

“Cuyunon,” also “Cyunin,” “Cuyuno,” and “Taga-Cuyo,” refers to the people and culture of the occupants of Busuanga Island, Agutaya, and Cuyo, the main island in a group of some 35 islets in the middle of the Sulu Sea, east of Palawan and southwest of Panay. Comprising Busuanga Island are the towns of Busuanga in the west and Coron in the east. Cuyo mainland include Magsaysay and Cuyo towns. It is located 281.2 kilometers northeast of Puerto Princesa City. The term is derived from Cuyo, the etymology of which is undetermined. In 1990, a population of 15,175 (1990 census population by NSO) was spread over the 50-square kilometer Cuyo Island, which is defined by a rocky terrain with numerous hills. Three of these hills are the Aguado in Igabas, Kayamamis in Lucbuan, and Bonbon in Rizal. The Cuyunon language is accentuated by the peppet sound (the stress combined with the terminal glottal stop) and contains monosyllabic word forms, like kut (“touch something”), sut (“go into”), but (“suffocate”), el (“get”), buk (“hair”), and bag (“loincloth”). There is neither a Cuyunon grammar nor dictionary, although a few prayer books have been written in the vernacular.

## **History**

During the Pleistocene Age, Palawan was linked to Borneo by land bridges which might explain why the flora and fauna of Palawan are similar to Borneo. Archaeological findings indicate that the late Neolithic and early Metal Age saw the influx of the early inhabitants of Palawan, mainly from Indo-China, South China, Malaya, and Thailand. The burial jars, ceramics, and the remains of the dead found in Palawan caves seem to indicate that these early settlers had well-developed belief systems and life ways.

By the 16th century, the Muslim traders from the surrounding areas had established close ties with the inhabitants of the islands, to the point that there were already Muslim villages at the shores of Palawan Island. As trade relations expanded, facets of Muslim cultural and political life were imbibed by the local inhabitants. Soon after, and due to their political superiority, the Muslims of Borneo and Mindanao exercised authority over the inhabitants of Palawan. Thus, the people of Cuyo gave tribute to the Muslims of Borneo, a custom that persisted until 1588. During this time, the Muslims were also collecting tribute from the Calamianes and were preparing to attack the island of Busuanga.

Palawan’s first contact with Spain was when the remnants of Magellan’s expedition, including Pigafetta, arrived in 1521 at the main island which they called Pulaoan. They also explored the islands of Busuanga and Cuyo. Father Luis de Jesus noted that the inhabitants of Cuyo Island had Chinese blood which, he said, explained their industriousness and shrewdness in trade. De Jesus described the islands as abundant in rice, pearls, fish, exotic fruits, forest products and wildlife.

The earliest attempt to assert Spanish authority over the islands came in 1570 when Martin de Goiti arrived at Cuyo Island and collected tribute worth 200 taels.

By 1582, Cuyo with a population of 800, was placed under the encomendero of Panay who was under the jurisdiction of Iloilo. Meanwhile, the Calamianes and Paragua (Spanish name for Palawan island) were placed under the jurisdiction of the alcalde mayor of Mindoro. By 1591 Cuyo and Calamianes became separate encomiendas. Spanish governance of the islands during this period was limited to the collection of tribute, a fact deplored by the Spanish friars who pointed out that the people of Calamianes also paid tribute to the government in Borneo.

At the onset of the 17th century, the Spanish missionaries began to sow Catholicism in the islands. By 1622, a group of Recollects under the leadership of Father Juan de Santo Tomas were assigned to Cuyo to plant the seeds of Catholicism. According to the reports of the Spanish priests, the Cuyunon accepted them warmly, except for the native priests and priestesses who considered the foreign priests as threats to their privileged positions.

