

THE SPANISH COLONIAL TRADITION IN PHILIPPINE DANCE

When the Spaniards came to the Philippines in the 16th century, they brought with them the Spanish religion and European arts and culture. The native religion and culture slowly gave way to Christianity and Western civilization. The natives started to lose most of their ancient traditions in the literary, visual, and performing arts. In no time, dances from Spain, France, and other European countries, such as the *jota*, *valse*, *fandango*, *habanera*, *schottische*, *mazurka*, *paseo*, *marcha*, and *paso doble*, were adopted and adapted to the tastes and needs of a colonial society and the conditions of climate and seasons in a tropical archipelago.

Background

Upon their arrival, the Spanish colonizers found a people whose level of civilization was already well defined. The ancient Filipinos had their own system of writing, a government based on the *barangay*, a wealth of myths and legends. They had a tradition of songs and poems and had woven music and dance into the day-to-day tapestry of their lives. They danced to celebrate love, marriage, birth, thanksgiving, victory in war; they danced to prepare for battles and to mourn their dead.

In 1521, Pigafetta related that while he was a guest at the house of the Cebu chief's son-in-law and heir, four beautiful young women entertained him by dancing and making "harmonious sweet sounds from brass gongs " (Blair and Robertson XXXIII:167-171).

In 1663, Fr. Francisco Colin wrote that during banquets there was always singing of songs like the *cundiman*, the *comintan*, the *balitao*, the *saloma*, and the *talindao*, some of which were only sung, while others (possibly the first three) were danced as well. Colin noted (Blair and Robertson XL:67):

The dances of the men and women are generally performed to the sound of bells which are made in their style like basins, large or small, of metal, and the sounds are brought out quickly and uninterruptedly. The dance may be war-like or passionate, but it has steps and measured changes, and interposed with some elevations that really enrapture and surprise.

Recognizing the importance of these dances, the church sought to harness them for the propagation of the new faith. In this, the friars showed much wisdom, focusing special attention on the education of the young. In 1609 Morga observed (Blair and Robertson XVI:152):

At the same time that the religious undertook to teach the natives the precepts of religion, they labored to instruct them in matters of their own improvements, and established schools for the reading and writing of Spanish among the boys. They taught them to serve in church, to sing the plain-song, and to the accompaniment of

the organ; to play the flute, to dance, and to sing... There are many dances and musicians on the other instruments which solemnize and adorn the feast of the most holy sacrament, and many other feasts during the year.

With the introduction of European culture in general, many of the old native dances disappeared or were slowly displaced by the Spanish. The *rigodon*, *virginia*, and *lanceros* were probably the first dances introduced by the Spaniards. They resembled much the French dances of the Middle Ages and were reserved for the aristocratic class and special fiestas. Towards the end of the Spanish regime, the *balse*, the *polka*, the mazarurka, the *escotis* (from schottische), and the paseo were in vogue among different social classes. It is said that the Filipinos were so fond of the dances that no fiesta or family reunion was celebrated without much dancing among themselves. In general, the natives accepted what were performed here by foreigners or what they saw abroad. In 1846 Jean Mallat noted (Blair and Robertson XLV:277):

The fandango, the çapateado, the cachucha, and other Spanish dances have been adopted by the Indians, and they do not lack grace when they dance them to the accompaniment of castanets which they play with a remarkable precision. They also execute some dances of Nueva España, such as for example the *jarabes*, where they show all the Spanish vivacity with movements of their figure, of their breasts, of their hips, to right and left, forward and backward, and pirouettes, whose rapidity is such that the eye can scarcely follow them.

Exposed for almost four centuries to the influence of European dances, the Filipinos gradually assimilated these dances, evolving their own simplified versions and derivations of the different forms. The elegance of the body and arm movements of foreign dances fascinated the Filipinos, so they adopted these. However, the sharp and fast movements of most European dances were tempered and softened by the languid grace that is characteristic of many Filipino dances. Costumes and props associated with the original dances were either adapted or done away with.

The Jota

The jota, a dance in fast triple time and a great favorite during the Spanish regime, was originally performed by the Spaniards at their social gatherings, together with the polka, valse, and habanera. Whenever there were not enough Spanish nationals to do the dance, Filipinos were invited to take part in it. Upon learning the jota, these Filipinos in turn taught other Filipinos. The dance became popular, maybe because of its gay and lively tempo and the agile movements that went with it. The dance soon spread, first among the well-to-do and later to the rural communities. In the latter, the dancing was usually started by the old people and followed by the younger ones.

