

Philippine Folk Dances: A Story of a Nation

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In *Philippine Folk Dances and Songs* (1966) by National Artist Francisca Reyes-Aquino,¹ there is a photo of a group of Isabela province's Kalingas accompanied by the caption: "Note how the baby is carried by the mother. Influence of their association with their Christian brothers may be seen in the use of a pair of shoes by one, the dress of one girl, and the shirt of the man. All others are still primitive." The photo is under the *Costume* section, which includes various images of persons wearing native garb representing different cultural communities in the Philippines. This section is meant to be a guide on how to dress "authentically" or appropriately when performing the dances described in the book.

The caption alludes to an evolutionist imaginary emerging from colonialism, i.e., "the primitive" unblemished by the trappings of modernity. Here, the impositions of colonialism are presented as endangering the "purity", if not the entire existence, of traditional cultural expressions. Such sentiment is echoed by Lucrecia Kasilag, another National Artist, in her research with fellow National Artist Jose Maceda and with Aurora Diño, on the music of the Buid of Mindoro in 1953, in the interest of developing the repertoire of the Bayanihan² (Santos, 2004):

Most of the tribes were relatively untouched by modern civilization, but sadly there were a number of cases wherein only the elderly remembers their tribe's old songs, and the young boys could not even speak their own dialect. The researchers realized that there was a very distinct possibility that many ancient Filipino cultures could be lost forever. The studies therefore assumed a sense of urgency; the preservation of tribal

music became one of the Bayanihan's most enduring contributions to the reestablishment of Filipino cultural heritage. (cited in Santos, 2004, p. 10)

Such sentimentality characterizes salvage anthropology, which aims to document cultures under "threat" of irreversible changes brought on by cultural impositions of colonizing forces. In postcolonial times, where newly liberated nation-states sought to define their existence through an internal search for their "own" identity, such anxieties persist.

In the context of the Philippines' colonial experience, Christianity is perceived to be the social force that brought about change to its "primitive" peoples. However, contrary to colonial goals that would perceive such transformation as a positive cultural development, the comment highlighting the changes in the attire of Isabela Kalingas is meant to point out how their culture has been gradually changing. The shoes, dress, and shirt are not part of their "costume", and by extension, their culture. Thus, it is the "primitive others" that represent what "true" or "authentic" Isabela Kalingas wear. Kasilag articulates the popular view of cultural workers and researchers in the country who see tribal cultures as the repository of what it means to be Filipino, and express the compelling need to do research on these cultural communities before their cultures "disappear". This kind of perspective subscribes to a concept of culture that suggests the existence of a set of bounded objects that represent the lifeways of a particular group of people, and obscures the social and political processes involved in legitimizing the authenticity of such representations (Wright, 1998). In the Philippines, nation-building rests on a strategic essentialism that relies on the assumed primeval roots of particular cultural groups. This was facilitated through the promotion of their expressive traditions including their "dances".³

In this paper, I take off from Geertz's understanding of culture as the "stories that people tell themselves about themselves" (1973, p. 448), and ask: What stories do Filipinos tell themselves about their nation through discourses articulated in the performances and literature of their folk

dances? By exploring the postcolonial context of storytelling, I argue that such act is informed by a desire to assert a national identity that is rooted in a pre-colonial past. And as the process of Philippine nationhood and its attendant cultural formations continue to be informed by legacies of colonial politics, it renders particular ethnicities as representatives of fixed temporal points in the country's cultural history.

Institutionalizing Folk Dances in the Philippines

I use the term “folk dances” to refer to dance forms, dancing practices, and dances identified by local practitioners and writers as locally practiced or having local origins. These are comprised of expressive traditions perceived as “indigenous”, “syncretic”, or “localized”/“indigenized”.⁴ Namiki (2014) makes a distinction between *folk dances* and *folkdances*. Folk dances are expressive forms involving human body movement that are practiced in the context of community life, while folkdances are representations of folk dances that are performed for the stage. Castro (2011) labels the latter representations as “folkloric” in nature and are comprised of “performance practices and the associated material culture deriving from the folk but recontextualized for audiences” (p. 68). This paper is about both folk dances and folkdances (as defined by Namiki); it considers all as “folk dances”,⁵ and calls attention to the ways in which the presentations and descriptions of these dances tell a local narrative of the Philippine nation. I argue that the positioning of dances along the lines of the dominant version of the country's cultural history reify cultural identities and mark them as fixed temporal points. Such positioning can be seen in the classification used by scholars and performers to categorize folk dances in the country, which resonate with Hobsbawm's notion of *invented traditions* (2013, p. 4). This classification involves a “process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past if only by imposing repetition”, as particular dancing traditions practiced in different cultural communities in the Philippines are folklorized (Castro, 2011; Namiki, 2014, 2011; Gilmore, 2000; Perillo, 2017).

Handler (1999) documents a similar case in Quebec, where folk ways, specifically folk dances, were subjected to cultural objectification “influenced by both romantic and nationalistic ideology and contributed to a vision of the peasant roots of the nation” (p. 71). He highlights the role of academia in this legitimizing process (see also Said, 1979). In the Philippines, similar efforts can be seen in the initiative of Jorge Bocobo, former President of the University of the Philippines (UP), to conduct research on the music and dances of different ethnic communities in the Philippines (Goquingco, 1980; Santos, 2005; Castro, 2011; Villaruz, 2006; Alcedo, 2014).⁶ In 1934, Bocobo tasked particular members of the university faculty from the Conservatory of Music and the Department of Physical Education including Francisca Reyes (later, Aquino), a physical education teacher who did a preliminary survey of Philippine folk dances for her thesis on folk dances and games in the Philippines, to be part of the research team. This project allowed Reyes-Aquino to expand her research on folk dances, resulting in the publication of six volumes of *Philippine Folk Dances*, which were published between 1953 and 1980 (including new editions). These six volumes feature dances from different parts of the country, including Hispanized or Christianized dances, localized forms of European dances, as well as ethnic dances or those practiced by different indigenous communities in the Philippines.