The friars immediately implemented the policy of *reduccion*, gathering the inhabitants in one settlement whose nucleus was the church. After several months of assiduous evangelization, the Recollects baptized around a thousand natives. They then implemented the same policies in the island of Agutaya. In 1623, they established relations with the inhabitants of Paragua but found them resistant to Catholicism, as Muslim influence in the island was dominant. To offset this, the Spanish government sent two companies fortified with artillery to guard the newly founded town and newly built fort in Paragua. So successful were the Recollects that by 1850, there were already 2,000 Catholic families in Cuyo alone.

By 1659, however, and due to lack of funds, the friars were forced to abandon the islands, with the exception of Cuyo and Agutaya. The vacuum left by the friars was immediately exploited by the Chinese pirate Cheng Cheng Kung, who demanded that the islands be placed under his rule. To counteract the Chinese presence, the local leaders of the islands requested the national colonial government to facilitate the return of Spanish missionaries, preferably the Recollects. By 1715, the Spanish rule was established once more, as proved by the increase of "Christian souls" to 18,600. Aside from evangelization, the friars also undertook administrative work in the islands, particularly training the natives or *indios* to become local leaders.

Meanwhile, the growing Spanish influence over the islands was challenged by the Muslims who asserted their presence by continuous attacks on these territories which they perceived as their own. Because Palawan was located between Christianized Luzon and Islamized Mindanao, the Palawan island group became the battleground of the struggle between the cross and the crescent.

In 1602, a group of Muslim ships from Borneo raided Cuyo and its neighboring islands, capturing in the process over 700 people. Within the same year, the Calamianes were also attacked. In 1603, the Maguindanao took more people captive and collected tribute from the localities. In 1632, Father Juan de San Jose

of Cuyo was captured and released only after two years and in exchange for a P2,000 ransom. Again, in the summer of 1636, a Muslim captain named Tagal under Sultan Kudarat looted the churches in Cuyo and Calamianes. In Cuyo, on 20 June 1636, Tagal's forces captured the natives who were unable to flee, burned the town, and killed three friars. More Spanish priests were killed in subsequent attacks by different groups of Muslims. By 1646, the Muslim leaders of Jolo, Guimbahanon, and Borneo conspired to launch joint attacks against the vulnerable Spanish-dominated islands.

To protect themselves, the Recollect missionaries and the Christianized natives built fortifications and garrisons. In 1638, Father Juan de San Severo led the building of fortresses which protected the churches in Cuyo, Agutaya, and Culion. To stop the Muslim attacks, the Spaniards applied dilatory tactics and diplomatic double dealing, negotiating with Borneo while revitalizing and building their own military capabilities. The diplomatic efforts resulted in the acquisition of the whole island of Paragua, which was given to Spain by Borneo in 1705.

As a matter of policy, more fortresses were built in the Christian-dominated towns of the islands, a timely decision indeed as the Muslims renewed their attacks during the 1720s. The Muslims attacked Cuyo in 1722, but they failed to overrun the fortress and defeat the combative natives. By the 1730s the Muslims stepped up their harassment and attacks on the fortresses in Culion, Paragua, Calatan, Malampaya, Dumarán, Linapacan, Taytay, and other bastions of Spanish rule. At this time, Cuyo's ability to protect itself became evident, as the Cuyunon foiled another Muslim attempt to invade the island by a fierce counterattack which defeated the Muslims and gained arms for the natives.

During the 18th and the 19th centuries, Palawan was a microcosm of the fragmented society that was the whole archipelago. The natives of the province were divided: some, like the Molbog and Jama Mapun were under the jurisdiction of the Muslim sultanate of southern Philippines; many, like the Calamianon, Agutaynon, Cagayanon, and Cuyunon, became Christianized and fell under the Spanish government; while the rest, like the Batak, Tagbanua, and Palawan, continued their precolonial existence, practicing their ancient native religion.

In the early years of the 19th century, the resurgence of prehispanic native religion among the Cuyunon—despite 200 years of Catholic indoctrination—greatly bothered Cuyo's parish priest, Father Pedro Gilbert de Santa Eulalia. The priest noted the still widespread worship of the souls of ancestors and the prevalence of rituals of the *babaylan* or *babaylana* (native priest/ priestess). This was cause for worry since the Cuyunon were considered as among the most Christianized in the islands.

