya shared how she started with ROFG. "Maliliit pa kasi kami… pag naririnig namin yung music, parang bell na sa amin yun eh… so what we do, my sister and I.. .upo lang kami sa isang

tabi, tapos di namin namamalayan, naglalaro na kami, ginagawa na naming siyang playground. 'Sumama kayo dito, sabi n'yang ganoon. Maki ano kayo doon.' Kami naman, 'O sige,' sayaw sayaw, ganyan,. basta kung ano ano lang gawin namin.'" ("We were still small… when we hear the music [with ROFG performers rehearsing inside or outside the Bahay ni Kuya], it rings like a bell to us. So, what we do, my sister and I…we sit in the corner, and before we know it, we were already playing, we turn the makeshift rehearsal space into our playground. 'Come over here, you two, join the dancers,' he said [Kuya Mon]. And we're like 'All right.' We get to dance, run around, and do anything we wanted in the dance space.")[180] After being brought by her teacher and dance troupe trainer to CCP for the first time, Cherry Villanueva, one of ROFG's former dance masters, and then a high school student, found herself being amazed by the performances that ROFG presented which really made an impact on her and led her to say, "I will join that group. I will dance on that stage."[181]

One of the things that struck me during the video shoot was how connected the members were to each other, taking a pause when necessary, listening to each other's stories, but also the prominence of Kuya Mon's influence in the lives of those who were featured in the said video production. Dandel R. Espeña, a ROFG scholar coming from the squatter's area called Smokey Mountain (a term coined for a large landfill in Tondo, Manila) shared that one of the most memorable things he experienced with ROFG was his first tour with the company to Japan. He then talked about one of their performances

[180] Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, Ugat at Ugnayan: Unang Tagpo, 20:50-21:49.
[181] Ugat at Ugnayan: Unang Tagpo, 24:17-25:27.

called Panunumpa sa Kalikasan (Pledge to Mother Nature) in which he started singing "Sumusumpa ako, sa ngalan ng bukas, na ipagtatanggol ko ang kalikasan" (I pledge in the name of my future, that I will fight for Mother Nature.")[182] He said that it was during this performance conceptualized by Kuya Mon that the performers from the Smokey Mountain, would take off their costumes revealing their everyday clothes as they tried to survive living in a difficult environment. Dandel adds,

> Sa kabila ng napakagandang palabas namin… eto ang totoong kami, eto ang talagang Smokey Mountain. Nakasuot kami ng mga gusot gusto na mga damit, pero gusto naming sabihin sa inyo na sa kabila ng ganun, may mga talento kami, may mga pangarap kami, pakinggan n'yo kami. At yun yung gustong sabihin ni Kuya Mon. Actually, hindi n'ya lang gustong sabihin yan. Naniniwala rin kasi si Kuya Mon na kaya naming baguhin yung mga sarili namin.[183]
>
> Despite the splendid show we had… this is the real us, this is who we are as children from Smokey Mountain. We may be wearing ragged and dirty clothes, but we just wanted to tell everyone who is watching that despite what we go through in our lives, we have talents, we have dreams, [and thus] you should listen to us. And that's what Kuya Mon wanted to say. Actually, he doesn't just want to say that. More importantly, Kuya Mon believes that we [the children of Smokey Mountain] have the capability to change ourselves.

The material I gathered from my archival research and which I held in my head at that time slowly metamorphosed into actual stories, memories, and experiences that brought about an emotionally filled day for everyone present. I found myself crying with them, laughing at their anecdotes, and just being genuinely happy for everyone in ROFG for

[182] Dandel, who is a licensed professional teacher at present, started as a former member of a group of young performing artists from Smokey Mountain called "Mga Anak ni Inang Daigdig" (Children of Mother Earth) of which Ramon Obusan was one of the performing group's trainers.
[183] Ugat at Ugnayan: Unang Tagpo, 33:00-34:41.

how the dance company took care and held these people from different backgrounds and walks of life to Kuya Mon's arms, his way of dancing, and the Bahay ni Kuya. Today, ROFG functions through the guidance of ROFF, Inc. managed by Tita Bing, from where all executive decision-making processes occur, including performances and programming, and rolled out by the group headed by its pioneer members.

The choreographic process continuously practiced by ROFG was highly influenced and shaped by the founder himself, Ramon Arevalo Obusan, who took inspiration from the way he was brought up by his family, his anthropological training under the University of the Philippines' renowned anthropologist Dr. Espiridion Arsenio Manuel,[184] and his experience of being part of Bayanihan in the 1960s as an instrumentalist, dancer, and researcher. As the eldest son and the second of eleven children of Dr. Praxedes Obusan and Mrs. Josefina Arevalo, Ramon knew at a young age the importance of responsibility, discipline, and respect in the family, and having a sense of humor. Out of love, fear, and fun, Ramon managed to channel this into how hetaught dances to the performing artists of ROFG.[185]

Listening to the stories of those who were part of ROFG's virtual production for its 49th year anniversary, I couldn't help thinking how most of them started with ROFG when they were just kids. It was also because of Kuya Mon's amiable attitude that kids

[184] Project Saysay, "In Memoriam: E. Arsenio Manuel," Facebook, Accessed June 6, 2022 https://z-upload.facebook.com/psaysay/posts/4675395592537652. Dr. Manuel is considered the "Dean of Philippine Anthropology" and "Father of Philippine Folklore" with his various contributions to anthropology, history, literature, and linguistics and various collaborations with different indigenous groups in the Philippines.

[185] Kanami Namiki, Ramon Obusan, Philippine Folkdance and Me, (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2014), 1-148).

tended to gravitate towards him, on and off stage. Michael Bayani, one of the head musicians of ROFG, remembered how sharp Obusan was on rehearsals and double the strictness when the company was on tour. But also, how fatherly was his figure, as the head of ROFG. As part of the Batang ROFG (junior members of ROFG, "batang" meaning "younger" or "kids"), Luke Anthony O. Singson, who happens to be one of Obusan's grandsons, shared how his first tour in Korea as a performer "was really fun. All of us were kids there. We would exchange our roles from dancers to musicians and vice-versa. We get to travel for free and do what we love… the hotel experience, unlimited food, your room is really nice, and you get to meet different nationalities from other Southeast Asian countries."[186]

Obusan's background and training in cultural anthropology led him to pay attention not just to the dancers from the Indigenous communities he worked with but their clothing, environment, and way of life as well. Thus, when ROFG performs onstage, they make sure that they wear regalia made by the community where they learned a particular dance and what the designs meant, how the costumes are appropriately worn, and how to seamlessly perform the dance with the music that they also learned from one of their main sources of expressive culture, the Filipino Indigenous communities. Namiki observed that "ROFG uses authentic details of movements, costumes, and music to particularize a unique culture and identity of each ethnic/cultural community, emphasizing a multicultural nation."[187] This approach to performing

[186] Ugat at Ugnayan: Unang Tagpo, 42:39-43:40.
[187] Kanami Namiki, "Hybridity and National Identity: Different Perspectives of Two National Folk Dance Companies in the Philippines," Asian Studies 47 (2011), 74.

indigeneity through the specification rendered down to the tiniest details for each community and their expressive culture highlighted in performance allows for the audience to learn more about these Indigenous groups, their culture, and how every part presented onstage— props, costume, musical instruments, narratives, and choreographed movements-- makes sense when viewed altogether by an audience. Obusan's creative consciousness that started as he accompanied the late Lucrecia Reyes Urtula (National Artist for Dance) on various field research and heightened with his training with Dr. E. Arsenio Manuel took Kuya Mon's passion to a different level as he pushed through learning more about Filipino culture through the lens of dance with an 8mm camera, a cassette recorder, pen, and paper, Obusan took to heart his training in researching Philippine dances and made sure that nothing goes to waste as he ensures that ROFG members get to embrace and carry on his dance philosophy, even until his passing.

When ROFG is asked to perform a dance, especially an Indigenous dance, the company first checks to see if they have a research archive for that dance. This may be in the form of Kuya Mon's notes, the use of related literature and studies, audio and video recording of the dance piece. After they have exhausted checking Obusan's research from the 1970s to the late 1990s, ROFG dance masters then check a prior recording of the dance, perhaps a series of photos of a performance from years ago, video documentation, or a recently recorded performance either by members or alumni of ROFG or their supporters. If they can find a recording, it will serve as the basis for restaging the dance for another event, space, or purpose. If they cannot find a recording, dance masters

consult with each other, and most of the time, help each other restage or choreograph a dance anew.

Part of the dance company's contextualization of the dance led to a decision to present the dance according to how they witnessed it in a community, which may begin at different points on a particular occasion (e.g,. the dance of the bride and groom, or an early morning performance of harvesting rice). Prince,[188] one of my interlocutors said "Sa panahon ngayon, si dance master dumidipende kung ano ang ibibigay na theme ni director. Kasi dati, si Kuya Mon yan dati… siya magbibigay ng repertoire, siya magbibigay ng dance, siyempre alam niya na meron siyang research ne'to. Papanood niya lang sa mga dance masters for inspiration. Sa experience din ng mga dance masters, may alam sila niyan eh. [Tsaka,] sa kanila pa rin nanggagaling ang last decision." ("As of this time, dance masters would depend on the theme the show's director would like to have before deciding what dance to present. Before, it was Kuya Mon's call. He would give the repertoire and the dance; he knows if he has done the research for a particular dance. He would then ask the dance masters to watch the documentation for inspiration. In the experience of dance masters [after Mr. Obusan's passing], they would also have the knowledge of what to do. In the end, Tita Bing and the Board [ROFF, Inc.] have the last call before a dance, a ritual, or a performance ends up being presented onstage.")

ROFG had a show on the night Kuya Mon was transported to a hospital due to a heart attack. "The show must go on," one of his dancers told me. And they did. In a

[188] Prince, one of the company's younger dance masters, is a resident artist of ROFG, who also took the lead in the digitization project of ROFG with the Cultural Center of the Philippines. At the time of my fieldwork, the digitization team of ROFG is composed of 5-6 people.

newspaper interview, Tita Bing said that "…after he died, we wondered if the company should go on. The family decided that we owed it to his memory and to the many young dancers he had trained and educated, to continue his mission. It has been an uphill climb, but thanks to many supporters and to the perseverance of the senior members, the company is very active today."[189] For Tita Bing, to keep the vision of her brother going has been her role.

From their practices in the Bahay ni Kuya to the various spaces they perform in and the dances they get to share with their audience, ROFG mirrors what its founder espoused the dance company should be: Filipino bearers of living culture that stay true to the Indigenous groups who shared their expressive culture with ROFG. While the group acknowledges that the presentation of "authenticity" is nearly impossible once the dance is lifted from the community to the stage, what the group attempts to cultivate is the sense of indigeneity entrusted to them by their Indigenous culture bearers and collaborators and to facilitate how they would perform indigeneity through the dances that they would present onstage.