As indicated in the foreword of volumes 1 through 5, all by Serafin Aquino⁷ who was then Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation (PAAF)⁸ and later Chief of the Division of Physical Education at the Department of Education, Reyes-Aquino’s works serve as guides for the ‘authentic’ reproduction and performance of the dances in different social activities, including recreation. They are also meant to instill a patriotic and nationalistic spirit. In the first volume, Aquino (1953) remarks, “[t]he work being done to collect Filipino folk dances and to preserve their authenticity for future generations deserves the support of every patriotic citizen. We should be proud of, and keep for posterity, the best traditions and culture of our people” (p. I). In the

second volume, Aquino describes folk dances as “really for and by the common people. A recreation program for these people, which includes folk dances that will uplift their spirit and provide a welcome relief from the monotony and dreariness of manual labor.” He continues, “This new volume on Philippine folk dances by Mrs. Aquino represents many years of continuous labor in the interest of preserving for posterity the genuine culture, customs, and traditions of the Filipinos as depicted in their folk dance.” (Aquino, 1960a, p. I). In the third volume, Aquino notes:

The value of folk dancing as a cultural and recreational activity is ... more fundamental than its being a means towards development of nationalism. Its higher value lies in the wholesome recreation and spiritual satisfaction it can provide, and the preservation of the people’s culture ... Care must be taken, however, to preserve the authenticity of the Philippine folk dances. It is therefore essential that for the real meaning and value of these dances, they be performed in their original form. In every case, authentic music, steps and costumes should be used. (1960b, p. I)

Aside from anthologizing the different folk dances in the country, Reyes-Aquino is also responsible for the inclusion of folk dancing in the physical education curriculum of public schools in the Philippines. She left UP after 18 years and joined the Department of Education, where she eventually became the Superintendent of Physical Education for the Bureau of Public Schools. By the fourth volume, the series would highlight the value of folk dances in education, and in defining and presenting ‘Filipino culture’ to the wider world. Note the foreword of the fourth volume:

During the past few years, marked interest in folk dances has been manifested throughout the country. Folk dances are generally given in school programs and community social affairs. The Philippine Folk Dance Society, of which Mrs. Francisca R. Aquino is the adviser, has helped much in popularizing the folk dances. It has established chapters in the cities and provinces and encouraged schools, colleges and universities to organize their folk dance troupes.

To acquaint other countries with Filipino culture and contribute to the promotion of international understanding, the Philippine Government encouraged the sending of folk dance troupes abroad. (Aquino, 1960c, p. I)

The foreword of the fifth volume is also worth quoting: “The public school ... awakened to the potential of folk dancing for entertainment as well as a means for the preservation of our culture, took it up, and from then on folk dancing became a regular part of the school curriculum” (Aquino, 1960d, p. I).

Finally, the foreword in the sixth volume by Manuel (1975) states:

An educational system, to be effective for the present social milieu, should aim to achieve triple objectives. These are: transmitting to future generations the values of society, fostering creativity, and developing reflective and critical thinking in the individual. (p. III)

For the achievement of these objectives, the dance, particularly the Philippine folk dance, easily becomes an effective medium of the schools... In its cognitive aspects, the student learns historical facts, customs, traditions and knowledge of the art—the native dances and their music. The affective aspects are such values as aesthetic appreciation, morality, proper decorum, love for our cultural heritage and patriotism, all of which may be developed through lessons in folk dancing. (p. III)

To this day, the public school system incorporates the learning of “folk, indigenous, ethnic, traditional and creative dances” as part of the physical education curriculum (Department of Education, 2013). In the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA),⁹ folk dance is one of the two tracks for dance majors, the other being ballet. In addition, folk dances are regularly featured in student presentations during the Buwan ng Wika or National Language Month,¹⁰ an annual month-long homage to the national language of the Philippines, which is Filipino.

Aside from being part of the school curriculum, the formation of school-based and professional folk dance troupes further formalized the place of

folk dance as one of the categories of dance traditions in the country. Reyes-Aquino would form the UP Folk Song and Dance Club, now the UP Filipiniana Dance Group, a school-based dance troupe of UP Diliman which performs in school-related events as well as in folklore festivals in the country and abroad (Alcedo, 2018). Other university-based groups that perform and promote Philippine folk dances include the University of the East Silanganan Dance Troupe, Darangan Cultural Troupe based in Mindanao State University in Marawi city from the southern Philippines, and the FEU (Far Eastern University) Dance Company (formerly FEU Folk Dance Group).¹¹

Professional folk dance troupes in the country include the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG)¹² and the Bayanihan. While the two groups differ in their approach to presenting folk dances in the country,¹³ their performances continue to be dynamic embodiments of particular constructions of Filipino identity. Their performances of different folk dance traditions in the country are grounded on research, with the objective of promoting awareness about these expressive traditions, and Filipino culture in general, in mainstream performance venues locally and abroad. As such, these professional troupes have become important symbols of national patrimony and its effective disseminators. The Bayanihan has regular performances and outreach projects in different parts of the country and goes on regular tours abroad, visiting many Filipino communities in different parts of the world. Their level of influence can be seen through folkloric groups that have been established in the United States, which use the Bayanihan model (Castro, 2011; Gaerlan, 1999),¹⁴ including noted cultural shows such as the Pilipino Cultural Night or PCN (Gilmore, 2000; Gonzalez, 2010).

In 1998, the role of the Bayanihan as one of the country's cultural ambassadors was legally recognized through Republic Act 8628, which designated the Bayanihan as "The Philippine National Folk Dance Company". The law describes the role of the Bayanihan as an organization tasked to research on Philippine culture, specifically folk dances, to

disseminate this knowledge. In the meantime, the ROFG is to continue its work of promoting and educating the public about Filipino culture through folk dance presentations. The members ensured the continuity of their organization through the Batang ROFG program, in which children and teens are trained in music and dancing in the tradition instituted by Obusan.

Folk Dances and the Cultural History of the Philippines

The dynamic embodiment of the national imaginary through dancing is not uncommon (see, for instance, Reed, 2010; Foley, 2001; Chakravorty, 1998; Fisher, 2003). As a visual spectacle, dancing can be easily recruited as a convenient symbol of the nation. In the Philippines, this is accomplished by presenting the diverse cultural communities in the country through stage performances of what is documented as dances in their culture. The Bayanihan compiles these different dances into four suites: the Cordillera suite, the Muslim Suite, the Maria Clara or Hispanic Suite, and the Lowland Filipino suite.¹⁵ These suites are meant to display the array of cultures in the Philippines, from the non-Christian groups in the northern Philippines (Cordillera suite), the Islamized groups in the southern Philippines (Muslim suite), and the Christianized communities in the country (Hispanic and Lowland Filipino suites). While the Bayanihan has expanded its repertoire to include newly discovered dances, these four suites remain staples in their performances.

Leonor Orosa Goquingco, another National Artist for Dance, who wrote one of the major texts on Philippine dance, reinforces these groupings of Philippine dances. Goquingco (1980) uses two general categories to describe the different “ethnic” dance traditions in the Philippines: “Dances of Non-Christian Filipinos”, which is further divided into “Dances of traditionalist or pagan groups” and “Dances of Muslim Groups”, and “Dances of Christian and Lowland Filipinos or Western-Influenced Dances”. The twinned categories follow her categorization of the “chief cultural groups” in the Philippines: Major Christian Groups, Minor Christian Groups, Muslim “Moro” Groups, Principal “Pagan” or Traditionalist Groups, Negrito and Dumagat Groups,

and Multiple-Belief-Holding Groups (such as partially-Christianized “pagan” groups) (p. 23). As with the Bayanihan’s dance suites, the various cultural communities in the country are grouped under broad categories roughly based on their degree of Christianization.