Another phenomenon that upset the Spanish authorities was the fact that 2/3 of the Cuyunon still celebrated the feast honoring the Diwata ng Kagubatan/Virgen del Monte (Enchantress of the Mountain), periodically held atop Mount Caimana

in Cuyo. The situation led the Spanish authorities to intensify their evangelization and governance efforts. Spain's effort to achieve national control over the archipelago resulted in the organization of politico-military provinces in designated territories. During the 1840s, Cuyo became the capital of the politico-military government of the Calamianes, which also administered Agutaya, Culion, Busuanga, Linapacan, and Coron. Meanwhile, Puerto Princesa became the capital of the politico-military government of Paragua in 1872. Soon the Muslims stopped their attacks. By 19 November 1886, the chieftains from Sulu and Jolo signed a treaty with Don Joaquin Ybañez of the Spanish armada, recognizing the Spanish authority over the entire Paragua.

In the 19th century, the Spanish government used Culion as a leper colony, and as penal colonies for both political and criminal offenders. As resistance against Spanish colonialism grew during the second half of the 19th century in Luzon and the Visayas, the territories of the present Palawan province became useful as dumping ground for "subversives" or oppositionists caught by the government. During the late 1890s, 50 native soldiers of the Spanish *guardia civil* (local police) defied colonial authority and released some 235 deportees or political prisoners. However, the Spanish government suppressed the insurgency and eliminated its leaders.

When the Spanish authorities left after the defeat of Spanish colonial rule, the government of Emilio Aguinaldo designated Hermogenes Constantino as commissioner for Palawan. But Constantino and his men—supposedly revolutionaries from Luzon—abused their authority, exploited the people and used their positions for personal benefit. Upon the order of Baldomero Aguinaldo, Rufo Sandoval replaced the corrupt Constantino as the head of Calamianes and Paragua. Sandoval was warmly received in the islands—except in Cuyo, which became the bastion of American colonialism. The foremost pro-Americans in Cuyo were its local head Clemente Fernandez along with propertied and prominent personalities like Ricardo Fernandez, Jose Manuel Fernandez, Jose Manuel Rey, Alfonso Clemente Encarnacion, and Abdon Diego. These men decided to welcome American control over Cuyo even before the Americans arrived.

To secure the revolutionary government, Sandoval assigned Fabian B. de Leon and Pedro Concepcion as representatives of the newly installed republic in Cuyo. Meanwhile, Sandoval had to track down the stubborn *Americanistas* of the island. To control the island, travel to Panay was likewise restricted. However, de Leon and Concepcion were eventually outmaneuvered by the local elite who scorned being ruled by the Tagalog leaders. The two were finally banished from Cuyo and failed to regain control of the Cuyunon.

On May 1901, Lieutenant Day of the Department of Mindanao and Jolo sent an American ship to Cuyo. The Americans occupied and asserted their authority over Puerto Princesa on 29 May 1901. During the period of the Philippine-

American War, the Cuyunon acquired the reputation of being the “most pronounced Americanistas in the archipelago.” Cuyo was inaugurated as a local government under the new colonial government, which, under the leadership of a pro-American army, reported that the Filipino revolutionaries were effectively neutralized. The Cuyunon gladly accepted the education offered by the new colonizers. According to official US reports, even the elderly Cuyunon scholars spoke and sang songs in English.

Depressed economic conditions in Cuyo by the end of the 19th century necessitated immigrations to the other islands, like Panay, to trade fish and harvest rice; Mindoro, to cut sugarcane; and Manila, to engage in commerce. Palawan drew swidden farmers in the 1910s and 1920s and larger scale homesteaders in the 1930s and 1940s. Overpopulation and the encouraging accounts of out-migrants who returned to Cuyo in wartime induced an upsurge of out-migration in the immediate postwar years.