The early Filipinos evolved their own simple versions of the jota. The *jota*

moncadeña, named after its place of origin, Moncada, Tarlac, combines Spanish and Ilocano movements. Its initial movements are lively and fast, accented by the scintillating rhythm of elongated bamboo castanets; the second part is characterized by a contrasting slow rhythm, typically native in mood and execution. The dance reverts to the fast tempo at the end. This version of the jota originally danced by the old people of Moncada, Tarlac, does not include the more intricate patterns of the Spanish jota. Instead, it adopted the lively tempo and the simple dance steps.

The jota was originally performed on special occasions, like the *guling-guling* (eve of Ash Wednesday), *the tambora* (eve of Christmas), or on feast days of saints. Later, it was performed in social gatherings, for weddings and baptismal parties. Almost always the musical accompaniment to the dance was a set of string instruments like the five-stringed guitar, *mandolina*, and laud.

The most common step found in the dance is the waltz, a step-close-step pattern executed to a triple measure. Stamp, brush, touch, and jump and their combinations and variations like the waltz turns and accented waltz steps are also done, all to liven up the dance. The slow rhythm at the middle part of the dance is typically Ilocano. To this rhythm, the figure called *patay* is done with slides and very slow steps, as the dancers take turns in consoling each other.

For this dance, the female dancers wore and still wear the *maria clara*, the upper-class female costume of the 1880s named after the heroine of Jose Rizal's novel, ***Noli me tangere*** (Touch Me Not). This is a floor-length panelled skirt of silk or satin, of black and white or other colors, with floral prints or embroidery. The camisa or blouse is usually made of handwoven *piña*, and has wrist-length, richly embroidered flowing bell sleeves. Over this camisa is worn a pañuelo, a square piece of the same material as the camisa folded into a triangular collar scarf covering the back and shoulders. The footwear is beaded or embroidered slippers. The male dancers wore and still use the barong tagalog, a loose fitting shirt worn long over the pants. It has a close fitting neck with collar and long, cuffed sleeves. Its material is usually the same as the ladies' piña, worn plain or embroidered. The pants and shoes are black.

The dance is accompanied by a *rondalla*, a band of stringed instruments, including the *bandurria*, laud, *octavina*, guitar, and *bajo*. Usually, the bandurria in the ensemble has six pairs of double strings. It is played with a plectrum. The laud is similar to the bandurria except that it has a long neck, wider body, and a lower pitch. Shaped like a small guitar, the octavina has a mellow tone quality and is tuned like the laud. The five-stringed Philippine guitar is an adaptation of the Spanish guitar. The *bajo de uñas* or bass guitar has four strings.

The malagueña from Malaga, Spain, is another lively dance adapted by the Filipinos. It is one of the favorite jota dances of the old people from San Pablo, Laguna. The dance utilizes stamps, turns, and the *jaleo* which is done with the partners' right elbows near each other. They perform waltz steps turning around

clockwise, looking at each other over their right shoulders, and small running steps typical of many Spanish dances.

There are other adaptations and interpretations of the jota in the different regions, performed during fiestas, usually by the elite. Their names are often derived from the place where they originated, hence, *jota cagayana* from Cagayan in the north; *jota gumaqueña* from Gumaca, Quezon; *jota bicolana* from Bicol; *jota cabangan*, a courtship dance from Zambales; *jota rizal*, a Batangas version named after Jose Rizal; *jota pangasinan* from Pangasinan. The *jota san joaquina* from Iloilo uses castanets too. There is another beautiful jota from Samar, *la jota samareña*. Other adaptations include *la jota yogad* and *la jota pilipina* from Echague, Isabela; and *la sevillana* from Iloilo. The costumes, props, and even the gestures and formations of these dances necessarily vary from town to town.

The Balse

The balse or waltz, a dance in slow triple meter, is seen in almost all Philippine dances. This dance form descended from the peasant *landler*, a dance from Southern Germany. It had spread throughout Europe and had become one of the principal dances in social celebrations in many countries, Spain included. By the 19th century, the balse was already popular in the Philippines.