The use of the category “Muslim” to refer to a particular set of dances is reminiscent of the frustrations of the Spanish colonial forces in their failure to convert the followers of Islam to Christianity. The significance of this struggle is evidenced by the Moro-moro, a specific form of *komedya* popular in the country from the seventeenth century until its decline in the late nineteenth century (Santos, 2003). The Moro-moro depicts Christians and Muslims as opposing forces, but always ends with the Muslims converting to Christianity. Jacinto (2011) lays out the problematic use of the category “Muslim dances”, noting that the use of the term “Muslim” is an orientaling generalization of cultural communities that practice Islam but are culturally variegated. In what follows, I offer a critical reading of the categories of folk dances in the Philippines and how they bolster a cultural history that is informed by colonial politics.

Goqingco offers an eloquent elaboration of ethnic dances that depict a dominant view shared by other literatures of Philippine dances:

The ethnic and regional dances of the Philippines are of profound significance, for they furnish students of history, sociology, psychology, religion, and so forth with a rare and living documentary marking various and recognizable strata of cultural development.

This phenomenon has been made possible by the preservation, in certain (usually isolated) regions, of “pure pockets of culture”. What one can find among these groups are, therefore, dance traditions providentially still untouched by the West and thus of inestimable value in reconstructing the nation’s prehispanic heritage. The aboriginal Negritos and Hanunoos, the primitive Bataks, and the Ilongots living in the hinterlands are among communities, groups, tribes, which were never conquered by the Spaniards and which live largely as they did before the arrival of Westerners in the

Archipelago. To visit them is figuratively to take a trip centuries back, through the time-tunnel of history, and to see how well they have preserved for us a great source-body of cultural traditions that might otherwise have vanished forever.

The so-called “primitive” or traditionalist peoples are particularly interesting because they have generally adhered to their traditions and religious beliefs.¹⁶ These traditions, rituals, and dances, retained in near-pristine form, could offer valuable clues in today’s search for the authentic roots of prehispanic Philippines. (p. 29)

Goquingco’s characterization of ethnic dances and her expressed concern over their preservation (which is similar to Kasilag’s sentiments) illustrate a reified view of culture reminiscent of cultural evolutionist Edward Tylor’s understanding of culture as a “complex whole” and of his categorization of world cultures as being in different stages of cultural development.¹⁷ Goquingco’s representation of ethnic dances as “a rare and living documentary marking various and recognizable strata of cultural development” echoes Tylor’s views, and in this case, shows an undisguised appreciation for such primitivism. Moreover, Goquingco presents (and celebrates) these communities as ahistorical entities—as cultures with no past and no future. The assumption that their practices have remained unchanged does not acknowledge the cultural exchanges that these communities might have had with other nearby communities and the attendant changes that might have ensued even prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonial forces.¹⁸

The Dance volume of the *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*¹⁹ describes ethnic dances as those that “have not been substantially Westernized” (Villaruz & Obusan, 1995, p. 34). The articles in the *CCP Encyclopedia* that discuss dances of ethnic groups refer to specific expressive traditions practiced by specific cultural communities but somehow resort to a generalized view of ethnic groups as the repository of the whole country’s cultural roots. Perhaps what captures this sense of rootedness is the way ethnic dances are represented as closely associated with social functions;

thus, labels for sub-categories of ethnic dances include “ritual dances”, “the life-cycle dances”, and “occupational dances” in the historical essay on ethnic dances.²⁰ Elaborating on her previous comment on the ‘traditionalist’ character of the country’s primitive peoples, Goquingco further observes that ethnic dances:

are dances that arose from the communal rites to conciliate the gods, to solicit rain, to seek deliverance from pestilence; or dances that came from special combat, and victory celebrations, or simply to lighten ... such everyday tasks such as the planting, harvesting, pounding, winnowing of rice, fishing, rowing and tuba (coconut-wine) gathering. (p. 31)

On the other hand, this segregation of dances is not found in other historical essays on “The Spanish Colonial Tradition” and “The American Colonial and Contemporary Traditions” in the *CCP Encyclopedia*. In these essays, dances are categorized by dance form. While the *CCP Encyclopedia* acknowledges that “ethnic Filipinos” have continued to practice their dances, the romanticized representation of ethnic dances as expressions of social life seems to be a form of strategic essentialism as these “rites and dances provide substance to present-day documentation and presentation” especially to Filipinos living abroad (Villaruz & Obusan, 1995, p. 34).

Such way of describing ethnic dances follows a narrative of Philippine cultural history that places indigenous cultures as belonging to the past, untouched by Christianity and modernity. This is consistent with the historiography presented in Philippine history books used in primary and secondary education in the country. *History of the Filipino People* by Teodoro Agoncillo (2012; first published, 1960), one of the main resources used in educational institutions in the country,²¹ has the following general headings for its many chapters: Pre-Colonial Philippines, The Spanish Period, Reform and Revolution, The American Period, The War Years, and The Third Republic. In the Pre-Colonial Philippines section, Agoncillo elaborates on the culture of “ancient Filipinos”. Here, a four-page description of the music and dance of “ancient Filipinos” includes some specific examples of musical

and dance traditions of the Visayans, the Negritos, the Bontok Igorots from northern Luzon, the Tagbanua of Palawan, the Ilocanos, and the Tagalogs. However, Agoncillo does not follow through with the specific histories of these cultural groupings in his account of the history of the nation. Instead, he reverts to the term 'Filipino' to give a more encompassing image of inhabitants of the Philippine islands prior to Spain's arrival and subsequent colonizing of the country. In the last paragraph of this section, he writes:

It should be noted that the ancient Filipinos had music and dances for all occasions and that because of their frequent association, their social organization was more well-knit than it is today. Looking backwards, one may say that during the Spanish empire days, the Filipino social organization remained substantially as it was before the conquest, but under the impact of American influence that same organization has suffered a little loosening of social ties. (p. 66)

As noted above, this generalizing view of Filipino culture is informed by the sentiments of salvage anthropology and promotes the idea that so-called pre-colonial cultures are "pure". Such a view disregards the persistence of strong family ties among rural and urban communities in the Philippines and obscures the rich, diverse, complex and *ongoing* history of cultural engagement these communities have with nearby communities within the country and elsewhere. At the same time, this cultural history also suggests an imagined continuity between cultures in the country, where indigenous cultures are made to represent the early forms or the past of the more urbanized and modern parts of the country. This is the framework that informs the literature on Philippine dances, and is articulated in the distinctions and categories made based on perceptions about the degree of Christianization (or Westernization) of particular dances or dance forms.