## **Economy**

Agriculture is the island’s main occupation. Traditional swidden farming produces rice, corn, sweet potatoes, manioc, and yams. Planting takes place in late April or early May. Cuyo’s swidden yields have tended to be unsubstantial. Fishing in Palawan’s seas, the secondary occupation, renders enough marine foods to be marketed in Manila. Offshore fishing requires nets, traps, and hooks and lines; various onshore techniques are employed to gather crab, shrimp, octopus, shell, sea urchin, sea cucumber, seaweed, and jellyfish.

Cuyo’s marginal share in the prewar market economy accounted for the relative lack of social differentiation and a generally egalitarian outlook due to scarce land, markets, and investment opportunities during the period. Carpentry, basketry, mat weaving, and coconut-wine collecting have generated small incomes. Copra has been lucrative only for a few big landowners. The out-migration of natives, mainly of average social standing, has significantly changed Cuyo’s socioeconomic patterns.

The island has minor docks and a small airstrip for light aircraft.

## **Political System**

Cuyo island and its neighboring islets are divided into two municipalities, Cuyo and Magsaysay.

The municipality of Cuyo, which is the area’s commercial and cultural capital, encompasses 1,742.5 hectares and a population of 11,283 (Prudente 1977). It includes the barrios of Maringiam, Suba, Pawa, San Carlos, Caponayan, Lubid,

Manamoc, and Balading and Funda in Bisucay.

The municipality of Magsaysay encompasses 1,800 hectares and a population of 7,070 (Prudente 1977). It includes the barrios of Igabas, Emilod, Lacaren, Balaguen, Los Angeles, Rizal, Lucbuan, Canipo, and Cocoro.

### **Social Organization and Customs**

Social contact is close and frequent in Cuyo Island. The Cuyunon work in groups when farming, fishing, and even when accomplishing small chores like cleaning house. However, as livelihood activities demand less time than effort, leisure is a main occupation, particularly during the postharvest months from October to December.

The folk habitually visit with their neighbors, and the men often have casual drinking sessions after work. There are more formal and organized socials like dances where friendships and courtships are pursued as well as baptisms, birthdays, and weddings.

Churchgoing is central to traditional life, and the Lenten rituals become primary social events. In gratitude for requests granted by the saints, notably Santa Cecilia, *cilia* festivities are held and highlighted by the roasting of a pig. During the yearly village fiesta, the *komedya* is performed for the more affluent in their private residences and for the public in the plaza. Its production expenses are defrayed by minimal admission fees, which may earn a little profit for drinks. Morning mass, cockfights, and games complete the celebrations. Although the fiestas are well attended, the meals prepared are comparatively simple. Cuyunon socials are generally more time-consuming than expensive, but are considered obligations that promote self-esteem and group harmony.

### **Religious Beliefs and Practices**

Centuries of evangelization and Hispanization have made the Cuyunon a devoutly Christian group. Today, the feasts of the Catholic liturgical calendar are celebrated, even as most Cuyunon would go to Sunday mass regularly and fulfill the obligations expected of Catholics. The biggest fiesta, celebrated in honor of the patron San Agustin on 28 August, features the usual novena of mass and prayers, as well as the *komedya* and other performances.

As in most areas of the archipelago, however, Christianization of the Cuyunon did not necessarily imply the eradication of the animistic beliefs that prevailed before the arrival of the friars. In most cases, these beliefs have been merged with Christian elements to produce what is commonly known as folk Christianity. Many of the animistic beliefs and practices of the ancestors of the present

Cuyunon were described in 1805 by a Recollect, Father Pedro Gilbert de Santa Eulalia.

Devout ancestor worship dictated many of the religious customs of the past. The *babaylan/babaylana* (shaman) played a significant role in this tradition. They received tribute in behalf of the souls which were believed to have departed to Madia-as, a mountain in Antique. They also performed various rituals for different needs and occasions.