Ina,[190] a pioneering ROFG member and dance master said, "When we were doing unpublished dances, may viewing time. Panoorin ninyo. Tingnan n'yo kung paano sila kumilos…anong ginawa nya, bakit nya [ginawa]…inaano ni Kuya Mon yun… When he gave me Inagta, 'Bakla, halika panoorin mo ito, ito ang gagawin mo.' That was my first

[189] Floy Quintos, "And His Tree Has Borne Much Fruit," Lifestyle.INQ, September 16, 2012, https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/67040/and-his-tree-has-borne-much-fruit/.
[190] Ina, another interlocutor I was able to work with from ROFG, has been with the company for 30 years. Since Ramon Obusan passed away, Ly shared that he was assigned as a dance director, project coordinator, project manager, and scriptwriter among many other things.

solo dance, na assigned to me... Mapapansin mo sa choreography ni Kuya Mon, it involves the community." ("There would be viewing time when we would be tasked to perform unpublished dances. [Kuya Mon would say] "watch the dance." Observe how they move, what other movements have been done, and perhaps ask yourselves why they moved the way they moved… Kuya Mon would check [would make sure]. When he gave me the dance Inagta [a dance of the Agta Indigenous peoples in Negros Oriental], he said 'Bakla [a term for a queer person], come over and watch this dance, this is what you will do. That was my first solo dance, the first one assigned to me… [Also,] one would notice that when Kuya Mon choreographs a dance, it involves the community.") Ina alludes to the unconventional ways in which Kuya Mon would slowly instill in them the responsibility of remaining true to what Obusan was able to research and what the Indigenous groups imparted to them. This instance shows that, for ROFG, articulating indigeneity through movement, dance, songs, rituals, music, and regalia is their way of ensuring that they clearly share what has been transmitted in the research process of the dance company with a particular Indigenous community. In honoring the worldviews and lifeways of Filipino Indigenous groups through a faithful and grounded presentation of their music, songs, and dances, ROFG persevered and strengthened the foundations of how they restage, choreograph, and perform Philippine folk dances from the local to the international scene by sustaining their connections with Indigenous culture bearers. At times, other dance companies, suffer from being highly criticized by folk dance enthusiasts, culture and the arts advocates, and at times by the Indigenous peoples themselves, because of cultural appropriation, not receiving support from the local

government unit, or not being deemed a folk dance troupe worthy enough to represent the city/municipality. ROFG also have its own share of critics, but as mentioned by my ROFG interlocutors, for as long as they build on the extensive Indigenous research work of Obusan and they rekindle their relationships with the Indigenous groups they work with by maintaining contact, by visitation, and/or consultation, ROFG will be able to continuously perform for and on behalf of their Indigenous collaborators.

Namiki's extensive research with ROFG cited how Kuya Mon established and maintained his communication and relationships with the local communities that he worked with. She said that "Sometimes the relationship is more personal, and various ethnic/cultural groups such as Kalinga (Cordillera), Ifugao (Cordillera), Aeta, Yakan (Basilan, Sulu), and Maranao (Lanao) visit Obusan's place in Manila. Some of them come before Christmas to ask him for pamasko, or a Christmas gift, which is usually in the form of money, or simply ask for accommodation or lodging while in Manila. Others bring artifacts such as costumes, textiles, ornaments, and other handicrafts to Obusan in order to sell or exchange them for school tuition fees or other daily life needs."[191] When I asked Prince how they have maintained ROFG's connections with various Indigenous communities all over the country after Kuya Mon left, Prince explained that ROFG would also take the time to reconnect with several communities that they have worked with, to rekindle the ties, or reintroduce and get to know new members from both groups, whether that is through supporting the Indigenous communities with their livelihood or

[191] Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino: A Study of Contrasting Representations," 71.

projects, giving them a call, and doing consultations with the Indigenous groups especially if it concerns a particular performance.

The corporealization of Kuya Mon's research philosophy and values towards showcasing Filipino folk dances in general, and Indigenous dances in particular, allowed for ROFG to present themselves as an unconventional folk dance company that does not easily adhere to Western standards of showcasing Philippine dance but rather a collective that strives for reflecting the different groups they have collaborated with in their work, and taking up space by investing in uplifting the lives of Filipino Indigenous communities in the process. For ROFG, it is clear that "authenticity" is not the romanticization of Indigenous expressive culture nor the fascination for what the West sees as the exotic, the savage, or the primitive. Instead, they believe there is a power that lies in forwarding the unique culture and traditions of Indigenous communities, and that Filipino Indigenous groups have rich knowledge systems and practices which deserves the respect, support, and valuation of others.

Keying In Obusan's Legacy: Digitizing the Ephemeral, Dancing through the Digital

"So kailan nyo to na-arrange, etong parang archive na to?", ("So when was this archive set up?"), I asked. Prince responded saying, "Etong archive na to, maayos naman siya dati. Pero, hindi siya ganun ka accessible sa mga tao, kumbaga, halo halo pa yung mga video… nakastock lang siya talaga. Meron din namang inventory, ma-a-access mo, pero matagal. Ang ginawa ko, nilagay ko siya sa Excel. Lahat ng materials na nandito, doon ko siya inarrange." ("This archive was also organized before. But this space was not

accessible for the people as the VHS recordings were still mixed up… they were all just randomly arranged in a stockpile. There was an inventory, you can access it back then, but it would take you a while [before you would be able to find what you are looking for.] So, what I did was make a list on an Excel sheet. I arranged the inventory here based on the rearrangement that I did.") "Self-taught ka lang ba sa inventory mo, ikaw lang gumawa?", I interjected. "Oo, kung saan kasi mapapadali eh. Dito sa RO, kung saan mapapadali. Ayun, from doon, nilista ko siya per box kung ano yung laman ng magulo pa, tapos yung per box na yun nilagyan ko ng number, na yun din nakalagay dito sa Excel. Tapos, eto yun eh…" (Yes, whatever makes the process easy [for me]. Here in RO[FG], what matters is how we could make things efficient. Then I started to list the items inside the box form when it was topsy turvy, put numbers as labels, which was reflected in Excel [and there you go, I have my own working system. This is how it's done…]"), Prince shared before he proceeded by demonstrating to me how his Excel system works like someone who has been adept with his tool, ensuring that he is productive at what he was tasked to do. From then on, I would see Prince work for hours in front of the computer, extracting data from recorded videos of previous performances and finding photos that would supplement the video material ROFG was preparing for its 49th anniversary.

ROFF, Inc.'s partnership with the Cultural Center of the Philippines in the digitization and preservation of Obusan's dance research archive in 2017 was the foundation's way to honor Kuya Mon's wish to digitize his research. I can see how this will be a huge step towards ensuring that Kuya Mon's work will be preserved, its

longevity secured, and that the next generation will be able to access his work through a digital platform. The drive to pursue this project was made possible when the pandemic ultimately stopped in-person performances. From cataloging the archive to watching the content recorded in the VHS and the coding of the material that follows, Prince takes the lead in methodically arranging Kuya Mon's archive that includes his research, international and local performances, lecture demonstrations, workshops, performances coming from other groups, and music. Aside from this, Prince is also aware of Kuya Mon's collection of weaponry, the contents inside ROFG's library, and other artifacts that would still need proper archiving including the preservation of its physical and intellectual aspects, the assurance that it may still be accessed, used, or displayed for a long period, and made available through various platforms, online or offline.

That being said, what worried Prince was the same thing that worried me when I found out that ROFG was racing against time to finish this project. For one, Kuya Mon has an extensive dance archive and it would take a little while for the whole tedious process to be completed. Second, ROFG lacks sufficient equipment to keep the integrity of the process. While the dance company has an analog-to-digital converter, Prince expressed that they would need a couple of formatted hard drives for saving the converted files and a separate VHS player (which is difficult to find nowadays). Third, such meticulous work needs manpower. The help of another person or two so that they can work round the clock would be crucial in terms of identifying various performances recorded in one VHS, the capacity to stay for longer hours of work whenever necessary, and the expertise to manipulate technical equipment needed in the process. Lastly, while

the space where the digitization process happens allows Prince to work efficiently, there may be alternative spaces where the VHS and CDs may be kept at the appropriate temperature and humidity it needs to survive for a long time. Despite these challenges, Prince makes sure that he takes advantage of every chance he has to work on digitizing Kuya Mon's dance archive, and in particular, the group's performances and Indigenous communities' expressive culture saved on fragile videocassette recording devices.

Not only Prince, but everyone who I got the chance to meet had their own means to make sure that they get the best results for whatever task they were charged with. I was able to attend an online meeting that the company had in preparation for their third and fourth quarter programming where they had disagreements. However, they would also find themselves resolving the pending conflicts in the end by choosing the option that would benefit ROFG the most without compromising much of their time and effort. More so, their decision to acknowledge each other's insights maximizes the individual effort and expertise that they put being part of the team.

The in-person video shoot I attended made me feel that everyone there had a role to play that they tried to conduct seamlessly. When an instruction was misunderstood or when an adjustment was needed, everyone knew when to extend whatever help they could offer to ensure the success of the day's project. Some sacrifices had to be made like allowing someone to exit an online meeting since they were encountering internet signal difficulty, taking a break to think through the best approach to a particular challenge, or presenting an alternative route in editing a file even that would mean spending a few more hours to go through the archive.

But what really struck me was the concerted effort from those involved. It was as if they were told to make sure that everything goes to plan despite the precarity of the pandemic. Not to mention the jokes and banter in between that kept ROFG members all in and going. For example, one pointed out how the other core member had a lot of other priorities and yet they all find themselves in the same space, sometimes even with eyes half closed, as they all try to keep the ball rolling for the dance company. Throwing off what may be perceived as offensive repartees turned out to be, in a way, expressions of endearment as to how the other person would reply back with a smiling face, and trying to respond back with a more offensive yet endearing remark. This scenario of familiarity, understanding each other, and finding a common ground, just shows the maturity of the dance company to deal with the challenges that may come their way and speaks volumes to their footing as a folk dance group rooted in the mostly unseen labor, hard work, and passion that their founder inculcated in them.