Thus, it is the notion of transformation that characterizes descriptions of dance forms and dancing practices associated with the Spanish colonial period, which have either European origins and/or bear the

influence of Christianity. The cultural processes that contributed to these transformations are described in the *CCP Encyclopedia*. Editor and contributor Basilio Esteban Villaruz (1994) opens the section “The Spanish Colonial Tradition” in the historical essay “Philippine Dance”:

With the coming of the Spaniards and the spread of Christianity, the people transferred the object of their worship to the saints, though they did not abandon their native impulse and style ... Christianity turned native to a certain extent and became a vehicle for the Filipino way of spiritual and communal expression. (p. 20)

A few paragraphs later, Villaruz discusses how European dances fared when these were introduced to the locals:

[European dances] underwent regional transformation in the colony, as is evident in the variations of the *jota* from the northern Cagayan to the southern provinces. As they became localized, these dances gained regional characteristics, adapting bamboo, coconut or shell castanets, scented handkerchiefs, *paypay*, Ilocano kumintang gestures, etc. Musical accompaniment was also indigenized through a variety of native instruments. (p. 20)

These dances include imported forms such as the *jota*, *habanera*, *malaqueña*, *fandango*, *cachuchas*, *rigodon* and *lanceros*, that eventually took on localized versions with more simplified movements and Filipinized names, as well as regional variations. In some cases, movements from these dances have been combined in what is known as *surtido*, which also has its own regional variations.²² Hispanized dances or forms that existed prior to colonization, but only continued to exist as part of Catholic-related rituals include the *subli*, *putong*, and *turumba* (Goquingco, 1980; Villaruz, 1994). There are also dances that are labeled “Christian” folk dances but are not religious in nature. The *CCP Encyclopedia* lists the *tinikling*, *itik-itik*, *kalapati/sinalampati*, and the *pabo* as examples. While the term “Christian” may

mean nothing more than that these dances are performed by Christianized communities, the use of the term indicates the significance of Christianity as an important cultural force that shaped the transformation of these local aesthetic forms.

The idea of cultural transformation lends itself to a view of Filipino culture as composed of 'syncretic' forms. Scholars have used this framework to explain particular religious (see for instance, Schumacher, 1984 and Macdonald, 2004), culinary (see Fernandez, 2003 and Zialcita, 2005) and artistic practices of Filipinos. Irving (2010) observes that music culture in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period included the rise of Manila as a multicultural center or "a forum for the intercultural exchange of ideas and commodities" (p. 32). He highlights the role of the galleon trade (1565-1815) in the intercontinental transfer of cultural practices and artifacts during the Spanish colonial period, especially between Spain, Mexico, and Manila.

Tiongson (1998) relates how theater forms with foreign origins, Spain specifically, have been localized in the Philippines and in Mexico. He provides detailed descriptions of the performances of these expressive forms, the *posadas/panunuluyan*, *pastorela/pastores*, and the *moros y cristianos*, and contemplates on the direction of influence between Mexico and the Philippines. In the end, he leaves this discussion in favor of an exploration of how these performative genres became integrated into the repertoire of expressive forms in different Filipino communities. He views these developments as acts of revitalizing the "traditional forms":

So entrenched are the Hispanic/Christian forms in Philippine life today that they have become part of the Filipino's cultural consciousness and his vocabulary for expression and communication. The more the Filipino is able to revitalize these traditional forms with messages that respond to contemporary national concerns, the more will these forms validate themselves as Filipino, the greater too will their contribution be to the definition of an identity unique to the Filipino. (p. 149)

Tiongson views “revitalization” as a process of adoption and adaptation that “dehydrated” the foreign content of performative forms (in this case, particular dramatic forms such as those that evolved to the current *panunuluyan*, *pastores*, and *sinakulo* in the Philippines), and “refilled” them with locally relevant themes and issues, “[contributing]... to the formation of a new native culture” (pp. 148–149). In contrast to the purism that underlies the desire for the preservation of ethnic traditions, expressive traditions associated with the Spanish colonial period that have been localized or indigenized are accepted and claimed as “Filipino” because these have been “mixed” with local temperament, rhythms, and elements. These include fiestas, processions and similar celebrations throughout the country, which bear some kind of Christian element.

As such, ethnic and Hispanic dances have figured prominently in representations of Filipino culture where they are placed along an evolutionary timeline. However, this history does not tell a story of progress but is constructed in a way that allows Filipinos to look into their (assumed) past to catch a glimpse of the Filipino soul. Fabian (2014) points out the contradictions inherent in the experience and use of time in writing ethnography. On the one hand, anthropologists share time with their interlocutors in the process of conducting ethnographic research. However, in the process of producing an ethnographic manuscript, the ‘other’ comes to be represented as belonging to a distant time. Fabian refers to this as the “schizogenic use of time” where “[i]n the objectifying discourses of a scientific anthropology, ‘Others’ thus never appear as immediate partners in a cultural exchange but as spatially and, more importantly, temporally distanced groups” (p. viii). I mention this here since the production of knowledge on folk dances in the Philippines is borne out of a process of knowledge production involving the study of ‘others’ who share the same historical period as their investigators. The research projects that Reyes-Aquino and her team, as well as of others, such as those of Kasilag, Urtula, and Obusan, involved the collection of data from local informants and dance practitioners that turned into a series of anthologies which all aimed

to preserve and celebrate the rich diversity of cultures in the Philippines by memorializing their practices as artifacts from (and in) the past. Ethnic and rural dance traditions were viewed as the country's cultural treasures, and, as such, they became signifiers of what is assumed to be pre-colonial culture in Philippine history. In the process, these dances were reified synchronically and diachronically despite the fact that these dance forms are still being practiced today.

The use of such chronology for differentiating indigenous and contemporary dances is likewise implied in the introduction of the Dance volume of the *CCP Encyclopedia*, where the editors write:

[E]ven as the volume seeks to be of service to students, it also hopes to be a sourcebook for dance artists and designers, who will find in the book visual and verbal records of the various indigenous, Spanish-influenced, and American colonial dances that they could study as possible sources for inspiration and technique for the dances they create for the contemporary audiences...[M]ore and more choreographers [realize] that they can only contribute to the history of dance if they express themselves as Filipinos, and that they cannot create as Filipinos if they do not go back to their roots in indigenous and folk culture. The encyclopedia hopes to encourage this return to roots by making available to the would-be choreographer the essential data on those ancient traditions. (1994, p. 2)

In this passage, the different dance traditions that are practiced in the country are placed along a historical periodization where indigenous and folk traditions are considered archaic forms, thus presumed to hold the key to understanding "Filipino" culture. It also implies a continuous narrative of dancing traditions in the Philippines, which "begins" with the indigenous and folk, and continues (or ends) in the choreographed "dances for more contemporary audiences".