Two hundred or more people gathered in a mountain or a place far removed from town to celebrate the *buetec*. One or two wooden idols were sculpted, arrayed in rich fabric and gold jewelry, and offered food. Holding seven handkerchiefs, the priests danced before these images. The spectators later joined in the dancing. After a celebratory meal, they stripped the images, hid them in the mountain, or left them to the safekeeping of the shamans.

The *panasag*, a preharvest ritual, was held shortly before the ripening of grain. Relatives visited a farmer's house, carrying a basket containing seven fistfuls of rice grain. *Pinilpil* or *limbac* was then made from the grain which, together with other foods like fish and eggs, was offered to the ancestral spirits. After the priests interpreted several signs to mean that the spirits had already eaten, the seven fistfuls of grain were carefully stored under the granary.

To cure the sick, a priest performed *tagablac*. He/she submerged two bamboo pieces in a glass of water. The sinking of these pieces indicated that a deceased relative, usually a parent or spouse, needed food. Then the priest slammed the sick person's body, which was laid on a table, to separate the body from the intruding spirit. The priest blew on the body while the witnesses gave offerings. He/she continued chanting while wiping the body with cloth. A similar ritual was the *sagda*, during which hungry spirits, said to have inhabited the body of the sick, were appeased with a meal of pork, wine, bananas, and other foods. In such attempts to restore health, the priest banished all images and portraits from the house of the sick.

The *patulod-sarot* was a dramatic ritual to prevent epidemics. A group of people prepared a small boat painted with oars and sails and kept it in a storehouse near the shore. Before the boat was set to sail bearing gifts of food and tobacco for the spirits, the people confronted the spirits with sword and shield in hand. The priest would fall several times, but when the spirits had been overcome, the priest chanted and asked the spirits to spare them from harm. The people sang while the priest swayed. The boat sailed, and all returned to the storehouse to eat or drink.

On the third day after a person's death, relatives gathered in the dead person's house to receive his/her spirit in a ceremony called *pasaca* or *paoli*. As usual, a priest interceded and offered food to the dead. Another ritual, the *an*, was a nighttime gathering in a mountain, involving six or eight widows and relatives and

one or two priests. A small boat was painted with oars, and surrounded with clay pots. The priests summoned the spirits of the deceased spouses, and as in the patulod-sarot, the boat was sent off with various foods for the spirits. The ceremony ended by the next morning or afternoon.

*Rambac*, an evening ritual, ended the mourning period. A clay pot or a bamboo pole contraption, the suboc-suboc, was thrust into the ground. The participants stood in front of the pot or pole as they questioned the priest before them. They formed two lines, and holding each other at the waist, jumped at the signal of the priest, who directed them toward the seashore while they sang to the music of the *soloma*. Those at the front of the line moved their poles as though blocking the soul and driving it away to another place. A feast followed afterwards.

There were also various methods of *timara* or fortune telling. One whispered incantations while quickly lifting a bolo and then releasing it. After this, the question could be asked. If the answer was affirmative, the bolo would move uncontrollably; otherwise it would remain still. A similar procedure was followed with a basket in place of a bolo. An insect could likewise answer a question; if it “sang,” an affirmative answer was indicated. Moreover, if a lizard “sang” when a person left the room or house, this meant that it was safe to go outside; if the lizard made no sounds, it would be safer to stay indoors.

## **Architecture and Community Planning**

From the sea, Cuyo Island’s first visible landmark is a lighthouse by the pier. Many of the streets leading to and within the town have already been cemented. The town has preserved the hispanic plaza-iglesia structures. Dominating the town center is Cuyo’s 1860 church, convent, and fort. Nearby stands a schoolhouse and a monument of Dr. Jose Rizal. The original complex of stone and mortar was a square with four bastions. The present complex, which occupies 1 hectare, is a solid rectangular edifice with walls 10 meters high and 2 meters thick. It has a tall belfry and watchtowers; its canons which face the sea are now fired only during town celebrations.