Overall, while this long process of digitization is more intricate than meets the eye, what the pandemic did was give way for this work to be done. “Ngayong pandemic, yan muna ginagawa namin. Para makatulong na rin sa mga dance masters.” (“During the height of the pandemic, that’s what we do [digitization of Kuya Mon’s dance research]. And also, to help the company’s dance masters.”), Prince commented when I asked him what keeps him going with this project. On one hand, this digitization project strengthened their commitment to not just preserving the important dance research that Obusan conducted for three decades but, more importantly, to forwarding the expressive culture of Filipino Indigenous communities and ensuring that the next generation would

be able to access their ancestors' dances, songs, regalia, and rituals through Obusan's work, digitized and available online. Through a digital platform, viewers would be able to experience what ROFG meant with their branding of "being close to original." It would highlight how Obusan's research paid attention not just to the dance, but the dancer's environment as well, albeit this time the audience would experience it virtually. It may then elevate what Namiki asserted regarding Kuya Mon's approach of looking at the wholeness of the performance. She said, "It is not just the dance's movements that must be understood, but also the way in which musical instruments are used, their sense of rhythm and tempo, and even the ways in which they handle clothing and manipulate props must be taken into consideration. Obusan is very conscious of, and sensitive to, being 'close to the original' in as many aspects as possible, because music, costume, and movement are inextricably linked."[192]

Such an approach, I believe, recenters the often marginalized Indigenous communities in the Philippines and makes their visibility more apparent to the viewers. By recentering Indigenous groups through a presentation of their expressive culture in the virtual space, I think about the potentially agentive ways of knowing, being, and doing rooted from an Indigenous people's lens that may spark a critical analysis of the presented work in the digital.

On the other hand, the huge digitization project exposes the dance company to questions of misrepresentation in relation to the Indigenous groups they have worked with and represented in their performances. While ROFG invests in digitizing Obusan's

[192] Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino: A Study of Contrasting Representations," 96.

work from the 1970s to the late 1990s, the burden is on ROFG to remain respectful to the Originators of the Indigenous dances they digitize, making sure that their performances do not perpetuate harmful stereotypes or misrepresentations of Indigenous communities, and that the elements of contextualization, attention to cultural details, and the intent to forward the Indigenous community rather than the dance company are made apparent. While I have witnessed during my fieldwork how ROFG has a space where part of Obusan's archive was already made ready for digitization, and that a small bulk of his research was already digitized (and is already being used for their performances during the pandemic, including their 49th year digital documentary project), I was also informed by Prince that the majority of Obusan's research still awaits filing, cataloguing, and digitization. The Bahay ni Kuya have more than three decades worth of archival materials, including videos of Indigenous and local Filipino group's rituals (ex. rice harvest), celebrations (ex. wedding), and events (ex. procession), and items that Indigenous communities use in their daily lives (ex. baskets, drinking pots, hunting and gathering tools). With such vast amount of data and material archive, there lies the challenge of not only making sure their digitization process is accurate and more importantly, that their representation of Indigenous groups does not create stereotypes of Indigenous peoples in mass media through the romanticization of their culture and be decentered and simplified in terms of characterizing who they are and the breadth of their expressive culture. When that happens, not only will it be problematic in the impending posterity of a digitized archive of an Indigenous community, but more so, to the very lives of the Indigenous communities who continue to live and practice their expressive

culture as part of their way of life. I believe that through contemporary versions of rekindling relationships with the Indigenous peoples that ROFG through Obusan have collaborated with before, improved representations of Indigenous communities may be attained, and discriminatory, minimizing, and silencing stereotypes that obliterate Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies may be prevented.

While some dance companies from the Philippines and the diaspora are responsible for reinforcing stereotypes regarding Indigenous communities and valorizing indigeneity as a romanticized notion of authenticity through the dances they present onstage, I forward that that ROFG performances, whether presented in-person or online, help shape the experiences of their viewers in a way that acknowledges the rich and powerful knowledge systems and practices of Indigenous groups and uplifts their world views, lifeways, and narratives. During the pandemic, ROFG had the challenge of relying on the archives of Obusan to connect with the expressive culture shared by their Indigenous collaborators. However, in their 50th anniversary show entitled "Dancing in a New World," ROFG used technology, tackled social issues, and showcased the dynamism of Indigenous groups they collaborated with by emphasizing how it is to dance in a new world— highlighting fact-based research, involving the potential of technological platforms like TikTok, and melding tradition and modernity. Just as performance is a central means for Filipino Americans to navigate their complex identities and cultural heritage in a diasporic context,[193] I see ROFG constantly refiguring

[193] Theodore S. Gonzalves, The Day the Dancers Stayed, 45.

the ways they restage and choreograph Philippine folk dances to continuously fight for and assert the presence of the Indigenous groups they collaborate with.

Pasikot-sikot sa Bahay ni Kuya: Circling through the House of Kuya Mon

One rainy morning, while I was setting up my interview materials, Prince mentioned that he would work on copying files on the second floor, where a room was assigned as a video room and storage area of Obusan's research materials including VHS, CDs, and various documents, and where a computer, digital recorder, and printer was set-up. Meanwhile, when he wants to copy photos, video snippets, and the like, he would prefer to work with those files in the evening, and downstairs as "ayokong ano, baka maano ko yung sinasabi nila." ("I don't want to experience what they say [happens here.]") "Na ano daw?" (Like, what?)," I asked as I laughed a bit. "Na may naglalakad…Naririnig ko lang, naming lahat sa baba, may kadena, may ganun.)" (That someone walks at night, I would hear footsteps, all of us downstairs [including the caretakers of the house] would hear it, also a chainlike sound, like that.") as he jokingly shared it.

That unusual conversation led me to ask how the house was built. Prince told me that the parts of the Bahay ni Kuya were previous parts of different houses from places like Laguna (a province 95 kilometers away from Pasay) and were put together to form the house. Prince remarked that "[Kaya] may sinasabi sila na kasama rin daw yung mga ano, [ispiritu], ayun." (That's why, they say, the spirits residing on those houses also came over.") Some of the items in the house were also repurposed. "Kung mapapansin

mo yung upuan na mabigat doon sa baba, hagdanan siya eh, na ginawa lang na upuan, ganun." ("If you noticed the long bench downstairs, it was actually parts of a staircase which was converted as a bench."), Prince added. I tried to brush off what Prince shared with me as I have a fear of the unseen but I guess, it also became a driving force for me to get to know Kuya Mon, ROFG, and Obusan's research archive through the Bahay ni Kuya. My succeeding visits to interview one of my interlocutors, witness an event, have a conversation with its caretakers, or immerse myself in the dance archives of Kuya Mon has been an experience I wish I could have again, to say the least. Engaging in the dance archive of Kuya Mon and at the same time experiencing it through the Bahay ni Kuya made me feel like I was running out of time given the array of materials ROFG draws on to anchor its performances, not to mention the parts of Kuya Mon's house that were not accessible yet during that time including his library and archival materials that were yet to be arranged. But, I did not waste time lingering on my worries and focused my attention on what I was allowed to access, including a walkthrough of the various parts of the two-story building, the dance company's costumes, VHS and CD recorded performances of ROFG and his research from the 1970s to the late 1990s, and documents composed of letters, list of dances, scribbled notes, programs, and various information about the different dances that Kuya Mon have researched on. Kuya Mon's archive provided me with a rich resource and a preview as to who he is as an artist, his creative processes and that of ROFG, and the cultural contexts from which ROFG takes its branding and purpose.

The Bahay ni Kuya was in the spotlight when on its 44th anniversary, ROFF, Inc. through its performing arm ROFG, partnered with the CCP Arts Education and launched the Bahay ni Kuya as a "Home of Philippine Folk Heritage and Learning Resource Center of the National Artist for Dance Ramon Arevalo Obusan."[194] This decision was a way for ROFF, Inc. to honor Kuya Mon's wish to continue the company's areas of focus such as the Batang ROFG and the digitization of his collections and preservation of his artifacts among other equally important pursuits for ROFG. "The foundation, led by its board of directors composed of Obusan family members and the ROFG members, has reached out to tap possible collaborations, in line with the wishes of the late National Artist Ramon Arevalo Obusan as to how his foundation can be utilized, 'find a way where the ROFF can be of full service to the generations to come [and] make sure that my researches are transferred to the top-of-the-line CDs to be preserved and eventually used by the next generation.'"[195] The dance company opened Kuya Mon's house for educational purposes, dance and music training, and turned the archive it houses into readily accessible materials for cultural education and research for students, researchers, teachers, artists, culture and the arts enthusiasts, and the youth.

Throughout its existence, the Bahay ni Kuya became a home not just for the performing artists of ROFG but for the "immediate community around him, to the community of folk dancers, artists, and members of the Indigenous communities all over

[194] Primer Media Inc, "Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group Launches 'Bahay Ni Kuya,'" Blog, accessed September 16, 2022, https://primer.com.ph/blog/2017/09/17/ramon-obusan-folkloric-group-launches-bahay-ni-kuya/.
[195] Primer Media Inc, "Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group," Blog.

the country."[196] During my archival work and follow-up interviews, I found out that Ramon Obusan actually met Leopoldo Caballero, a culture bearer from the Panay Bukidnons, in 1996, during the conduct of the Global Indigenous Cultural and Youth Olympics hosted by Manila as part of the United Nations World Programme of Action event. Obusan then requested Caballero to stay with him for six months to share the Panay Bukidnons' culture (specifically the Indigenous group's sugidanon; up to the point of requesting Caballero to write twelve books about Panay Bukidnons). The following year, two senior members of ROFG visited the Panay Bukidnons to learn more about their local culture and tradition. Since then, the Bahay ni Kuya has kept an unarranged archive of images and texts of the Panay Bukidnons' expressive culture. Prince and Ina also told me of the various Indigenous groups that visited Kuya Mon for collaborations, business, and cultural exchange.

The vast collection of musical instruments, artifacts, fabric, and even his personal collectibles, paint Kuya Mon as a multifaceted man, which in turn, makes the Bahay ni Kuya a multifunctional space. His house paints Kuya Mon as someone who is well-travelled, collects musical instruments in as much as he collects random items of every day (ex. rattan baskets, hats, and pots), has a soft spot for Christmas and the nativity scene, and whose house reflects Indigenous carvings, designs, colors, and objects integrated to the whole that is the Bahay ni Kuya. At the same time, the Bahay ni Kuya transforms into a rehearsal space, a place for him and his visitors to socialize, and a

[196] ROFF, Inc., "Bahay Ni Kuya."

learning ground for appreciating and immersing oneself to Philippine culture, and in particular the country's Indigenous dances.

For Namiki, the Bahay ni Kuya wears multiple hats by being "a school of discipline, a repository of Philippine "folk" knowledge, a cultural hub and network of urban folk dance groups, a training ground for dancers, teachers and musicians, and a cultural organization that provides support to marginalized youth. It is a family, not only of ROFG dancers, but a larger imagined community of Filipino folk who come from near and far to seek refuge in Obusan's house, which is, in effect, an entire nation's home."[197] For her, the Bahay ni Kuya is a transformational space for all walks of life to come in and out of. I contend that this transformational force, also allowed for the members of ROFG to not only experience the regular flow of people, communities, and archival materials in and out of the Bahay ni Kuya but also elevate the flow of interrelationships that the group had as everyone confronts the fragility of life amidst the onslaught of COVID-19. In other words, relationality through a journey of embracing traces of indigeneity in the Bahay ni Kuya mattered for the dance company.