Historically, though, these dance forms are unrelated to each other. Joann Kealiinohomoku, cautioning against such assumed continuities,

delivers a critical reading of dance history texts where ballet dancing has been presented in dance history literature “as if it was the one great divinely ordained apogee of the performing arts” (p. 35), and excludes itself as a form of “ethnic dance”. To her, the term “ethnic” refers to a “group which holds in common genetic, linguistic, and cultural ties” (p. 39). She applies this to ballet, which has its own community of speakers, practitioners, and patrons, as well as practices and traditions that characterize it as its own form of dancing. Moreover, she points out that the history of ballet as a dance form cannot be divorced from a social history that informs its origins, development, and practice. Thus, it bears consideration as an ethnic dance despite its widespread practice in different parts of the world. In fact, its widespread distribution should bring attention to the dance form’s various culturally specific individual and social histories involving class struggle, colonialism, war, social exclusion, and the transnational movement of bodies.

To follow Kealiinohomoku, one would need a closer examination of the particular histories of the different dance forms in the Philippines, since each dance tradition’s history and development cannot be assumed to be part of the same historical path. For instance, Sally Ann Ness (1997) writes about a significant development in the repertorial history of Philippine ballet in her article on the works of Agnes Locsin, a Filipina choreographer whose works incorporate movements used in expressive traditions practiced by indigenous communities in the Philippines. Although Ness focuses on issues of appropriation and cultural responsibility arising from Locsin’s choreographic innovation, auspiciously labeled “neo-ethnic ballet”, she calls attention to the need to further examine the historical particularity of different dancing traditions in the Philippines, in this case, ballet dancing in the country. In fact, she goes as far as to call neo-ethnic ballet a ‘Filipinized’ form of ballet (p. 76). Locsin (2012) herself capitalizes on her innovative practice in her own book, where she outlines the choreographic techniques she uses to create her works. She also narrates the choreographic processes in some of her more notable pieces and includes notes from the dancers

and her artistic collaborators. In these writings can be extracted a history of a dance form—the ballet—as it developed in the Philippines. Indigenous dance forms in the country, as well as those with foreign origins (e.g., hip hop), have their own histories, although these have yet to be extensively studied.²³ It must also be said that dance forms practiced by indigenous communities in the Philippines are also hybridized forms which are borne out of cultural exchanges and creative collaborations with other communities in the Southeast Asian region and elsewhere (Zialcita, 2005; Hussin & Santamaria, 2013; Amilbangsa, 1993; Abad & Santamaria, 2011).

At the same time, it is not to suggest here that the historical paths of the different dance traditions in the Philippines are completely divergent from one another. Ness' exposition of Locsin's work, which Ness claims is also influenced by Locsin's exposure to Bayanihan-style movements, is an illustration of how the histories of dance forms in the Philippines intersect on biographical and institutional levels. The ongoing social, political, and cultural encounters and engagements between indigenous communities and mainstream society in the Philippines (specifically state institutions and the academia, for instance) remain complex and are fueled by desires (on both sides) for incorporation, acceptance, and equity on the one hand, and autonomy and self-determination on the other. These desires are incarnated in the increasing number of platforms for showcasing the diversity of cultures and expressive traditions in the country and the formation of performing groups coming out of public schools and indigenous communities.

One such platform is the National Music Competitions for Young Artists (NAMCYA), which is a national competition for young musicians in the field of Western classical music. Since 1973, however, the NAMCYA has featured a Traditional²⁴ Music Concert alongside the music competitions. The Traditional Music Concert is not considered a competition and is held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP),²⁵ where the final rounds of NAMCYA competitions are also conducted. The Concert aims to display the different indigenous musical traditions in the country and educate the

public about these. Another objective is to discover young musicians who are carrying on their traditions using local learning methods. In the course of the competition, different performing groups audition to be part of the concert. In the early years of the Traditional Music Concert, these auditions were held during the regional level competitions in the different provinces throughout the country through live performances in front of judges who mostly come from Metro Manila. In recent years, audition tapes are sent in from all over the country and are evaluated by the Traditional Music Committee in Metro Manila.

In its early years, the Traditional Music Concert mostly featured local masters and their students, or family ensembles. Today, the performing groups that audition for the concert are usually those that were formed in schools and within local communities themselves. These musical performances²⁶ sometimes include some form of body movement²⁷ (i.e., dancing). Recently, they have become more stylized theatrical versions of their expressive traditions. In the NAMCYA Traditional Music Concert held in November 2017, almost all performances incorporated some form of dancing or body movement. In some cases, the dancing was more prominently displayed than the performance of music, as this kind of arrangement is deemed more visually striking.

NAMCYA has indeed become a powerful social force that has influenced the direction of folk expressive traditions (indigenous and Hispanized) in the country. Here, the encounters between the communities, their local intermediaries, and the “expert” judges from Metro Manila, who decide on the performing groups that will participate in the concert, have influenced the aesthetics of the performance of these expressive traditions. Local communities have viewed the NAMCYA as an opportunity to participate in mainstream Philippine society by showcasing their “culture” at the CCP. Thus, their performances of their local community traditions have undergone some changes based on their perceptions of what judges might find appealing and acceptable for Manila audiences. Such rare and limited occasions for indigenous and rural communities in the Philippines to

display their cultural wares have forged an aesthetic direction for particular expressive traditions in the country, as schools and communities have created their own performing groups,²⁸ and more theatrical elements (such as dramatizations of life events) are incorporated into their performance (instead of featuring just the musical tradition). Yet, this does not necessarily mean that the expressive traditions of these communities have been totally transformed. These folkloric presentations comprise just one strand of the history of particular dance traditions. As Castro asserts, “folk” and “folkloric” dances should not be seen as having a unidirectional relationship, where “folk” is the source of the “folkloric”. Citing Anthony Shay, she adds that “folk and folkloric exist as ‘parallel traditions’ (p. 68).

Although Castro’s assertions refer to the presumed historical connections made between indigenous expressive forms and those the Bayanihan performed, I extend her discussion to the school- and community-based performing groups that have formed in recent years with the aim of preserving dance traditions by exposing them to a wider audience. The mainstreaming of otherwise less popular and marginalized expressive traditions demonstrate the ongoing, intersecting, and rich contemporaneous histories of folk traditions alongside what is considered more “modern” dance forms, such as ballet and hip hop, that are practiced in the country. It also reflects a social history replete with cultural engagements between different social groups and cultural communities in the country. These forms of preservation—which include methods used by the Bayanihan and the ROFG, as well as the performances in the NAMCYA—involve some form of intervention from individuals and institutions outside of the community.