Houses are more dispersed in the barrios outside the town. These are several variations of the traditional *bahay kubo* of nipa and bamboo. Most are raised above the ground with the living quarters on the second floor, a *silong* for storage underneath, and a *kamalig* for additional storage in the backyard. The newer and larger houses now use contemporary materials, mainly concrete, wood, and galvanized iron—sometimes with lighter native materials.

### **Performing Arts**

Indigenous Cuyunon music still survives in instruments such as the *batungtung* (bamboo slit drum), *palakupakan* (sticks with bamboo clappers), *subing* (jew’s harp), and *lantoy* (nose flute).



The *tipanu* band, a fife and drum ensemble, and the *de kwerdas*, a string band, supply background music on important social occasions. They also accompany singers and render dance music like the *pinundo-pundo*. The *tipanu* is reserved for the *ati-ati*, *sinulog*, and *komedya*.

Both ensembles use available instruments and instrumentalists. The *tipanu* core is basically two drums and four to seven transverse mouth flutes with six fingerholes. One or two *tipanu nga maitley* (small flutes) and three or four *tipanu nga mabael* (larger flutes) are played with a *redublante* (snare drum), *bombo* (bass drum), and sometimes a pair of *platilyo* (cymbals). The *de kwerdas* has two or three *byulin* or *rabel* (violins), and occasionally a *gitara* or *sista* (guitar), a *baho* (six-stringed bass), a banjo, and a *bandurria*.

In Cuyunon music the *akompanimento* refers to the harmonic accompaniment—principal or *primero* to the first or highest voice, and *segunda* to the second.

Cuyunon songs suggest the islanders' various occupations from farming to tippling *tuba* (coconut wine). Fisherfolk and sailors often sing about the sea (Fernandez and Fernandez 1975:5):

*Ako ay mi layang pasiak  
Panambantamban mi pamalanak,  
Porabil ako mapilak kong nagasolong  
Don nganiang dagat.*

I have a fishnet with shells as the weight.  
I use it for catching *tamban* and *banak*.  
Before I throw the net,  
I wait for the tide to come in.

Lyrics are poetic although simple and unsentimental. They convey wisdom, practicality, and fatalism even in playful children's songs (Fernandez and Fernandez 1975:2-3):

*Tarinting paglayog don,  
Ay ikaw tateban den.  
Pagsot sa liyang-liyang,  
Sa batong malinang-linang.*

Taringting fly away now,  
For the high tide will soon come.  
Enter the eaves  
Among the smooth stones.

Some songs are infused with humor, which does not preclude profundity (Fernandez and Fernandez 1975:3):

*Nagbilin si Nanay lomismo si Tatay,  
Akeng pangasa waen and babai nga boray,*

*Ang babai nga boray adorno sa balay,  
Ang babai nga boray kong mag-arek maloay.*

My father and mother advised me  
That I marry a blind girl  
A blind girl will serve as an ornament at home,  
A blind girl kisses softly.

*Sandaw*, the Cuyunon lullaby using either the pentatonic scale or the western diatonic scale, soothes the child with pleas and promises.

The Cuyunon youth celebrate love with song during the postharvest courting season. The *cancion*, a popular serenade, is sung with the strumming of a five- or six-stringed guitar in the distinctive *puntyal* manner. Parting is a familiar concern in Cuyunon love songs. Examples of love songs are “Napopongao Ako,” “Ang Gegma,” “Ploning,” “Daragang Taga Cuyo,” “Konsomision,” “Ako Maski Bayan,” “Tiis Manong Pido,” “Nagpamasiar Ako,” and “Komosta.” Here are the lyrics of the last two (Fernandez and Fernandez 1975:10).

“Nagpamasiar Ako”  
*Nagpamasiar ako sa malapad nga siudad,  
Nakapotay ako, panel nga malapad.  
Na basako rendaang manga libirtad,  
Ang naga norobian, sarang pa mabelag.*

I went strolling in a wide city.  
I picked up a wide paper.  
From it I read, that sweethearts  
Can still be parted.