Typical of the waltzes is the *balitaw*, a lively courtship dance very popular throughout the country, particularly in the Tagalog and Visayan regions. In these areas, it was customary in the past for a young man to make known his amorous intentions to a young woman in a social gathering through song and dance. In most cases the poetic words of the song were composed on the spot, keeping to the plaintive strains of the music while the pair danced slow waltz steps around each other. This is the step-close-step pattern in rhythm. Often, other waltz steps were also improvised like the waltz turns, the waltz balance, and the cross waltz. If the dancers were good, the dance could last for hours.

A courtship dance known throughout the Philippines is the *cariñosa*. Cariñosa, meaning affectionate, lovable or amiable, typifies the Filipina maiden's modesty and humility, and is another dance using the waltz step. Using a fan and a handkerchief, the dancers go about their courtship in a coquettish way through hide-and-peek movements, never missing a step with the music. There are many versions of this dance but the hide-and-peek movements with the fan and handkerchief are common to all.

Balse was a popular dance in Marikina, Rizal during the Spanish period. It was usually performed after the *lutrina*, a religious procession. The participants in the procession gathered in the house or yard of the *hermana* or sponsor for light refreshments. During or after the refreshments, there was dancing and singing, and the balse was one of the dances performed. The music was usually provided

by a *musikong bumbong* or bamboo orchestra.

Other folk dances that make use of the waltz and its variations are the *santa rosa* from Marilao, Bulacan; the *bucasoy* from Alimodian, Iloilo; the *magkasuyo* from Quezon; the *saad* from Capiz; and the *molinete* from Negros Occidental. The dances are performed for any social or religious occasion.

The *sayaw santa isabel* is performed on the thanksgiving feast after a good harvest, during *balaihan* or engagement ceremonies, weddings or religious processions. For these dances, the girl wears the less formal balintawak, with *tapis* or overskirt, a soft pañuelo, and a salakot decorated with brightly colored flowers. The *corcho* or leather slippers with cork heels and *bakya* or wooden clogs are worn by the ladies. The boy wears *camisa de chino* and trousers of any color, and slippers.

The Pandanggo

As popular as the jota and balse, the pandanggo was another favorite dance of Filipinos during the Spanish period. In Spain, the fandango is a lively Spanish dance done to a slow-to-quick rhythm. With characteristic adaptability, the steps of the original fandango were blended into the native dances resulting in soft but lively versions. It is usually performed for entertainment and merrymaking, with dancers keeping rhythm with castanets or tambourines.

There are many different types of the pandanggo. The *pandanggo ivatan*, a wedding dance from Batanes and the *pandanggo rinconada* from Camarines Sur are named after their places of origin, while the *pandanggo sa ilaw*, *pandanggo sa sambalilo*, *pandanggo sa paño*, and *pandanggo sa tapis* are identified by the objects used in the dance. Some pandanggo are known by their characteristic movements, such as the *engañososa*.

The pandanggo sa ilaw from Mindoro is perhaps the most difficult and demanding of the pandanggo. Here, the dancer executes not only waltz steps but also the cross-waltz described earlier with waltz turns and sway-balance steps with a point, as she gracefully and skillfully balances three lighted *tinghoy* or oil lamps on her head and on the back of each hand. The last step is done on a step-cross-step-point pattern in two measures.

Originally, the dance was performed to the clapping of the hands of onlookers. Later, upon the request of Francisca Reyes-Aquino, who discovered this dance together with her research team, a lively melody in triple meter was composed by Antonino Buenaventura, a member of her team, who kept the original rhythm. Today, this melody is often mistaken as a folk song.

The dance is often performed during gatherings as one form of entertainment. In Mindoro, the costumes for the dance were the balintawak with tapis for the lady

and long red trousers and barong tagalog for the gentlemen.

Another version, the pandanggo sa sambalilo from Camiling, Tarlac uses a hat. Here, the focus is on the male dancer who tries to pick up the hat from the floor with his head with great skill.

The *pandang-pandang* is an extraordinary and exciting wedding dance from Antique. It was and still is customary for a newly married couple to perform this during the reception. Legend has it that this dance originated at one wedding dance. A newly married couple was supposed to be dancing normally, when a gecko (lizard) happened to get into the pants of the bridegroom. In his attempt to get rid of the gecko, the groom moved about in a frenzy, hopping and jumping, hitting his thighs and buttocks without missing the rhythm of the music. The spectators thinking that it was all part of the dance clapped their hands to cheer him on.