ROFG's core is not just found in Obusan's dance philosophies that the dance company members hold on to dearly but also in relation to the Indigenous groups that they have worked with. This means that by engaging with indigeneity in the archive allowed non-Indigenous ROFG members to listen to one another, collaborate with others, and uplift each other. By experiencing the movement of people, culture, and stories together through Kuya Mon's house, a sense of communality emerges in the process as

[197] Namiki, "Sayaw Filipino," 74.

everyone in the group is treated as a family, they share the same experiences as part of ROFG, and Kuya Mon allows its performing artists to explore their capabilities, challenge their limits, and chase their dreams by working alongside each other, while taking pride of their roots, and their being Filipino in general.

While ROFG's engagement with Filipino Indigenous communities was reduced to accessing Kuya Mon's dance archive and the few opportunities they got to showcase Indigenous expressive culture during the height of the pandemic, I argue that the physical absence of Indigenous communities that ROFG had interacted with during the two years of the pandemic made ROFG aware of the indigeneity that surrounds them through the Bahay ni Kuya, the Indigenous archive that permeates Kuya Mon's abode, and the relationships that Kuya Mon has formed with different Indigenous groups prior to the pandemic. The dance company took the gap created by the pandemic to revisit their collections of costumes and musical instruments for proper archiving, repair what needs attention, and repurpose what may be found useful. My visit to the Bahay ni Kuya allowed me to witness ROFG in the middle of this process. Costumes were washed in batches, others were classified, and labels were made more apparent. I also found groupings of various musical instruments, dance accessories, and props that may have not seen the light prior to the pandemic but during that time, had the chance to be checked, cleaned, and organized. Prince also shared with me how ROFG also checked on their Indigenous community counterparts during the pandemic, their situation, and how ROFG could help. Interestingly, as I was usually alone or in the presence of only one or two people during my various visits to the Bahay ni Kuya, I still felt a sense of fullness even

if I was alone walking on the first floor where the living room with a big mirror is (which helped me think it was a dance studio/'rehearsal space) or taking the stairs to the second floor and be welcomed by the dining area, another living room, and different bedrooms with various purposes, one of which was to house the VHS collections and research documents of Kuya Mon. In the absence of people who would usually populate the Bahay ni Kuya, his photos, memories, and that of the different generations of ROFG who permeated the space filled my senses, the archives never failed to make me curious, and by just looking around, taking photos, or touching the edges of the windows or taking a breath of fresh air on the veranda, it never felt like I was alone.

ROFG's experiences during the pandemic in relation to the Indigenous groups they have collaborated with and my short stint at the Bahay ni Kuya all point to the constant exchange of relational processes between the dance company members and their Indigenous interlocutors. In other words, ROFG takes seriously the unique and diverse qualities of the communities they work with and considers Indigenous groups as distinct but intimately connected circles. Veering away from the homogenization of indigeneity in terms of dances that are presented in-person or online, ROFG takes the less traveled route of investing its resources to elevate the Indigenous communities of the Philippines. This is where I then get to see Muyco's sibod making sense. For sibod to fully transpire, the musicians, dancers, space, and the moment must sync with each other. In the process, each entity involved gets to feel each other, find ways to harmonize, learn from each other's differences, and adjust one's flow in and out of the performance. And while such relational choreography is difficult, ROFG finds itself thriving.

Chapter 3

Indigenous Currents, Interweaving Flows: Parangal Dance Company in Motion

Introduction

I was sitting quietly in a small, white van with Makasi[198] of Parangal Dance Company (PDC, or simply, Parangal)[199] and Fai of Salamindanao Dance Company (SLC) [200] when Makasi told me to not expect anything and "just be open to the experience." We were headed to a site in the outskirts of Cotabato City where the 4-day Maguindanaon ipat, kadsakay (also bpagipat, kapagipat or pag-ipat),[201] a pre-Islamic healing ritual, will take place. Fai looked at me smiling, which I only knew through his eyes as he was wearing a face mask, as if anticipating my reaction as I am about to experience one of Maguindanao Indigenous peoples' (also, Maguindanaw or Maguindanaon)[202] practices that involves the entire community. Considered as the most elaborate of ceremonies for ancestors and spirits in Maguindanaon culture, ipat is hosted by a family or a community

[198] Makasi (not his real name) is the artistic director and founder of Parangal Dance Company (PDC) based in the unceded Ramaytush Ohlone Territory, also known as San Francisco, in California, USA.
[199] "About," Parangal, accessed October 3, 2021, https://www.parangal.org/about. "Parangal," as a Tagalog term, means "tribute." Parangal is a volunteer-based Filipino folk dance group located in San Francisco, California.
[200] "Maguindanaon Sagayan," Parangal, accessed October 3, 2021, https://www.parangal.org/maguindanaon-sagayan. Sir Fai (not his real name) is the artistic director and choreographer of Salamindanao Dance Company, a school-based dance troupe from Cotabato City State Polytechnic College in Cotabato City, Philippines. "An exceptional Moro master artist, he is a dancer, shaman, chanter, and a traditional musician (Maguindanaoan Tribe). He plays various Maguindanaon traditional instruments like the kulintang, agong, debakan, babendil, and gandingan."
[201] José Maceda, "A Cure of the Sick 'Bpagipat' in Dulawan, Cotabato (Philippines)," Acta Musicologica 56, no. 1 (1984): 92–105, https://doi.org/10.2307/932618.
[202] "Maguindanao," Bureau on Cultural Heritage - BARMM (blog), July 19, 2019, https://bch.bangsamoro.gov.ph/bangsamoro-cultural-heritage/maguindanao/. "The name Maguindanao, meaning 'people of the flood plain,' was given to both the people and the island on which they live."

for a set time period and is usually led by a pagagamot (or babaylan, meaning “shaman”). I just tried to ease my thoughts for the 30-minute trip and observed that from the hustle of the cityscape, we were seeing a gradual spatial shift as we travel— more trees, less buildings, and narrower roads.

When Fai was introduced to me by Makasi in the hostel we were staying, I already noticed the ease with which Fai communicates with Makasi, how he quickly tends to Makasi’s follow-up questions, and how smoothly Fai coordinates the trip’s logistics, evident in the fact that he has been doing these for years with Makasi’s group. I then remembered that they knew each other for more than a decade already as Makasi and some Parangal members have been to Cotabato and experienced ipat a few times before. For all those times, it was Fai who manages the preparations for the ritual, coordinates with the Maguindanaon Indigenous peoples, and arranges all the logistics of the itinerary that Parangal through Makasi arranged with him. “Basta sasayaw tayo, ha?” (“We will be dancing, alright?”), Makasi softly reminded me. Before I can even respond, Fai interjected, “Kaya mo yan” (“You got this”). I just looked at both of them, trying to find reassurance that everything will be okay. I knew a little about ipat through Makasi and my research but being there witnessing everything happening all at once was overwhelming for me. I was even asking myself if the community will also welcome me and I was tempted to ask more questions like what dance will we be doing, what should I do in the process, or if there is anything I should prepare for. But I just kept my thoughts at bay so as not to pre-empt anything that may hinder my full experience of immersing with the Maguindanaons and experiencing ipat.

When we arrived, I first noticed various trees and plants growing on the other side where a small mosque (place of prayer for Muslims) was built just adjacent to the one-way road where our van entered. Knowing that ipat is part of a pre-Islamic belief system and therefore is discouraged amongst Maguindanaons as it is perceived to be primitive and is not acknowledged anymore as part of the present Islamic practices, I can't help but think about how the imam (worship leader running the mosque) would react with the conduct of the ipat. "You'll see…pupunta yan sila dito sa sunod." ("You'll see, they (referring to the imams) will be coming over here next time."), Fai told me in one of our conversations. I noticed that to keep their side of the mutual relationship with the imams, the Maguindanaons doing the ipat always start the ritual after the imam conducts his last prayer of the afternoon which is broadcast in the village through a large megaphone installed outside the mosque. Prior to the ipat preparations, I was told by Fai that they have already coordinated with the imams and even invited them to come to the feast, referring to the get together (usually dinner time) of Maguindanao community members, especially the ones directly involved in the ipat including visitors like Makasi and I. The imam's words would echo throughout the area while every Maguindanaon continues to be pre-occupied with doing something, seemingly unbothered, but notably aware.

From the oldest person to the youngest kid, each one seemed to have a hand in the weeklong event. Tall bamboo poles with red, yellow, and green cloth were erected at various points in front of the small house to call for the good spirits and ward off the evil ones. "Para malaman nila na andito tayo" ("So they [the spirits] would know we are here"), Fai shared with me when he noticed my curiosity with the bamboos designed with

colorful cloth patterns. Inside the house, three Maguindanaons sit on the floor, slicing some vegetables and root crops for the planned dinner. Two other people were taking charge of the small room where the shaman contacts the spirits. It is filled with various offerings like roasted chicken, uncooked rice, cooked eggs, textiles, regalia, and a small version of the vinta (traditional outrigger boat) at the center. The room was also adorned with textiles from Mindanao, various Indigenous dance implements, and offering plates filled to the brim as the smell of the incense filled the small space. There were two tables filled with cups for kape (black coffee) and different kakanin (sweets) made of glutinous rice and coconut milk placed outside the house where the other part of the ipat ritual is conducted. “Kain tayo!” (“Let’s eat!”), one of the people helping shouted, inviting everyone to take part on the snacks on the table. As visitors, we were told to go first. I took a bite of the bread I got while Makasi had some kape to which I also followed suit. We both joined the Maguindanaons having their preparation inside the house and conversed with them.

In hindsight, I slowly felt everyone moving to the table, taking their share, pouring hot water to a cup for their kape with some of them adding brown sugar just like what I did, and getting one bread or a kakanin. The children just sat or stood to the side, playing or talking to each other to perhaps wait for their parents or older sibling to bring them something to eat. Someone then sat down on the lined up kulintangan (set of eight gongs arranged on a rack) and just played beautiful music using two wooden sticks that echoed on the space. The focus of the whole space shifted to the energy of the kulintangan and its player, playing musical notes that I would say have been always

familiar to the community, and even to me who only learned the musical sound and beats through recorded accompaniments. Some ate their snacks, others continuously worked, the children played around, and here I was, in the middle of this community gathering, soaking in the experience. No one was wearing a mask at that time except me, so I made the conscious effort to also not wear it when I started eating but also even after that, although at times it felt semi-automatic to wear it, perhaps due to being conditioned by the pandemic. I used my hand sanitizer from time to time as well. "Wala sa amin dito yan… walang nagkasakit dito dahil sa COVID-19, we are protected" ("It's nothing to us… no one got sick here because of COVID-19, we are protected"), Fai reassured me and Makasi. For a second, I admittedly forgot about the pandemic. With this ethnographic vignette, I offer a glimpse of how Parangal conducts their "immersive research. To understand how Parangal engages with dárawatan as they collaborate with Maguindanaons, I ask: What does this immersive process have to do with the company's ongoing relationship with various Indigenous groups in the Philippines? How does Parangal Dance Company approach the restaging and choreography of Philippine Indigenous dances?