“Komosta”  
*Komosta komosta dawat ang alima  
Tanda sa pagbelag ara dipirinsia,  
Ogali soltiros ogali daraga  
Naga rilasionan sa mayad nga leba.*

Let me shake your hand  
As a sign of separation without hurt feelings  
It's but natural that we fall in love  
And then forget...

Music also marks the occasion of death. *Pa Hesus* is sung for a person on the brink of dying, repeated over and over as a way of entrusting the soul to God and driving away evil spirits.

Bereaved families are entertained with singing games during the *pulao* (wake). The participants sing “Koordas di la Bordon” as they pass around a ring; the one who holds the ring at the end of the song is made to sing. Similar rules apply to *kotao-kotao* except that the game centers on a boy and a girl holding a handkerchief (Fernandez and Fernandez 1975:14):

*Kotao kotao kong aga kotao kotao kong apon,  
Mapatay sa gegma baribad sa getem.  
Indi maingaranan and pito ka birso  
Ang panyong palaran itaplak sa olo.*

Crowing in the morning,  
Crowing in the afternoon,  
Die of love, but not of hunger.  
The seven verses cannot be mentioned,  
But the lucky handkerchief must be placed  
on one's head.

*Punebre* music is played during the burial procession. *Sarabien*, a dirge recounting the life of the deceased, is sung to the cries of mourners swaying by the graveside. *Kaluluwa* is sung during All Saints' Day on the first of November.

Some song forms treat broader themes. The *composo ballad* narrates factual events, particularly tragedies. It is often delivered during fiestas with the music of a string band and at times the dancing of boys and girls. The livelier *erekay*, originally a swidden planting song, is performed in happy gatherings. It favors the topics of love and sex (sung by a man and woman) and King David (sung by an elder). In *parlando-rubando* style, it may be accompanied by a four-stringed instrument called *yuke*. The *cancion* can venture into livelihood and nature subjects like *layang* and *pasiak*.

Native yuletide songs such as the "Pinagbalay," "Pastores," and "Tambora," are being replaced by modern Christmas carols. Of Cuyo's festivity music, among the most well-preserved are the songs and chants of the Ati (Fernandez and Fernandez 1975:24):

"Sangka Mi Ati"  
*Sangka mi ati kami tao sa bokid,  
Kami mi bolawan, mangitit pa sa oring.  
Wa-ay wa-ay toboan kami paray  
Sa balay magsobra sa bantolina.*

"Only One Aeta"  
We are people of the mountain,  
We are gold, as black as charcoal.  
Wa-ay. Wa-ay may rice grow abundantly,  
In my house may it grow and overflow.

Other religious music are "Maghimaya ka Hati" and "Santa Barbara Doncella," for seeking refuge from a storm; "Ave Maria Stella," for the Blessed Virgin Mary, sung by women during wakes, while planting, or as a protection from illness; *gozos*, for a saint at the end of a novena or a procession during a fiesta; *litania*, for the Virgin after a rosary and a novena; and *alabado*, for the Virgin and the Blessed Sacrament.

A few songs commemorate Palm Sunday. The Lenten *pasyon* narrates Christ's life and death. Also sung during Holy Week are "Amante," "Ameng Diyos," "Crucifixus," "Perdon," "Pange Lingua," "Stabat Mater," and "Regina Coeli" (for Easter). Notable of the songs offered to the Virgin during the Flores de Mayo are "Dios te Salve, Maria," "Ang Trese sa Mayo," and "Daygon ta si Maria at Venid."

Cuyunon dances have evolved from native and Spanish influences. Among these are the *pastores* (the Christmas dance of the shepherds), the *chotis* (from the German *schothische*), *lanceros de Cuyo* (local French quadrille), *birginia* and *virgoere* (virginia reel or square dance), *paraguanen* (a romantic comic duet), and *la jota paragua* (a Castilian-type *jota* using bamboo castanets and the *manton*). The island is known for the *mazurka de Cuyo*, a social dance with characteristic *mazurka* steps. Another popular dance is the *pinundo-pundo*, a stylish wedding dance marked by sudden pauses; its first two parts, featuring solo dances of the boy and the girl, are followed by the *suring*, a love play between the couple. Forms found in other regions, like the *kuratsa*, *pandango*, and *habanera* have also been adapted by the Cuyunon.