As can be noted, different dance forms and traditions in the country have their own respective social histories embodied in their performances and performance practices. These histories may or may not intersect at certain points, and reveal the cultural exchanges and underlying social and political relations between individuals, communities, and institutions. As such, the construction of *the* or even, *a* history of “dance” in the Philippines

in linear terms must be viewed as a form of interpretation that is informed by particular desires and interests. For instance, Pison (2016) writes about the act of archiving for the second edition of *The CCP Encyclopedia*, Dance volume.²⁹ Her role as one of the editors and writers in the Dance volume has led her to reflect on the implications of the act of archiving the different dances, dance forms, and traditions in the country, especially in the context of limited time, resources (in the form of manpower and information), and conceptual framework. Pison concludes that as much as it was difficult to “pen down” bodily performances and practices that comprise the different dance traditions in the Philippines, and that as much as the encyclopedia is a project informed by nationalist sentiment, the final form of the second edition of the Dance volume is able to present Philippine dance as comprised of overlapping narratives of dancing bodies across the nation and, recognizing the discursivity inherent in the production of the encyclopedia, “paves the way for multiple iterations of dances, thus extending their life” (p. 65). It can be argued, however, that the cultural weight of the *Encyclopedia* as one of the key sources of knowledge about dance in the Philippines and the discourse it (re-)produces on “Philippine dance” especially given the relative scarcity of scholarship in the subject (which Pison also points out), requires closer examination.

Perhaps an interrogation of the label “Philippine dance” can be a start. The insistence on the existence of such a thing opens a conceptual space that, on the one hand, seems to promote an inclusivity for all dance traditions in the country. On the other hand, however, it also easily accommodates the construction of a singular (and linear) narrative in the desire for clarity as to what “Philippine dance” is. Kealiinohomoku raises a similar issue for generalizing labels such as “African dance”, which is used in various texts written by Western dance scholars. According to her, the use of the term “African dance” dangerously propagates a monolithic identity for all the dance traditions of communities within the African continent. It is a label that does not have any basis in reality, and easily masks the existence of culturally specific dances and dance traditions within the African continent.

She adds that this label is not an *emic*,³⁰ or something that different cultural communities in Africa might use to refer to their own specific dances or dance traditions. In her review of literature written by Western experts on dance, she observes that this label is associated with descriptions of “primitive dances”, also dubbed as “ethnic dances”, “primitive dances” and lumped together as “African dance” and “American Indian dance”. Kealiinohomoku makes the argument that such labels serve to distance these forms of dancing from Western forms of dancing—specifically ballet dancing—and propagate colonialist views of cultural difference.

The label “Philippine dance”, however, embodies desires to “preserve” particular dance forms and traditions in the country as a means of promoting a particular understanding of what being “Filipino” is. Coming out of post-colonial nationalist discourses by the state, in coordination with academe, the search for *pre-colonial* cultural expressions became an imperative. In the Philippines, this entailed the classification of various dances, dance forms and traditions that were practiced throughout the country, framed in terms of a historical periodization that is both temporal *and* cultural. Ethnic dances (Christianized and indigenous) occupied a privileged position in this classification as they served as emblems of national identity. Following evolutionary logic, traditions of cultural communities presented as being “prehispanic” carry the burden of representing what is “authentically Filipino”. Dance forms and traditions associated with the process of Christianization are deemed Filipino by virtue of their syncretic character; in other words, these are not totally foreign since they were modified by Filipinos and woven into the fabric of their social life.

A close examination of how these dance forms and traditions were made to represent Filipino culture and identity suggests that their inclusion is guided by the way particular cultural imperialisms of the country’s colonizers—Spain and the United States—are configured in the social consciousness of Filipinos. The Spanish colonial period in the Philippines is marked primarily by the introduction of Christianity. The Catholic Church was an influential force in affairs of the state, and instrumental

in formalizing the hacienda system that continues to prevail in the rural areas of the country. It also instituted educational institutions, albeit not as extensively as the Americans did. In this process, Filipinos learned, or at the very least were exposed to, various European musical forms, theatrical traditions, and dances.

For the most part, cultural traditions “inherited” from Spain are viewed more positively and celebrated more widely. The different fiestas in the Philippines, which were originally organized by Catholic friars to invite the curiosity of Filipinos, who had yet to be converted to Christianity (Wendt, 1998), are at present featured as main attractions for the tourism industry. Google searches on “Filipino culture” show colorful images of fiestas that commemorate local community practices, products, or patron saints. Religious expressive practices associated with the celebration of Christianity, such as Holy Week processions, Christmas-related rituals, and other devotions (such as the much-awaited Nazareno and All Saints’ Day), warrant declarations for nation- or city-wide holidays. Expressive traditions such as the *rondalla*, the *komedya*, and the *zarzuela* are unquestioned as “Filipino” especially with their local modifications.

Castro suggests that the inclusion of the Spanish dances in Philippine folk dance presentations represents a nostalgic desire for “manners, grace and courtship” that are contrasted with the memory and experience of fast-paced modernity represented by the cultural developments that followed the American colonial period. This nostalgia comes from an upper-class sensibility that legitimizes “oligarchic control of the country” (Castro, p. 92). As such, the presentations reflect and perpetuate a celebratory view of the Hispanic heritage of the Philippines coming from an *ilustrado* point of view and by a persistent fascination for old world cosmopolitanism and upper class experience. For instance, the uniqueness of “Filipino cuisine” is represented in terms of its fusion of Asian and Spanish flavors, and is served with typical *ilustrado* flair as in the (now closed) La Cocina de Tita Moning, Heritage Bistro, Barbara’s, *Ilustrado*, Ristorante delle Mitre. These restaurants, which feature “Filipino cuisine”, give patrons a glimpse

of ilustrado life during the Spanish colonial period. Heritage cities such as the City of Silay—the self-proclaimed Paris of Negros³¹—proudly display the opulence of their heritage houses³² owned by local landowners and even celebrate significant events in their locality mostly told from the point of view of the landowners, with not a single mention of the lives and struggles of the farmers who work in their fields.

Although there is a general view that legacies from both Spanish and American colonialisms have contributed to the “richness of Philippine culture”, there is somewhat more accommodation given to cultural contributions with Hispanic origins, compared to the lukewarm, at times ambivalent, and sometimes hostile, sentiments directed toward those attributed to the United States (US) empire. The use of the English language, the formal education system, and the democratic political system are cultural contributions to Philippine society attributed to the US. While these are still very much in place, they are viewed as impositions that have barely made any traction in terms of being “Filipinized”. For the most part, they are viewed as undiluted inheritances. And if by some chance these elements are “Filipinized”, the local versions are considered (inferior) imitations of the “real thing”. As a consequence, dance forms introduced during the US occupation of the country that are still practiced locally such as ballet, disco dancing or even hip-hop, are not necessarily embraced as part of the nation’s cultural heritage. This is not to say, however, that local artists (such as those who practice ballet and hip-hop) who go abroad and become successful either as members of a foreign-based company or as winners of some international competition are not received with pride. In fact, the desire to excel in these dance forms exists alongside the search for the Filipino soul in ethnic dance traditions in the country. However, the basis of “Filipino pride” in these cases is the ability of Filipinos to adapt to the practices and foreign standards of these dance forms, presenting themselves as equals of their foreign counterparts. As Castro as well as Zialcita (2005) observe, cultural formations during the American colonial period are considered expressions of modernity, wealth, power, advanced technology,

and urban sophistication. As such, expressive traditions associated with the American period in Philippine history are not celebrated as part of the cultural heritage of Filipinos. This is in direct contrast to the ways in which folk (ethnic and Hispanic) traditions are perceived.