In this chapter, I argue that the research trip (also called "cultural immersion") of Parangal Dance Company to the Philippines to collaborate with different Indigenous communities reveals a decolonial approach from which Filipinos and Filipino Americans in the diaspora center the world views, lifeways, and expressive culture of Indigenous Filipinos. This decolonial approach is also akin to what I assert to be a framework for dárawatan— that a recognition of the role of the Indigenous community as arbiters and

the non-Indigenous folk dance groups as collaborators in the circulation of Indigenous expressive culture is fundamental for a full dárawatan to take over.

Second, I believe that the kind of relationality Parangal establishes and maintains with various Indigenous groups is an effort on their end to break the privilege of their positionality as Filipino-Americans and nurture the ways in which they want to build relationships with different Filipino Indigenous groups beyond just knowing them and learning their expressive culture. While Parangal members flex their positionality to navigate power structures and hierarchies in the Philippines that hinder them from effectively connecting with Filipino Indigenous communities, it is the same positionality that they utilize to strengthen their relationship with the indigenous groups they collaborate with. Finally, I posit that by Parangal's investment in honing reciprocal practices towards Filipino indigenous cultural groups, with an emphasis on working with the latter's culture bearers, Parangal approaches the restaging and choreography of Philippine Indigenous dances with groundedness and confidence knowing they have the guidance, blessing, and support of the main creators and practitioners of indigenous expressive culture themselves, the indigenous peoples, as represented by their elders or culture bearers, that also molds the ways in which Parangal presents Indigenous expressive culture to Filipinos in the U.S. and the world. Often, and if the possibility allows, PDC bring the culture bearers to the U.S. to see the staged dances in-person, provide feedback, teach masterclasses when opportunities arise, connect them with the Filipino community in the U.S., and eventually speak to the people as the main sources of these Indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

To elucidate my arguments, I trace Parangal's beginnings, the company's core values, and process of "immersion" with Philippine-based Indigenous groups. I also focus on my experience joining PDC on their research trip with the Maguindanaons at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. More so, I look at how Parangal navigates their continuous partnership with Filipino culture bearers. Finally, I explore PDC's restaging of Philippine Indigenous dances the diaspora. I forward that Parangal's research approach is one that centers Indigenous communities and their expressive culture; a praxis that puts a premium on the fluidity and constant movement of people, ideas, and cultures.

Throughout Chapter 3, I forward an Indigenous-centered and decolonial dance ethnography that includes interview responses from my interlocutors, field notes, archival data, participant-observation, and performance analysis conducted in the middle of a pandemic to expound on the process in which Parangal Dance Company conduct their research trip or "immersion" with the Maguindanaon Indigenous peoples. I argue that their approach reflects the decolonial ways in which they collaborate with Indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines.

In Honor of Our People: Parangal's Tribute to its Roots

Parangal Dance Company[203] aims "to give tribute to Philippine heritage by preserving and promoting ethnic attire, music, and dance through research, workshops,

[203] Parangal Dance Company provide workshops in the use of ethnic attire, the way the music of Indigenous dances is played, and how the dances are being done from the Indigenous communities in the Philippines that they have worked with. Parangal also continues to engage with Philippine folk arts "to support and help preserve the [Indigenous communities'] respective cultural heritage and ensure [the] transmission of Indigenous skills and techniques to the next generation."

and performances."[204] Parangal's year-long programming reflects the various activities that they engage in including invitational performances, open-invite dance classes, community outreach, and their annual research trip to follow through with their mission as a non-profit Filipino folk dance and music company. The dance company is composed of first, second, and third generation Filipino-Americans based in the San Francisco, Bay Area. Some of Parangal's members were former dancers of the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company (or Bayanihan) and others have been trained and/or followed the teachings of the late National Artist Ramon Arevalo Obusan through the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG).[205] Others have been exposed to both the Bayanihan and ROFG training and some have been with other Filipino-based folk dance troupes. "I was with Barangay Dance Company[206] which is also where Makasi was. I was 13 when I started and about 16 when Parangal was created," said Kim, one of Parangal's core team members and is currently a mainstay, concentrating on pangalay (also known as daling-daling, a traditional fingernail dance of the Tausūg Indigenous peoples of the Sulu Archipelago in Mindanao, Philippines). There were those who already learned one or more dance styles prior to joining the company, and others were able to experience Philippine folk dance through their respective Pilipino American Cultural Nights (PACN,

[204] "About," Parangal, accessed October 3, 2021, https://www.parangal.org/about.
[205] C. C. P. Admin, "Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group," Cultural Center of the Philippines (blog), January 11, 2021, https://culturalcenter.gov.ph/resident-companies/ramon-obusan-folkloric-group/. The Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG) "has created a niche in the world of dance as forerunner of Philippine folk dance performed closest to the original. Boasting of over a thousand performances in the Philippines and abroad, the ROFG is one of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' leading resident companies since 1986."
[206] "Barangay Dance Company," SF Station, accessed October 12, 2021, https://www.sfstation.com/barangay-dance-company-b10187. Barangay Dance Company is a non-profit San Francisco-based Filipino folk dance organization.

also Pilipino Cultural Nights or PCN).[207] Matt, another member and the current music lead of Parangal, started his journey to Philippine culture after his first PCN at University of California, Davis. "[He] joined ACPA (the American Center of Philippine Arts)[208], then House of Gongs,[209] and ended up in Parangal" and then worked his way as one of the artistic leads of the dance company in 2023.

Standing true to the meaning of the company's name, (Parangal, a Filipino word for "tribute"), the members of PDC strive to honor "Philippine heritage by preserving and promoting ethnic attire, music, and dance through research, workshops, and performances." Van,[210] a 2nd generation member of PDC and the dance company's 2023 Chair of the Board of Directors shared that "[We were] like young professionals learning how to run a non-profit but also the main commitment of becoming better informed about our culture, dances, and everything." Part of the company's mission is to "serve as a bridge, inspiring and connecting Filipinos in diaspora to their roots to give them a sense of pride and identity, while educating diverse communities to foster awareness and appreciation of Philippine culture." In context and practice, Parangal gives tribute to the

[207] Xavier J. Hernandez, "Behind the Curtain: The Cultural Capital of Pilipino Cultural Nights," Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement 15, no. 1 (2020): 1–23. Pilipino American Cultural Nights (PACN, also Pilipino Cultural Nights or PCN) "is the most widely practiced and recognizable tradition for Filipino American college student organizations across the United States since the 1970's.
[208] "American Center of Philippine Arts (ACPA) | California," ACPA, accessed January 17, 2023, https://www.philippinearts.org. ACPA is now known as the Agos Program of Kularts, Inc. whose purpose "is to teach Pilipino/a/x dance, music and multidisciplinary art activities as a gateway to heritage, hxstory and social justice.
[209] "Home | House of Gongs," Divine Creative Studio, https://www.houseofgongs.com/. House of Gongs "is a creative space cultivating Kulintang artists and cultural practitioners" based in San Francisco/Oakland, California.
[210] Van started to become part of the group when she came across a Parangal post on a site welcoming everyone for a dance workshop in 2009 which she checked out and found herself coming back to every Friday since 2009 to 2017.

Indigenous group's culture bearers, the very people they collaborate with. Aside from presenting Spanish-influenced Philippine folk dances and countryside dances, Parangal takes pride in restaging and choreographing both traditional and contemporary dance pieces or productions that center the dance culture of the different Indigenous groups in the Philippines that they have worked with. The dance company invests in an immersive research approach that not only focuses on Indigenous expressive culture but also forwards "cultural leaders and cultural masters through interviews, documented rituals, dances, music, and attire details."[211] As a volunteer-based dance group, Parangal survives through grants and fellowships, but mostly out of pocket initiatives from its members. As of 2023, the San Francisco-based dance company has worked with 40 Indigenous communities in the Philippines, including the Panay Bukidnons.

Parangal Dance Company is inspired by Bayanihan and ROFG's legacy to Philippine folk dance. Some core members of Parangal have been former members of Bayanihan and ROFG. Other members of Parangal have undergone extensive folk dance training with Bayanihan and ROFG. In Parangal's staging of their own Philippine folk dance repertoire that I witnessed in 2018, I saw how they blended the approach of Bayanihan (theatricalized or stylized) and ROFG (focus on basic steps and "closest to original" movements) and, at the same time, departed from the approaches of these two folk dance companies through their own folk dance interpretation and choreographic approach. When Parangal interprets a dance piece and approach their choreography, they always make it to a point of collaborating not only with the company's musicians,

[211] "About," Parangal.

researchers, designers, and the research archive they may have gathered prior to meeting or with their past experiences with Filipino Indigenous groups. More importantly, they involved the local culture bearers of the expressive culture Parangal learned whether through communication with Indigenous communities on social media, supporting the Indigenous group's culture and the art, craftsmanship, and livelihood or simply lending a hand for these minoritized communities.

Their actual immersive research practice with the various Indigenous groups in the Philippines usually spans one or two weeks depending on schedule, resources, and the situation of their collaborators, after which they continue to keep in touch with each of the Indigenous communities through the latter's culture bearers (elders) with whom they consult on Parangal's future staging of the Indigenous community's dance and music. Parangal's team conducted fieldwork with Panay Bukidnons in 2017 as part of their research and continues to communicate with the culture bearers of Panay Bukidnons for binanog (dance) consultation and acquisition (through purchase) of the Panay Bukidnons' panubok (dance costume) and musical instruments.

I met Makasi in Calinog, Iloilo's 2016 Hirinugyaw Suguidanonay Festival,[212] where both of us were invited as judges for the cultural dance competition. That year, it was also my fifth consecutive time to be asked as a judge in the festivity since 2012. I figured my affiliation to the College of Physical Education, Sports, Culture, Arts and Recreation (PESCAR) at West Visayas State University (WVSU) in Iloilo City worked to

[212] Panay News, "Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival of Calinog: An Ingenious Fusion of Faith and Culture," Panay News, February 7, 2020, https://www.panaynews.net/hirinugyaw-suguidanonay-festival-of-calinog-an-ingenious-fusion-of-faith-and-culture/.

my advantage for them to consider me as one of the many judges. Meanwhile, Makasi was with Parangal members on their cultural immersion with Panay Bukidnon Indigenous Peoples in Calinog, Iloilo. It was the group's second stopover as part of their annual research trip to various Indigenous groups in the Philippines that coincided with the locality's religious-cultural festival. At this point, Filipino-American Makasi then shared with me that he is part Aklanon,[213] an ethnolinguistic group occupying the northern part of Panay Island in Western Visayas, Philippines. His parents hailed from Makato, Aklan, just two towns away from Banga, Aklan where I was born and raised. I was certain that due to the fact that we share the same mother-tongue (Akeanon), place of birth (Aklan), and identity affiliation (Aklanon), I was drawn to Makasi, who I then found out has been doing a lot of cultural work, performances, and research on Filipino folk dance in the San Francisco Bay area since 2003 with the volunteer-based, Filipino folk dance group, Parangal. When we finished judging the event, Makasi and I talked about keeping in touch for collaboration. Little did I know that just a few months after we met, I would get a Fulbright scholarship to study a doctorate degree in Critical Dance Studies at the University of California, Riverside, and get the chance to meet Makasi and visit Parangal Dance Company.