The Cuyunon have developed the art of merging song, dance, and drama. Cuyo's *sayaw* is a colorful enactment of a story heightened by the music of a string band. It is presented by five pairs of youth arranged in two lines, fully costumed and made up, and bearing props like flowers, crowns, and even knives. After an introductory dance, the leading couple proceed to relate the tale, sometimes using verse. The topic may be anything, from everyday occurrences to special events like winning the sweepstakes. This story is then interpreted in dance and ended with a finale.

*Tambora* is a depiction of the nativity, traditionally performed by Christmas carolers in Cuyunon or Spanish.

Yearly on August 28, Cuyo Island celebrates San Agustin's feast. On the eve of the fiesta, a cultural presentation featuring the traditional performing arts and sometimes a separate show of modern songs and dances may be presented. The feast day is begun with a morning mass (sometimes a High Mass officiated by the bishop) and followed by the *ati-ati*, a legacy of the Aklanon. Folk from the nearby islands board *barotos* (boats) to view the parade which recreates the confrontation of San Agustin and the native "savages." Participants portray the Aeta by darkening their bodies with soot and painting their faces with *anyel* (indigo). They don foot-high headgear of coconut *ginit* fiber adorned with chicken feathers, and decorate their costumes with coconut leaves. The men, clad in loincloths, carry spears, bows and arrows, or bolo. The women, wearing *patadyong* (barrel skirt) and beaded necklaces, carry baskets with a trumpline. The costumes may be modified to distinguish the groups representing the various tribes.

The participants form two lines, one of men and the other of women. The director signals the start of the singing by striking his cane on the ground. This is followed by a spontaneous dance characterized by sways, hops, jumps, and the jerking of weapons accompanied by chanting; the director also signals the end of the dance. The *teniente* (barrio head) and his family may recite a series of verses. The director is then approached by the last to recite, customarily the *teniente*'s youngest child.

As the floats of San Agustin and other saints enter the church at the end of the procession, the participants kneel, prostrate themselves, or sing while performing skipping steps before the images. The merrymaking intensifies when the *alcayo*, a dancing clown, chases the ladies, stopping only when coins are thrown to him on the ground. The *alcayo* collects the coins with his mouth.

Meanwhile, the *panapatan* performance are staged in front of various houses for a fee. These are mostly excerpts of the komedya and *ati-ati* known as *komedya sa kalye* and *ati-ati sa bukid*, the performers of which use simpler clothing than in the more elaborate full-length performances. *Ati-ati sa bukid* is sung and danced to celebrate a fruitful harvest. Today it is usually danced by young boys wearing masks or indigo-painted faces.

Another pantomime, *inocentes*, recreates the descent of the "savages" from the hills to pay tribute to San Agustin. Wearing coconut fiber masks and red striped shirts, the participants frolic and fence with sticks.

Komedya or *moro-moro* performances are larger (with some 50 actors) and more refined than the *ati-ati*. The clash between the Muslims and the Christians is further dramatized by background music; commonly used tunes are the *paso doble*, *marchas*, *giyera*, and *kasal*.

The same subject is portrayed by the *sinulog*. The Christians are identified by their black costumes, *kampilan*, and elongated shields; the Muslims by their red turbans and waistbands, and round shields. The participants may wear masks or paint their faces. Both groups, usually of six dancers each, sometimes perform to the beating of tin cans. Alternate steps of offense and defense, e.g., advancing and retreating, with corresponding movements of weapons, are followed by circular formations simulating scenes of strategy plotting. • M.P. Consing with R. Matilac and F. Prudente/Reviewed by S.G. Padilla Jr.

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