I argue that these configurations are shaped by a nationalism that is fueled by a postcolonial desire to define what is “truly” Filipino. In this case, this means finding cultural markers that do not bear any foreign influence, or, in the case of practices with foreign origins, have been drained of their foreign-ness. Ironically, this process is enabled by a persistent (residual) legacy from centuries of political subjugation by foreign colonizers of the country. The cultural imperialism shaped by the political and ideological influence of the Catholic Church not only resulted in its widespread practice; it also gave rise to a system of categorizing the diverse peoples in the Philippines. This system would be legitimized and propagated long after the official departure of Spanish colonizing forces, well into the American colonial period and beyond.

Although the Christianizing mission of Spain succeeded in converting much of the country, cultural communities in the northern and southern Philippines, especially the Muslim communities, were able to resist cultural imposition. This “problem” was inherited by the Americans and was addressed through their “benevolent assimilation” of these communities. They established the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (BNCT) in 1901, which was tasked to “conduct demographic, linguistic, and ethnographic studies of lives of these ‘tribes’ to ‘determin[e] the most practicable means for bringing their advancement in civilization and material prosperity’” (Abaya, Lucas-Fernan, & Noval-Morales, 1999, p. 1).³³ The BNCT would be transformed into the Ethnological Survey in 1903, the Division of Ethnology of the Philippine Museum (now the National Museum of the Philippines) in 1913, and back to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1916 (Abaya, Lucas-Fernan, & Noval-Morales, 1999). Succeeding government offices that would carry out the assimilation of the non-Christian tribes after the Commonwealth period in the Philippines (1935-1946) are the Commission for National Integration

(CNI), the Presidential Assistant for Cultural Minorities, and the Office of Muslim Affairs-Cultural Communities, which was later divided into the Office of the Northern Cultural Communities and the Office of the Southern Cultural Communities. In 1997, the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was formed by virtue of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371). The NCIP's mandate is to assist displaced cultural communities to re-claim ownership of their ancestral lands. Although the IPRA addresses important and pressing issues related to the displacement experienced by many indigenous cultural communities in the country due to government projects, war, and private industry, the NCIP as an institution also serves as an emblem of a long-standing practice of "othering", one that has existed from the early accounts of Spanish chroniclers and throughout the ethnological projects of the Americans.

In the Philippines, this history of "othering" non-Christian communities in the northern and southern Philippines by colonial forces and the local elite can be attributed to a persistent political and cultural marginalization that conveniently merged with a pervasive evolutionary discourse that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. It is this evolutionary discourse that informed the responses of nationalists such as Reyes-Aquino who were intent on searching for cultural symbols that were free from any colonial influence. Her extensive research conducted in the first two decades of the 1900s, and the subsequent publications on Philippine folk dances coming out of this work, started the path toward this cultural and temporal othering and continue to inform writings about, and performances of, folk dances to this day. These are articulated in academic and popular discourses that promote the constructed primeval beginnings of the "Filipino people", as well as the processes of syncretism and localization/ indigenization that followed it, allowing for a conceptual space that made teasing out the "indigenous" possible. Thus, cultures that were previously targeted for assimilation, but are assumed to have continued their resistance to such advancements, are heralded for their "purity", "authenticity", and "originality" as the country's primitives. As a consequence, their expressive

traditions remain to be important symbols of the nation, as are the syncretic forms that still bear significant traces of indigenous expressions. On the other hand, the expressive traditions that are associated with what is recognized as the more urbanized and progressive period of Philippine history maintain their foreign-ness despite local developments.

On a hopeful note, there is Locsin's *neo-ethnic* ballet, which successfully integrates the earthiness of so-called ethnic movements into the ballet movement vocabulary. However, the view on this particular development sees such ethnic movements as a mere resource material for modern works. Ballet dancing in the Philippines for the most part remains a "foreign" dance form, definitely not an "ethnic" one, despite the specific history of the dance form in the country. But, as Reyes-Aquino's story tells us, research on the different dance traditions in the Philippines is a powerful tool for understanding ourselves. Perhaps with more critical studies on the specific histories of the different movement traditions in the country, we can recast the cultural history of the nation by expanding our understanding of our cultural connections and hybridities beyond and outside our colonial experiences.

Notes

1. National Artists in the Philippines are individuals who are officially recognized as having contributed to the development of particular artistic traditions in the country. For more information on this award, see <http://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/culture-profile/national-artists-of-the-philippines/>.
2. "Bayanihan" is the common moniker of the Bayanihan: The Philippine Folk Dance Company, one of the leading and influential professional folk dance companies in the Philippines. Established in 1956, Bayanihan was founded by the late and former Philippine Senator Helena Benitez.
3. I put the term "dance" in quotes here to indicate the often-problematic use of this term, especially in the case of identified Philippine dances.

As Drid Williams succinctly explains, “Dancing is generally thought to be universal among peoples of the world ... [and] [b]ecause movement is a universally used medium of expression among humanity, the shift is easily made to the proposition that dancing is universal” (*Anthropology*, Drid Williams [Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004], 33-34). Following Williams, I question the use of this term to refer to all forms of organized human body movement within different expressive traditions in the country. In this paper, however, I follow the local use of the term in literature and discourses on folk dancing in the Philippines.

4. Briefly, indigenous dances, also called ‘ethnic dances’, are those that are practiced by indigenous cultural communities or communities that are considered ‘uncolonized’, ‘pristine’ and ‘authentically Filipino’. “Syncretic” or “localized”/indigenized dances are those with foreign origins that have been localized or ‘mixed with’ local forms. I problematize these categories in the next section of this paper.
5. My use of the term “dance” refers to the different dance forms or genres, specific works and practices (e.g., performance practices) as identified in literature on Philippine dance.
6. The University of the Philippines (UP) is the only national university in the Philippines. While researchers based in other universities made similar efforts, the work of Francisca Reyes-Aquino through the support of UP President Bocobo had more wide-reaching effects in the development of folk dancing in the Philippines.
7. Serafin Aquino is the second husband of Francisca Reyes.
8. The current Philippine Sports Commission, enacted into law as Republic Act 6847 or “The Philippine Sports Commission Act” (1990), traces its history to the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation (PAAF). The PAAF is considered the first sports organization of the government. It was established in 1911. “PSC Profile,” Philippine Sports Commission, updated June 22, 2017, <http://www.web.psc.gov.ph/index.php/about-us/psc-profile>.