In 2018, I did a mini-ethnographic project with Makasi and selected members of Parangal during a few days of their rehearsal in the Bay Area for a class-related

[213] The people in the country's oldest province, Aklan, are called Aklanons, or Akeanons, which is also the term for their local language. Aklan is derived from the local term akea, which means to boil or to froth. Akean then means "where there is boiling or frothing" and describes the effect of the swift current of the river.

requirement. Last October 6, 2018, I flew to the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in San Francisco, California with a friend to watch Parangal's annual dance production entitled "Padayon" (meaning, to continue or to press on) which featured their new contemporary work "Sarimanok"[214] inspired by Philippine-based Indigenous stories and Philippine folk dances. In one of our interview sessions, Makasi shared how "Sarimanok" was included in the company's production.

> Our cultural director, Jet, we we're really looking into that, so she reached out to Kuya Jess [of] Leyte Dance Theater [based in Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines]. She went to Leyte and learned from them and then we presented it as part of our 7th anniversary show [in 2015]. It was a contemporary take based on Leyte Dance Theater's [research and choreography]. But it doesn't take away that there's still tradition [in the making of the performance]. In 2018, [when] we focused on Meranao,[215] we're coming up with other pieces. That way, people would know the difference, what's traditional, what's coming from an artistic approach, or one coming from an interpretation of a legend. The only thing not from our research with Indigenous groups was that one [Sarimanok] with Leyte Dance Theater.

Parangal's investment in in-depth and sustained research work with the culture bearers from various Indigenous groups in the Philippines, including Filipino community-based dance companies like Leyte Dance Theater, made me deeply engage in the discourse regarding relationality and how it circulates in their immersion trips to the Philippines. Because I was also interested to know more about Parangal and their work through

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[214] "Sarimanok." Roots, National Heritage Board, April 2, 2021.https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1238645. "According to a folk belief of the Maranao people which was derived from Islamic traditions, the sarimanok was said to be a giant rooster which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encountered in heaven. However, it actually relates to an earlier, pre-Islamic belief that the bird was a spirit medium that could communicate messages to its twin in the spirit world."

[215] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Maranao." Encyclopedia Britannica, February 23, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maranao. Meranao, also Mëranaw, Maranao, and Maranaw, is the biggest Muslim cultural-linguistic group of the Philippines.

Makasi's lead, I decided to include them as one of the groups I wanted to work with in my dissertation. Meeting Makasi "in the field" and being with him in our Maguindanao journey was a full circle moment for me from when I met him in 2016, to following him and Parangal Dance Company's performances and cultural work in the U.S., and ultimately getting the chance to join Makasi's research trip, a cultural immersion with the various Indigenous groups based in the Philippines.

Being with the Maguindanaons: The Maguindanao Experience

This section focuses on my analysis of Makasi's collaboration with the Maguindanao Indigenous peoples in the conduct of the ipat ritual. In other words, it highlights Parangal's relationship with the Maguindanaons through an understanding of Makasi's experience. In this light, I assert that Parangal Dance Company takes a decolonial approach in collaborating with Philippine-based Indigenous communities. Through the process of immersing themselves and sustaining the relationships they built together with Maguindanaons, the dance company goes beyond learning the Indigenous expressive culture shared to them. More importantly, the dance group cultivates a conscious effort to nurture, make transparent, and sustain their collaboration with Indigenous Filipinos, knowing that it is only through aligning themselves with Indigenous communities, their ontologies and epistemologies, and their expressive culture, that non-Indigenous Filipinos can meet Indigenous cultural communities' eye to eye.

One decolonial value that Makasi made sure to include in his collaboration with the Maguindanao Indigenous peoples was upholding an open, sustained communication that was made evident prior to, during, and after the conduct of ipat. First, he made sure that the Maguindanaons through Fai was informed that from an anticipated group of 15 people who planned to come for a 15-day community immersion with four Filipino Indigenous groups in the Philippines, only Makasi made it to the country's capital, Manila, on the first week of January 2022. Despite knowing that most of his companions from Parangal cancelled their participation last minute due to the brewing threat of the pandemic and the heightened quarantine protocols upon arrival to the Philippines, Makasi then ensured Fai that I will be coming with him, albeit on a different flight schedule. The majority of Parangal members already rescheduled their flight thrice from its original date of July 23, 2021, which was the date I flew from Los Angeles, California to the Philippines in the hopes of supposedly meeting and joining Parangal's team in Manila. A few days before the January 11th research trip to the Cotabato City of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines, Lyd, another Parangal member who was already in the Philippines in December 2021 with her husband and daughter, had to cancel her commitment to join the Maguindanao leg with me and Makasi for health reason. Notwithstanding the difficulty of the situation and the risks in place in relation to the ongoing pandemic, and upon consultation with the Maguindanaon culture bearers, Makasi and I decided that we will push through with the cultural immersion knowing that our collaborators were all set for our arrival. They also gave us permission to be with them as scheduled. Because Makasi and I were coming from different places

(Makasi was in Manila and I was in Iloilo City), Fai went as far as making sure that we were taken care of along the way, guaranteeing our transport routes so we would arrive safe in Cotabato City.

Second, through an open and sustained interaction, an inclusive negotiation regarding the ipat was able to materialize. Since we visited the ritual site every day, and since changes come up, like when we had to adjust the time of the ritual or change how we will go about with a particular part of ipat as advised by the pagagamot, Fai consulted me and Makasi, and then we got the chance to talk about it to confirm everything is in accordance with the practices of the Maguindanaons while allowing visitors like me and Makasi to still get the full experience of being "in" the ipat process.

Lastly, what a meaningful open and sustained communication facilitated was the centering of the Maguindanaons position, a complete surrender to an Indigenous locus of power. For me, that meant an acknowledgment of the takeover of Maguindanaon worldviews, knowledge systems, and lifeways the moment me and Makasi set foot to the ipat ritual site. When I stepped back and look at their experience that Makasi and I went through, we just both allowed the Maguindanaons to take the front seat in guiding us through the 4-day ipat ritual. This includes how Fai and the other culture bearers guided me and Makasi to wear the tubaw (head covering practically used as a head covering in the heat and as a dust protector) and allowed me to borrow and wear a malong a inaul (a wraparound cloth woven with geometric designs). As the ceremony changes from time to time, Makasi also did not have any idea about what is to come, which in a way made me feel alright not knowing anything. So, once we both entered the small room in the house

where the first part of the ipat ritual took place, we were there in complete surrender, just allowing our sensibilities to absorb the experience. I noticed that the other culture bearers were there to guide us, telling us to stand to lift the small boat from the floor and install it using the provided rope, or to move and sit in front of the pagagamot whenever it was time to do so. Even the pagagamot, knowing that we were visitors and despite him navigating the ways in which to interact with the spirit world which was a completely unfamiliar territory for me, would still make it to a point to look in my eyes, with unspoken words but just actions done in silence, and an understanding from both of our ends— on what to do, on when to do it, and up to what point I should be actively participating or actively observing so I get to be present throughout the process.

Another decolonial move that Parangal nurtured with the Maguindanaons is the value of strengthening coalition. Through Parangal's immersive practice built around the ethics of care and solidarity, the dance company strove to advocate for the primacy of educating themselves through what they learned about the Maguindanaon's lifeways, and the ways Maguindanao Indigenous peoples face and deal with the systemic disparities and extractive capitalist practices they experience. In one of our conversations involving Maguindanaon culture bearers, Makasi, and me, I learned that while others work with Maguindanaons on a transactional manner, requesting them to perform or purchase their attire, which at times end up with Maguindanaons being taken advantage of, Parangal takes seriously how they converse with the Maguindanaons. The dance company details their purpose, especially on matters that involve sharing the Maguindanaons' expressive culture, asks for the culture bearer's permission, and employs probing questions to dig

deeper into what dance, music, attire, or props the members are engaging in and learning from. In doing so, it was easier for the members of Parangal to support the causes of Maguindanaons, their livelihood, and the call for Indigenous sovereignty towards collective action.

Through Makasi, I knew that Parangal members, even if they know a thing or two about the Maguindanaons due to their exposure to a prior trip to Northern Mindanao or because of the information shared amongst members in rehearsal or meetings about the Maguindanao people or their expressive culture, they still come to the immersion trip with an open mind and a receptive disposition. I noticed how Makasi, at one point realizing the sequence of the ipat ritual on the second day was different, said "Ay, iba din pala." ("It is really different now."), and continued by looking at me, making sure I am alright, and then proceeded to sit down in one corner with me. After the whole set of afternoon events, Makasi asked Fai about the details of what happened, clarifying information about the things he already knew and the things he just learned about, which Fai gladly responded to, explaining the difference in some parts of the ceremony.

Even if they were the ones who were just talking, I felt that they made sure to still include me. I sensed that their bodies while talking were more open to me, as if I was part of Makasi's question and Fai's responses, which also made me engaged in listening to the ensuing conversation. "Bukas, baka iba na naman yan. Hindi naman kasi natin kontrol ang sitwasyon" (Tomorrow it might be different. It's not all the time that we have control over the situation"), Fai mentioned, referring to the spirits that the pagagamot is communicating with. As the shaman utters some incomprehensible words with his eyes

closed, I noticed that it was only Fai who communicated with the pagagamot amidst the presence of other culture bearers in the small room, signaling Fai's familiarity with the process, but also his alignment with the shaman.

Whenever possible, Parangal members also conduct donation drives in the Bay area and online whenever the Maguindanao people would ask for their help or when help is needed especially at times when the Maguindanaons face the havoc of natural calamities, armed conflicts, or family loss. For example, when Bapa Kalikod, a sagayan culture bearer, passed away a month after our scheduled visit, Makasi and the rest of Parangal made sure to extend financial assistance to Bapa Kalikod and his family, but also honor his legacy to Parangal by performing sagayan in various platforms (both online and site specific or invitational), educating people about the dance, and passing on all the wisdom that the dance company got from his teachings and encouraging younger generations of Filipino Americans to learn sagayan. On the other hand, Makasi also made sure that PDC purchases all their attire, musical instruments, and props from the Maguindanaon culture bearers or the surrounding community not only to support the Maguindanaons economically, but for Parangal to also have an apt representation of the Maguindanaons when the dance company gets the chance to showcase Maguindanaon expressive culture to the world.

