

## AWIT, PANDANGGO, KUMINTANG: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN SCHOLARSHIP AND THE FIELD

Elena Rivera Mirano

In December of 1980, I saw my first *subli*. This traditional ritual form from the southern portion of Batangas, a province in the Southern Tagalog region of the Philippines, is a long, elaborate devotion to the *Mahal na Poong Santa Krus* (Beloved Lord Holy Cross), the *patrón* (patron saint, protector) of the towns surrounding the ancient town of Bauan. It features song, dance, instrumental music, prayer and poetry. I was immediately struck by the complexity and beauty of the form and the level of artistry that it demanded of its practitioners. While I could not recognize the influences that had shaped it, I realized that it did not fit into the mold of Christianized, westernized folk art forms I already had occasion to observe. The fact that it continued to flourish in an area so close to Metropolitan Manila and had been subject to the influence of the west and a modern industrial culture for such a long time, seemed a miracle to me. I realized that I had stumbled into an enchanted space, where forms previously thought extinct continued to exist and lead a protected, although seriously threatened life.