The pandanggo ivatan is a wedding dance from Batanes. The bride and groom open the dance, after which the groom gives his gala (wedding gift in cash or in kind) to the bride. This is the signal for the guests to offer their own gala, each of which is preceded by a brief dance by the married couple to symbolize the start of their new life together.

The pandanggo rinconada is a favorite of the people of the Rinconada district in Nabua, Camarines Sur. This is a festival dance performed by young and old people during the Christmas season.

The engañosa, a festival dance from Samar also popularly known as *pandangyado mayor*, was believed to have been introduced by the Spaniards during the latter part of the 19th century. Retaining its Castilian flavor, the dance has lifting music and enticing movements, hence the name engañosa. For this dance, the maria clara and barong tagalog and black trousers and black shoes are worn by contemporary groups.

The Habanera

Introduced during the Spanish colonial period, the habanera, a piece of music named after Havana in Cuba where it originated, is a dance in slow duple meter with step-close-step pattern, similar to the tango. The Filipinos interwove into their own version elements from the original dance.

Most of the habanera dances come from the Pangasinan and Ilocos regions. The *habanera de soltera* is performed by a betrothed couple during one of seven ceremonies before their wedding. This very expressive dance is performed during the fifth ceremony in the home of the bride-to-be. After the feast in which the relatives of both the bride and groom take part, the couple express in their dance the

love and happiness they expect in their marriage. The dance is called habanera de soltera, because this is the last time the couple will dance in their single state. Besides the basic habanera step, slides, knee bends, and hops are also used in the dance. A variation of the habanera step features the double-cross habanera step. This is done in two measures with two cross steps before the habanera step. Also used in the dance is the typical *kumintang* of Pangasinan called *kewet*, which means turning the hand outward from the wrist, with the fist loosely closed and the thumb sticking out. For contemporary performers of this dance, the girl wears a maria clara, preferably in white as this is the dance of a betrothed couple, and slippers, while the boy wears any old style barong tagalog and trousers and any colored shoes.

The *habasinan*, another Pangasinan dance, is a gay and beautiful habanera. Derived from the word “haba” from habanera and “sinan” from Pangasinan, the courtship dance is both expressive and romantic, and is usually performed during weddings and other social gatherings.

The habanera from Ilocos Sur, as performed by the Ilocano peasants, depicts the modest and retiring traits of traditional Ilocano women.

From Botolan, Zambales comes the very colorful and lively dance *habanera botoleña*. In the early days, this was supposedly performed in honor of a departing parish priest. Later, the dance became a festival dance performed during social gatherings for various occasions.

Capiz has its own version of the habanera called *habanera capiseña* which is one of the most popular courtship dances, performed during social gatherings at baptisms, weddings, fiestas, and other important occasions.

The Mazurka

Competing with the other dances in popularity is the mazurka, one of the national dances of Poland. After the subjugation of Poland by Russia, the mazurka was naturalized by Russia.

When the dance form was introduced in the Philippines, the Filipinos readily integrated it in their repertoire of folk dances. As usual, there are as many versions of this dance as there are localities that accepted it as part of their folk dances. The step pattern is a slide, cut, hop step to a triple measure.

The *mazurka boholana* is a traditional ballroom dance popular in Bohol during the Spanish period. This was originally performed by couples informally gathered in the ballroom, with no definite sequence of steps and figures. What makes the dance interesting is the combination of mazurka, *redoba*, and *sangig* steps.

For the contemporary performers of the mazurka, the costume used is the maria clara for the girls and barong tagalog and black trousers for the boys. Almost

always the mazurka are ballroom dances and they are performed in both open and closed ballroom dance positions.

The *mazurka val* is a variation from Pangasinan. The steps are a combination of mazurka and waltz, hence the name. One interesting feature of this dance is that figure where the boy exhibits his skill in dancing and both partners display coordination in movement as the boy carries the girl on his feet while dancing. The girl wears a maria clara or a turn of the century costume with a long train, the end of which is carried or tied to the middle finger of her right hand.