Aware that many of the Maguindanaon expressive culture is not something that Parangal would be able to portray, wear, or share, Parangal still strives to know more about the Maguindanaons and their worldviews to be able to deepen their understanding about the Indigenous community. Even if some Maguindanaon regalia can only be worn

by particular culture bearers of the community or the awareness that the group cannot restage a version of the pagagamot and the ipat ritual as a performance, Parangal keeps coming back, as what matters to them more than what they can share to the world is the opportunity to be able to connect to their roots, know their ancestors, and collaborate with the living culture bearers of the Maguindanao dances that they have been engaging with since its inception. For Makasi, it is very vital to give parangal (tribute) to the very people who paved the way for Filipinos in the diaspora, and groups like Parangal Dance Company to thrive as cultural ambassadors of Filipino culture throughout the years.

Lastly, by recognizing the struggles of the Maguindanaons from the security threats they sometimes experience to the historical erasure of their pre-Islamic expressive cultures, Parangal does its part in recognizing the "peoples" in the Maguindanaons to exercise their sovereignty by first allowing the Maguindanao people to govern, take part, and have a say in the collaborative decision making processes that they establish when they get to share a part of their expressive culture with non-Indigenous dance groups like Parangal. For one, Makasi's dealing with the Maguindanaons through Fai was made up of decisions that not only both agreed upon but was made in consultation with the Maguindanaon Indigenous peoples who were involved in the process. Throughout our stay with the Maguindanaons what Makasi made so palpable was his fervent acknowledgement and embrace of the Maguindanaons' spiritual ways, language, and social systems. When Maguindanaons acknowledge their inherent relationship to the land, water, and wind around them, including nature, Makasi did not only join them, but I would get a glimpse of how he would pause to reflect on the experience, generously

extend his gratitude to everyone who made every part of the ipat ritual the way it should be, and acknowledge forces beyond what the eyes can see throughout the 4-day healing ceremony. It is through these moments with Makasi that I believe a kind of relationality is nurtured between Parangal and Maguindanaons, where Makasi is able to strip off his positionality as a Filipino-American to enact more of the ways in which he wants to build relationships with the Maguindanao people and learn their expressive culture.

While Makasi, at times, had to share that he was an artistic director and a Filipino-American to get ahead in navigating power structures and hierarchies in the past, aware that his goal to connect with Indigenous groups may not happen because of bureaucratic hoops the Indigenous peoples themselves are willing to get him out of, it is the same positionality that he utilizes to strengthen his relationship with the Indigenous groups he collaborates with on behalf of Parangal. The dance company solidifies its pursuit for collective action with and in the leading of Maguindanao Indigenous peoples by nuancing and respectfully integrating Maguindanao cultural outlook, expressive culture, and lifeways into the performances that Parangal curates for international audiences. If possible, Parangal makes it a point to bring one or two Maguindanao culture bearers to the U.S. to formally speak on behalf of their culture. For Parangal, it was necessary to involve Maguindanaons in their journey as a Filipino-based folk dance company through the use of social media, by making Maguindanaons as consultants in the choreographic process, highlighting local craftsmanship and talent in the group's props, musical instruments, and attire, and bringing them alongside Parangal's journey in the U.S. and in different parts of the world by sharing Maguindanao recorded narratives

or turning their expressive culture into exhibits so the dance company can effectively share the rich expressive culture of the Maguindanao Indigenous group and make the dream of Maguindanaons like Fai to let the world know that Maguindanao Indigenous peoples exist and that they are here to stay.

Forwarding the People: Centering the Maguindanaon Culture Bearers

In this section, I assert that Parangal moves forward with the choreography and performance of Maguindanaon dances from the community to the world by anchoring back to the Maguindanaon culture bearers who keep the dance company grounded wherever they are in the world. Parangal's decolonial take is made evident in how they empower the Maguindanao culture bearers to speak not just for themselves but for the community they represent through centering Maguindanao aesthetics and expressive culture in the dance company's performance— a synthesis that binds the relationality between Maguindanaons and Parangal Dance Company. In turn, this synthesis allows for a relation that engages people to think more about and not just end up appreciating Parangal's performances of Maguindanaon culture and tradition through music and dance.

When we arrived at an undisclosed rural neighborhood with houses apart surrounded by endemic trees in the area where the ritual will be held, I recognized the number of people moving around, busy with different tasks. When Maguindanaons noticed us approaching, their eyes almost scanned everyone, perhaps expecting the Parangal group, and yet they only saw Makasi who some of them were familiar with, and

then me, who they have just seen for the first time. I was wearing a mask when I arrived so I channeled my smile through my eyes, hoping they will be at ease with my presence given that I am quite a tall person with a big frame. But I felt no tension from their end. It was as if the space was cleared with heaviness. It felt very welcoming despite everyone focused on what they were doing that time. I then noticed three houses built close to each other serving as the perimeter of a vacant lot where Makasi said part of the ipat ritual will take place, the other space being inside one of the houses where the pagagamot resides. When I asked Makasi why he often comes back to Maguindanao, he said it was like a rite of passage for him to begin, if it is possible, Parangal's research trip with a healing ceremony from the Maguindanaons. More so, he pointed out that all of them in Parangal still learn a lot when they come back to experience ipat with the Maguindanaon people. He said that it is the nature of ipat to be experienced differently every time it is being conducted as it depends on factors like the number of days it is held, the intent of the request for the ritual, and the pagagamot's trance experience, among other things. Makasi also mentioned that Parangal was able to clinch a US grant[216] in 2021 to specifically document ipat, which allowed him and the rest of Parangal's members to continuously include ipat in their schedule. The grant also opened an opportunity for Parangal members to have an in-depth experience with the Maguindanaons of Northern Cotabato not just with ipat but also their rich expressive culture, including their songs, music,

[216] "Maguindanaon Sagayan." Parangal dance Company got the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) Living Cultures Grant Program that supported "the filming of a documentary to preserve and increase access to information about the practice of Sagayan, a pre-Islamic dance of the Maguindanaon in Mindanao, Philippines."

dance, instrument making, clothing design/patterns, and food. Makasi shared with me that every time they request for an ipat with the Maguindanaons, Parangal gets to learn something else regarding the Maguindanaon culture and their people that they have not known in their prior trips. In turn, Parangal gets to restage not the ipat ritual itself, but parts of it, that the culture bearers of Maguindanao allow them to perform, like the dance sagayan (a spiritual dance that honors ancestral spirits and wards off evil spirits),[217] which the company gets to nuance every time they come back to the Maguindanao community and work with the culture bearers in the area. From this experience, Parangal members then get to delve into meaningful conversations with Maguindanaons for the dance company to explore what the dances that they were immersing themselves in meant, its connection to the other ceremonies they participate in, and its meaning when translated for stage purposes. For example, Makasi continues to explore sagayan in Parangal's repertoire through the Ipat a Kadsakay Project, a contemporary interpretation of ipat. Through this undertaking, Makasi respectfully stages what Maguindanaons deem is possible for a presentation, always consulting the culture bearers along the way, once the choreography is done and prior to its presentation in local performances and invitational tours.

Once Parangal has established a relationship with the Indigenous groups they work with and has the chance to explore the community's expressive culture through music, dance, attire, and stories regarding the performance, ritual, or event they witnessed or participated in, the dance company partners with the Indigenous group's culture

[217] "Ipat a Kadsakay," World Arts West 3, https://www.worldartswest.org/ipat-a-kadsakay.html.

bearers. This kind of partnership is something that PDC strives to sustain even if the number of Indigenous communities they encounter every year increases. Since the dance group's first exposure to the Maguindanaons, Makasi told me that they constantly communicate for consultation, and to support the Maguindanaons by investing in their crafts and livelihood.

During the pandemic, when travelling was a big challenge, PDC had to find ways to maximize what social media platforms can offer. For example, they would conduct rehearsals in the Bay Area and at one point, they would have the Maguindanaon culture bearers as guests via Facebook Messenger. While "internet infrastructure in the Philippines has significantly improved, making it more accessible and affordable for everyone to use in daily life… with over 84 million active internet users as of 2022,"[218] getting access to internet connection in various parts of the country is still relatively expensive and the signal is not stable. Maguindanaons would sometimes find it hard to continue communicating over a videocall or had to deal with delayed broadcast whenever they were asked by PDC to become resource persons for the dance that Parangal teaches during their regular rehearsals or when they are requested to be guests for an event. Despite that, Parangal continued to harness the power of technology so that they could continue bringing in Maguindanaon culture bearers to share their work, their life stories, and offer their voices to Parangal's choreographed dances that come from Maguindanao. By investing in the culture bearers, PDC through its dance leads and choreographers like

[218] Andrea Santiago Orgaz, "Philippines Internet Usage in 2023 At All-Time High," Ding, Ezetop, January 5, 2023, https://www.ding.com/community/internet-usage-in-philippines-2022.

Makasi explore the dance repertoire that they can offer onstage, for an application to a grant, for invitational shows, or for their international tours.

Parangal not only focus on the basic dance steps that they have learned from the Maguindanaons, but they would go as far as involving a particular activity in connection with a dance performance and transform what seems to be a quotidian act from the Maguindanaons and include it in the presentation of the Maguindanaon expressive culture onstage. A glimpse of how this transfer of an Indigenous people's culture transpires from the community to the stage was reflected in one performance of PDC. When Makasi and I experienced the ipat procession in 2021, it started a few blocks away from the ipat ritual venue with a group of Maguindanaons wearing their cultural attire. It also involved me and Makasi who were positioned almost at the beginning of the two long lines. While we were walking, the pagagamot led our group with sagayan, while music was coming from a gong and a traditional drum accompany the shaman's movement. The imams from the mosque got to observe the procession as well as everyone with households nearby. The line led to the house entrance where the pagagamot spends most of the time for the ipat ritual.