9. The PHSA was established in 1977 by then President Ferdinand Marcos as a specialized training school in the different fields of art. ("Profile", Philippine High School for the Arts, updated 2012, [https://www.phsa.edu.ph/about/profile.html](http://www.phsa.edu.ph/about/profile.html))
10. The Buwan ng Wika (National Language Month) is a national event that was mandated into law in 1997 by then President Fidel V. Ramos, under Presidential Proclamation 1041: Nagpapahayag ng Taunang Pagdiriwang Tuwing Agosto 1-31 Bilang Buwan Ng Wikang Pambansa (Declaring the Annual Celebration Every August 1-31 of National Language Month) <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1997/07/15/proklamasyon-blg-1041-s-1997-2/>
11. *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*, Vol. 5, s.vv. "Far Eastern University Dance Troupe," "University of the East Dance Company," "Darangan Cultural Dance Troupe."
12. The Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group was established in 1972 by Ramon Obusan, a National Artist for Dance. Obusan is a former member of the Bayanihan who while performing in the company found their presentations too stylized. His folk dance presentations claim to be more faithful and authentic (<https://ramonobusanfolkloric.wordpress.com/>).
13. As stated in the website of ROFG: Ramon [Obusan] became critical of the Bayanihan's approach to folk dances, which he felt gave too much emphasis on formulas, appearances, and over decorated costumes. To Obusan's mind also, Bayanihan was too elitist and classicist, concentrating too much on the looks and the social status of its dancers. He also disagreed with Bayanihan's costume mistress Isabel Santos' reinterpretation of indigenous clothing with brightly colored sequined costumes and of Bayanihan choreographer and fellow National Artist awardee Lucrecia Urtula's treatment of folk dances with exaggerated clockwork precision movements, all in the name of theatricality and showmanship. In 1971, Obusan founded the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG), which was acclaimed for its faithful and authentic Filipino folk dance performances" (Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group n.d.).

14. I witnessed this personally as a graduate student at the University of Illinois, when the Philippine Student's Association, mostly composed of Filipino-American students, would have yearly cultural presentations, which feature folk dances from the repertoire of the Bayanihan. Gonzalvez writes extensively about these presentations in his book *The Day the Dancers Stayed* (2010).
15. Guillermo G. Rivera, "Bayanihan's Beyond Folklore II: Brings Out Bits of Philippine History," *News and Features, Bayanihan The Philippine National Folk Dance Company*, accessed October 15, 2018. <http://www.bayanihannationaldanceco.ph/mestizajearticle.html>
16. The way Goqingco links the continuing practice of traditions—especially religious rituals—as a marker of being primitive should be noted given how the spectacular displays of Catholic rituals in the Philippines have been extensively documented without suggestions of Catholic followers as being "primitive." However, as I discuss below, these displays are oftentimes viewed as bearing traces of pre-Christian practices.
17. Edward Burnett Tylor's full definition of culture is "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". This definition of culture served Tylor's understanding of cultural difference, which he attributed to the degree to which a society conforms to the civilized ways of "higher nations" (Tylor [1871]1920, 1).
18. See, for instance, MCM Santamaria's studies (Santamaria 2010, Santamaria 2014, and Hussin and Santamaria 2013) on the *igal* as a shared practice among cultural communities in Southeast Asia.
19. The *CCP Encyclopedia* is the most extensive and comprehensive compilation of information about artistic traditions in the Philippines. It was conceived as the repository of, and authority on, knowledge about Philippine arts. It is intended to "shed light on the most vital affirmations of being Filipino through the centuries and thus help to define and harden the core of the nation's identity" *CCP Encyclopedia*, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), V: iv.

Each of the seven volumes that covers the seven major fields of the fine arts (architecture, visual arts, dance, music, theater, film, literature) is divided into the following sections: Historical Essays, Forms and Types, Aspects of Production, and Artists and Organizations.

In this article, the discussed content from *The CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art* comes from the first edition, published in 1994. A second edition was released in late 2018.

20. This perception of ethnic dances raises questions about the application of the term ‘dance’ to the movements associated with social practices—are these ‘dances’ at all? Or are these culturally specific rituals that involve human movement? As Drid Williams (2005) asserts, not all human practices that involve body movement can be considered dancing.
21. *History of the Filipino People* has eight editions, the last two of which were published after his death in 1985. While it was initially published for use in the University of the Philippines, *History* became widely used by other secondary and tertiary education institutions in the country (Totanes 2010).
22. *CCP Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5 (1994), sv. “Surtido.”
23. Aside from books with sweeping histories of Philippine dance, literature on dancing in the Philippines are mostly instructional materials for the performance of different folk dances. These include the works of Francisca Reyes-Aquino mentioned in this article as well as Ligaya Fernando-Amilbanga’s *Pangalay: Traditional Dances and Related Expressions* (1983). Recently, more in-depth studies of particular dance forms have been published including the works of Peterson (2003) and Jacinto (2015) on the *pangalay*, Santamaria (2010; 2014; 2017) on the *igal*, Mirano (1989) on the *subli*, and Perillo (2013) and Luna (2015) on hip-hop dancing in Manila.
24. The use of the word “traditional” in this context recuperates the term’s meaning, which refers to the oral transmission of practices from one generation to the next.

25. Located in Pasay City, Metro Manila, the Cultural Center of the Philippines is the premiere performance venue in the country. It is situated in Pasay City, Metro Manila. It was built in 1969 during the Marcos regime for the purpose of displaying the best creative works of local and foreign artists as well as the different expressive traditions in the country.
26. The category ‘music’ has been problematized by Ramon Santos (2005), who suggests that some performative forms or genres in communities that do not practice European-derived musical traditions may not be perceived locally as such.
27. As argued by Santos (2005), and reiterated by Santaella (2016), expressive forms in the Southeast Asian region have integrated sonic and kinetic elements.
28. The guidelines of the NAMCYA Traditional Music Committee indicate that performing groups must prominently feature at least one ‘young’ performer—that is, an individual who does not exceed 18 years of age. This guideline, as well as the direct institutional involvement of the Department of Education, could have also encouraged the formation of school-based performing groups.
29. Pison’s article recounts her experience as one of the editors of the second edition of the *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Arts*, Dance Volume.
30. In anthropological research, the *emic* perspective is the “insider’s” or “native’s” point of view. This is contrasted with the *etic* perspective or the “outsider’s” or researcher’s point of view.
31. The City of Silay is part of the province of Negros Occidental, one of the provinces on the island of Negros in the Philippines.
32. Some of these houses are recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as Tangible Cultural Heritage.

33. Ethnographic accounts of the different peoples in the Philippines documented by chroniclers and missionaries as well as those found in Spanish dictionaries of Philippine languages (see Scott 1994) and reports about the diasporic communities in Manila (see Irving 2010) certainly did exist as early as the sixteenth century. And even at that time, these ethnographic descriptions were, as Scott (1994) observes, “hopelessly skewed by Spanish ethnocentricity and the reactions of aliens caught in the grip of culture shock” (p. 3)

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