The *mazurka visaya* from Negros Occidental combines folk and ballroom dance movements. According to the old people familiar with the dance, only a few could perform the dance properly because of its difficult and intricate step patterns.

From Mindoro comes another version, the *mazurka mindoreña*. This beautiful festival dance was the premier dance of the elite of Mindoro. Don Antonio Luna, considered one of the best dancers of his time, popularized the dance.

The Polka

The polka, considered as the national dance of Bohemia (Czechoslovakia), was among the first dances introduced by the early European immigrants to the Philippines and by Filipinos who had been to Europe. It was popularized in the Islands not later than 1859. It was usually performed as a ballroom dance during fiestas or grand social affairs. The basic dance step of the polka is executed to a duple meter with a step-close-step pattern following the one-and-two rhythm. Other polka steps used in the dance are the heel-and-toe polka, the hop polka, the gallop, chasing steps, and the hop step. Every locality would have its own version, but the basic steps, the plain polka, and the heel-and-toe polka were always included.

The Quezon polka is performed in sets of four pairs in square formation. In Bataan, the dance is called *polka tagala*. In one figure of the dance, the ladies kick their voluminous skirts forward and backward to show off their beautiful lace petticoats. In Batangas, the dance was called *polka sa nasyon*, while in Mindoro it was known as *polka sala*. Among the Visayans, the dance was called *polka antigo*, and in Negros Occidental *polka italiana*.

In Ilocos Norte, there is a courtship dance called *sileledaang*, which means laden with sorrow. Interestingly, the dancers here show their fondness for each other using the basic polka step to a tempo.

The *maliket-a-polka* is another version of this dance form. *Maliket* in Pangasinan means happy, therefore, happy polka. This is danced during fiestas in honor of the Santo Niño, patron saint of a barrio of Pangasinan. When this dance is performed

today for the stage, the balintawak with tapis and soft pañuelo draped over the left shoulder is used by the girls while the camisa de chino and any pair of colored trousers are used by the males.

The Rigodon and Other Quadrille Dances

Other dances introduced during the Spanish period were the quadrille dances, most important of which is the rigodon. To the Filipinos, the rigodon or *rigodon de honor* is the best ceremonial dance. Introduced to the French court by a dancing master named Rigaud, it was first known as *Rigaudon*. In Britain, it was later called the *Rigadoon*. The dance got to Manila in the 19th century and was called Rigodon.

The rigodon is performed to orchestral music with a lively rhythm. The most popular quadrille dance in the country, it is usually performed at state functions with high government officials and people of high social class participating. In the square formation, distinguished or important personages are the *cabeceras* or head pairs, and the less important ones, the *costados* or side pairs.

Although there are many versions of it, the dance is always in quadrille formation. The cabeceras always perform the dance steps first, followed by the costados. After the *saludo* or *anuncio*, the dance starts with the figure of ladies meeting, followed by the *zeta*, *casamiento* or *abanico*, *visita*, *cadena*, *cambio pareja*, and finally the *cadena*. In all the figures the dancers walk in a stately manner following the rhythm of the music.

An interesting facet of the rigodon is its music. It is composed of at least five numbers, each one complete in itself and usually taken from popular operas of the day. The last musical theme is the work of a Filipino composer, Jose Estella. Before World War II, the male dancers were requested to wear formal mess jackets or white tuxedo, black pants and black tie for the rigodon. The women, except Muslim and foreign women, were requested to come in *traje de meztiza* or *terno*, the native formal attire for women, characterized by butterfly sleeves, stiff pañuelo, and long train.

Other types of quadrille dances are the lanceros from Pagsanjan, Laguna; the *pasakat* from Santa Rosa, Laguna; the *los bailes de ayer* or *maharlika* from Tarlac; the *lanceros de lingayen* of Pangasinan; and *lanceros de negros* from Silay, Negros Occidental. The Silay version of the lanceros is in linear formation, not in quadrille formation like the others.

The Paseo and Chotis

The paseo or promenade was a favorite pastime of the elite, where upper class ladies tried to outdo one another in donning their best finery. Eventually, the paseo

became a dance, and gave birth to many different local versions.