In the recorded onstage performance that I saw online, Makasi was able to include the procession[219] which is usually done on the last day of the ipat ritual for a performance he choreographed for the Merrie Monarch Ho'ike Festival in Hilo, Big Island, Hawai'i in 2017. The whole set of performances that began with a procession focused on "sayap,"

[219] The procession which was done on the last day of the 4-day ipat ritual that I and Makasi experienced was something that he also experienced on a prior ipat with members of Parangal Dance Company.

that presents “the legend of Bai Manisan, a princess from Maguindanao, in Mindanao's Pulangi River basin. This elaborate presentation feature[d] a full stage of traditional dancers, traditional attire, symbolic flags, golden umbrellas, a royal banquet, a Maguindanaoan boat, and the mesmerizing music of gongs and drums.” There was also a Sagayan dancer from Parangal that led the two long lines doing a procession on stage. Like the one that transpired in the Maguindanao community, all the Parangal dancers onstage were also wearing the regalia made by the Maguindanaons. Onstage, the ipat ritual itself was not included as per advice by the Maguindanaon culture bearers. Parangal began with the performance of Bayok, a sequence of storytelling chant, followed by Sagayan, Silong sa Ganding (characterized by the flickering movement of the wrist to a silong rhythm), Kuntaw (a martial art dance influenced by immigrants from Indonesia, Malaysia, and China), Malong (a tubular cloth utilized in different ways during the performance), Pagkawin (Maguindanao royal wedding leading to its highlight, the Singkil [a rite of passage dance for courtship]), and Guinakit (involves the movement of a boat sailing away as the royal couple rides in it).[220] By consulting Fai, and working with various Maguindanao culture bearers during their prior Mindanao immersion trip, Makasi and Parangal members were able to put up a performance that paid tribute to the Maguindanao Indigenous peoples and their expressive culture. In 2021, when I was with Makasi during his immersion trip with Maguindanaons, he and the team he tapped from Cotabato City were, also able to produce a documentary[221] highlighting the parts of ipat

[220] “Merrie Monarch Ho’ike,” Parangal, April 19, 2017, https://www.parangal.org/hoike.
[221] “Sagayan Archiving Film,” Parangal, January 24, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/parangal/videos/822801342453628. “Maguindanaon Sagayan Archiving is a

that the dance company may not be able to perform onstage. The documentation of the ritual will ensure that the group not only has an output for the grant that supported Makasi's travel, but also important materials that the dance company can look back to for their experiences of being with the Maguindanaons in 2021.

From my experience of being with Makasi during our research trip in Cotabato City and knowing more about PDC through my other interlocutors, I was able to confirm that Parangal considers the Indigenous groups they work with not as static communities but dynamic people. The Maguindanaons' sense of self and worldview have been altered by migration, communication, transportation, and exchange of people and goods and so have the ways in which they adopt their world views and knowledge systems to the changing times. Thus, by honing one's raised awareness of the agency that Indigenous peoples carry through their worldviews and knowledge systems and centering that in the process of Maguindanaons version of dárawat, groups like Parangal are able to dismantle the narrative of white saviorism and instead redress how relation can be imagined and corporealized with indigenous groups, especially as it involves the sharing of one's expressive culture that is an extension of Indigenous peoples' lives, and as Maguindanaons in this context.

I theorize that Parangal's amalgam of relation complicates what community is in the context of whose voices they are including in their narratives and the invocation of

documentary project through the Living Traditions of Alliance for California Traditional Arts 2021-2022. It is a four-part film with the aim to preserve the legacy and work of various culture bearers and masters in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines for many generations to come both Maguindanaon and artists, increase access to Sagayan - a living tradition, and for the world to know about the Maguindanaon people, culture, and their olden tradition."

relationships of power in the process. This kind of Indigenous relationality that Parangal have with Maguindanaons completes the loop of what dárawatan is all about, a continuous negotiation, learning, and sharing, of Indigenous expressive culture. Parangal prioritizes the narratives of the Indigenous group they work with; employing detailed questions to nuance a dance practice, exploring possibilities for stage presentation, and still maintaining the expressive culture's ownership to the Indigenous peoples who shared them. It is because of Parangal's sustained communication with Indigenous groups in the Philippines through a point person, usually someone coming from the same community, that Parangal generally can collaborate with them with ease, almost considering members of Parangal as the Indigenous group's close kin. Makasi also made sure that Parangal works with Indigenous artisans and culture bearers to establish a consistent yet flexible language in ethically learning from the Maguindanaon peoples themselves who are the owners of their expressive culture.

Conclusion

Dancing Dárawatan in the New World

It was my first time to enter the historic Philippine Art Deco building in Plaza Lawton, Ermita, Manila named the Manila Metropolitan Theater (also Metropolitan Theater), or the MET last August 19, 2023 to support the 50th year production of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG) entitled "Dancing in the New World." The full dance production is ROFG's attempt to put together tradition and technology, fact-based research, and the archived research work of National Artist Ramon A. Obusan into contemporary, relevant, and socially responsive production of Philippine folk dance. Directed by ROFG's brand advocate and loyal supporter, Floy Quintos, together with choreographers and ROFG senior dancers mentored by Kuya Mon namely Cherry Ylanan-Villanueva, Jhunnard Jordan S. Cruz, Lyle Eymard A. Villahermosa, and Marciano T. Viri, the 50th year performance featured new repertoires that tackled "crucial issues that all folk dance companies must address in these changing times."[222] While ROFG's preparation was confronted with a crucial question on "how to make the traditions of Indigenous Peoples and ancestors more accessible and engaging to a young audience whose tastes have been shaped by K-pop and TikTok,"[223] the dance company made Kuya Mon's being a narrative storyteller their compass to weave through a show that presented Obusan's meticulous research, the senior choreographers' vision, Quintos'

[222] Souvenir Program, "Dancing in the New World," Ramon Obusan Folkloric Foundation, Inc., 2023.
[223] Souvenir Program, "Dancing in the New World," 2023.

direction, and the contributions of ROFG's alumni, present dancers, and affiliate performers from the various groups and institutions all over the country. Further, the show also endeavored to address what Quintos points to as the issues that mire cultural work nowadays, including "issues of appropriation, inclusivity, Indigenous rights to self-determination, and representation."[224] After the show, I met and thanked my ROFG interlocutors, and congratulated Tita Bing and everyone who was a part of the dance company's 50th year production. As I was on my way home, ROFG's performances at the MET kept looping in my head. Was that how dárawatan should circulate in the "new world"?

In Chapter 1, dárawatan manifested as an Indigenous-led praxis that strategically and tactically positioned the Panay Bukidnons as rightful arbiters of their own expressive culture. Despite the challenges they had to face in their participation in the digital edition of Calinog, Iloilo's Hirinugyaw-Suguidanonay Festival, the Panay Bukidnons maintained how they wanted to be collaborated with for the most part, as they, in the end, perceived themselves as culture-bearers who were tasked not just to be caretakers of their rich culture and traditions, but to be advocates of their expressive culture in a respectful, nuanced, and accessible way.

In Chapter 2, I argued how dárawatan was channeled in the Indigenous archive. That while Obusan became the vessel through which decades of Indigenous expressive culture was entrusted, it was the agency that the Indigenous archive possessed—including but not limited to Indigenous objects given to Obusan, the dances, chants,

[224] Souvenir Program, 2023, p. 2.

music, and attire that he was able to capture through video and learn from the Indigenous peoples themselves— which kept dárawatan going for ROFG, albeit the circulation of the process hangs on a balance. The performativity of the archive in Bahay ni Kuya is continuously harnessed by ROFG, which strives to be reverent, mindful, and articulate in their engagement with Obusan's archive and in their understanding of Indigenous Peoples' agency through their representations of various Indigenous cultural communities in their performances.

It was in Chapter 3 where I then witnessed how dárawatan was made manifest in the continuous negotiation of Parangal Dance Company and the Maguindanaon Indigenous community when both became a part of the ritual ipat a kadsakay. My experience with Parangal and the Maguindanaons was a full circle experience of what I witnessed with how ROFG connected with Indigenous Peoples through Obusan's archive during the first leg of my fieldwork, how Panay Bukidnons cooperated with LGU-Calinog in staging the local festivity, and finally how Parangal, in the conduct of their annual immersive research, collaborated with Indigenous groups like the Maguindanaons. Dárawatan then, is a continuous loop, that may circle the globe, wherever groups like Parangal or ROFG may be, as these Filipino folk dance companies continue to represent the expressive culture, lifeways, cosmologies, and the dynamic ontologies and epistemologies of Indigenous communities like the Maguindanaons and the Panay Bukidnons, who, for the moment, continue to hold the ground, their ground, and stand stably on it.

Throughout this journey, I have had so many setbacks, and I deem that I won't be able to feel that I have bounced back from it, if I won't be able to push through my future plans. I hope to expand my research in the field of Gender and Sexuality Studies which I was not able to cover in this dissertation. I would like to pay attention to the ways that queer people participate in negotiations taking place between Indigenous communities and folk dance companies, what does it mean for the LGBTQIA+ community to be present and participate in the field of culture and the arts, and in particular the circulation of Indigenous expressive culture. I would like to delve into what part of the Filipino's Indigenous worldviews or local folk dance practices influence or are being influenced by the layered ways that Filipino culture view queer participation in culture and the arts and the normative stereotypes associated with "folk dancing." I also would like to expand my research and nuance the different economies and relationships of power circling dárawatan, how it manifests for other Indigenous groups and their collaborators, or how it may serve as a paradigm in analyzing the coming together of Filipinos from the homeland and the diaspora in trying to learn more about how Indigenous expressive culture is restaged, choreographed, performed, and toured in different parts of the world. More importantly, I look forward to going more in depth into the important discourse about cultural appropriation of indigeneity, the relationship of gender and class in Filipino folk dance performance, and the relationship of American authoritarianism and democracy in the formation of the postcolonial Filipino, among others.

Despite its limitations, my dissertation contributes to the field of Indigenous Studies, Visayan/Mindanao Studies, and Philippine Studies. Through my research, I was

able to forward the importance of centering Indigenous voices in research. In Philippine studies where Western frameworks are usually used, it would be beneficial to center local-based, Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Because of the complexity and nuance of my multi-site and multilingual research, my dissertation also contributes to the emerging research that focuses on performance in the island groups of Visayas and Mindanao in the Philippines, and in particular, research that is Indigenous-driven, decolonial, and critical. More so, my dissertation was also able to forward how an Indigenous group may take various routes in trying to adapt to situations where they have to make decisions about what, how, and how much of their culture they share. This dissertation expands the field of Philippine studies, specifically paying attention to parts of Filipino society and culture that may have been viewed as trivial but speak so much about our identities as Filipinos.

I imagine a future for dárawatan to be a process called by a different name, depending on how it is perceived by a particular Indigenous community. I think about a dárawatan that centers the decision-making of Indigenous peoples first followed by a negotiation with the collaborating non-Indigenous folk dance company. I support a dárawatan that enriches the experiences for both entities that hold the line, as I believe that when the process becomes more fluid through the incorporation of local interaction, sustained connection, and shared recognition for Indigenous peoples, their traditions, way of life, and expressive culture, then more possibilities may open for what dárawatan could become. As future generations may continue to learn from Indigenous groups like Panay Bukidnons and their expressive culture, but also from dance companies like ROFG

and Parangal as well to whom are entrusted the living, complex, and pulsating culture and traditions of Filipino Indigenous Peoples, we can look and learn from our agentive Indigenous groups and in the thoughtful representation of Filipino folk dance companies, as they both hold the line in the unceasing circulation of dárawatan, and on what it means to continue dancing in a new world.

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