The *paseo de bicol* from Oas, Albay is adapted from the paseo. During the celebration called *aurora* (dawn), the old people gather in the church to pray for a good harvest or to overcome impending calamities, while the young folks promenade with their loved ones around the church or in the churchyard. The dancers use a variety of steps in the dance: the waltz step, the waltz turn, the change steps, the sway balance with a waltz, and the three steps and a point. For this dance, the girls wear the traditional Bicol costume, the *patadyong*, and camisa with butterfly sleeves. A folded soft pañuelo hangs on the left shoulder. The boys wear the barong tagalog or camisa de chino and colored trousers. Another dance that may be considered a paseo is the *andaluz de negros* where a lady encounters and relates to four gentlemen as she strolls around.

Ballroom dancing became even more popular with the arrival of the *escotis* or *chotis*, a derivation of the foreign schottische, one of the oldest European dances. Many say it is Germanic in origin; other say it came from Poland and was brought to the Philippines in the 1850s.

Performed as a ballroom dance during social gatherings, the escotis of Capiz and Aklan uses the step, close, step, hop, step, pattern of the European schottische, while the chotis of Camarines Sur uses the localized version—the step, brush, step, brush, step, step, step, pause. The music is similar to the polka but played a little slower. Many say the dance is a mixture of polka and a slow waltz. Like the *chotis de negros*, the escotis from Capiz and Aklan can also be danced in informal social gatherings; hence the patadyong and *kimona* or camisa with butterfly sleeves may be used by the women, and the camisa de chino and dark trousers by the men.

The *chotis dingreña* from Dingras, Ilocos Norte, is a dance of the elite. Being formal, it uses a serpentina skirt with a train and stiff camisa and pañuelo.

It is interesting to note that the escotis is still popular among the people inhabiting the mountains of Capiz, particularly in Panitan and Tapas. It was and still is an interesting practice of the people there to test the durability and strength of a newly built house by performing the dance at its housewarming. This is because the dance makes use of hops in a fast tempo.

The Surtidos

“Surtido” means assorted and refers to dances which combine movements from different dances. The *polkabal* acquired its name from two popular dances, the polka and the balse. The composite name was given to this lively dance by the people of Atimonan, Quezon. Among the interesting steps used are the *luksong uwak*, *ensayo*, *contra-gansa*, and *punta y tacon*. On the other hand, the *mazurka valse* from Negros Occidental is a combination of the mazurka and the balse steps;

the *jotabal* from Gumaca, Quezon combines the *jota* and the balse.

The name pasakat from Santa Rosa, Laguna is the corruption of the original French *pas de quatre* or *paseo de cuatro*. This French ballroom dance was introduced in the Philippines during the latter part of the 19th century.

When no name could be given to a dance because of the combination of many dance steps and music, the term *surtido* was also used. There are many regional versions of this dance.

There is the *surtido norte* from Ilocos Norte, which combines the different steps and music of the Ilocos region. It also uses the half-closed fist movement called the *kumintang*.

From Bantayan, Cebu comes the beautiful *surtido cebuano*. Originally danced like the rigodon in square formation with cabeceras and costados, it is sometimes performed in sets of two pairs. The dance is composed of a variety of steps danced to a medley of Visayan airs.

Epilogue

A good number of the dances with Hispanic influence still exist today. Many are still performed in their original form while some have been modified, according to native taste or convenience. In Parañaque, during Easter Sunday, the *bate* is danced for the *salubong* which reenacts the meeting of the Virgin and the Risen Christ. In Batangas, the *subli* is still performed by men and women to honor the Santa Cruz, patron of Bauan. In Bicol, the *pantomina* is danced in social gatherings, particularly during wedding celebrations, just as the *pastores* is performed by groups of about 13 males and females in “shepherd” costumes during the Christmas season. In the eastern part of the Visayas, the *kuratsa* is still very much a part of merrymaking. In Pakil, Laguna, the *turumba* is sung and danced by devotees during the procession of the Nuestra Señora de los Dolores while in Obando, Bulacan, people dance to petition the Nuestra Señora de Salambao, Santa Clara, and San Pascual de Bailon for a spouse or a child. Finally, many formal gatherings today still feature the stately rigodon.

But the folk dance does not only exist in their original setting today. They have also become popular in the past few decades because they have been documented by researchers and are now being performed by professional dance companies as well as students in school.

Research on Philippine folk dances was started by Francisca Reyes-Aquino (then Tolentino) in 1931. With University of the Philippines (UP) President Jorge Bocobo’s thrust towards documentation of folk music and dance, Reyes-Aquino, Antonino Buenaventura, and other faculty researchers embarked on a wide-scale

documentation of traditional folk songs and dances.

These dances were later published by Reyes-Aquino in her six-volume work entitled *Philippine Folk Dances* which has become the principal source book for folk dance scholars and teachers.

After Reyes-Aquino, the other scholars who did their own researches were Libertad V. Fajardo who published her study on Visayan dances; Juan Miel and Petronila Suarez who focused on the dances of Samar and Iloilo, respectively; Jovita Sison-Friese who worked on the dances from Pangasinan; Teresita Pascua-Ines who published her studies on Ilocano dances; Jose Balcena who documented the dances from Capiz; Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa who did extensive research on the *pangalay* of the Sulu area. Outstanding and pioneering research was also done by the artistic directors of the foremost folk dance companies in the country, specifically, by Bayanihan's Lucrecia Reyes-Urtula, Baranggay's Paz Cielo Angeles-Belmonte, and Ramon Obusan of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. There are also a few others who studied Philippine folk dances but due to financial constraints could not do consistent research.

Inspired by these researches, many folk dance groups were formed to showcase the dances outside their places of origin. In 1937 Reyes-Aquino formed the UP Folk Song-Dance Club and the Filipiniana Dance Troupe. In 1949, the Philippine Folk Dance Society, a group composed of teachers all over the country was organized, also by Reyes-Aquino. Soon after, companies were established which presented these folk dances as theater. The Baranggay Folk Dance Troupe was founded in the Philippine Normal College by Reyes-Aquino's student, Paz Cielo Angeles-Belmonte in June 1947. The Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company was formed in the Philippine Women's University in 1957, and since then has introduced Philippine folk dances to audiences around the world. The Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group was founded by former Bayanihan dancer-researcher Ramon Obusan in September 1972, and is now one of the leading folk dance companies in the country. Other notable companies are those based in the UP, Far Eastern University, University of Santo Tomas, University of the East, and Mindanao State University in Marawi. While the presentations of these dance companies are largely theatrical and stylized, with glittering costumes and elaborate props, they still succeed in showcasing and popularizing Philippine culture through dance.

The interest in folk dance grows stronger today, not only because of the growing number of folk dance companies formed over the past decades, but also because folk dance has become part and parcel of the education curriculum in all levels—elementary, secondary, and tertiary. Scholars all over the country almost always include folk dances in their activities, programs, and projects. Moreover, folk dance teachers have kept alive through the years the Philippine Folk Dance Society formed by Reyes-Aquino in 1949. Finally, the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), with its thrust towards developing and promoting a

nationalist culture, has instituted annual folk dance workshops at the Folk Arts Theater, and folk dance workshops and performances by different companies (including its resident companies, the Bayanihan and the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group) in CCP venues and all over the country. The CCP has also given awards to artistic directors of outstanding folkdance companies, folk dance researchers, and artists.

In the current search for a Filipino idiom in dance, contemporary choreographers have gone back to folk dance for inspiration. Some of the works which have used folk dance types or movements are: Leonor Orosa-Goquingco 's ***Filipinescas: Philippine Life, Legend and Lore in Dance***; Anita Kane's ***Inulan sa Pista*** (Rained-out Feast); Julie Borromeo 's ***Zagalas de Manila*** (Young Maidens of Manila); Alice Reyes ' ***Amada*** and ***Bungkos Suite***; Tony Fabella 's ***Noche Buena*** (Christmas Eve Celebration); Eddie Elejar 's ***Rigodon Sketches***, Corazon Generoso-Iñigo 's ***Baile de Ayer*** (Dance of Yesterday) and ***Sisa***; Basilio 's ***Tropical Tapestry***; Gener Caringal 's ***Recuerdos*** (Memories); Brando Miranda 's ***Lawang Paoay*** (Paoay Lake); Lydia Madarang-Gaston 's ***Anak-Bulan*** (Moon Child); and Felicitas Layag-Radaic 's ***Tanan*** (Elopement) and ***May Day Eve***. • L. Reyes-Urtula, P.M. Arandez, N.G. Tiongson

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