

# Where is the Crown?: Dancing the *Putong / Tubong* on Stage<sup>1</sup>

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## *Abstract*

The Putong/Tubong as ritual represents a complex form of expressive behaviour in which chant, music, poetry, magical act, and dance movement are entangled in significant social events. In Turnerian sense, these social events are “rite of passage” where the punsyon (honouree, celebrant) is crowned by the *manunubongs* (ritual initiators) with the visitors (Turner 1969). All participate in and witness the socio-cultural meanings embedded in its enactment – healing, veneration, and thanksgiving (Viray 2015b). As a product of nationwide field dance research and documentation, National Artist for Dance Francisca Reyes-Aquino with composer Antonino Buenaventura included the *Putong/Tubong* in a collection of folk dance and music notation, *Philippine Folk Dances Volume 1* (1953, 1996). As a result, the *Tubong* as a ritual has been included in the folk and traditional staged dance repertoire in the Philippines and abroad.

This article investigates how dance companies like the PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company (San Diego, California) have translated the crown (Putong/Tubong) ritual into a staged choreography. The first section presents the “structural units” of Putungan based on the company’s filmed dance<sup>2</sup> taken from Youtube (Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007:22-23). The succeeding section relates the staged choreography or “a dance realization” with reference to its original ritualistic contexts and social function or “dance concept” (Bakka and Karoblis, 2010:172-173).

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<sup>2</sup> Filmed dance: Anamaria Cabato, (2013) *PASACAT performs Putungan*, [YouTube] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZULCJ8d8g>, (accessed: 14/February/2015).

Then finally, the essay argues that the most significant motif (both in dance concept and realization dimensions) in the *Putong/Tubong* ritual has vanished, specifically, the sense of touch during the coronation section through which the participative element is enacted. This core movement motif is also essential in that the ritual's space (i.e. proximity) is shared among the *punsyon*, the *manunubongs*, and the visitors. While the essay articulates how meaning and important nuances of the ritual are lost, the last section juxtaposes the choreographic choices of the company with the *manunubongs'*, the cultural-bearers, in order to unfold decision-making process in staging a ritual and/or folk dance. Through this analysis, the article aims to engage dance artists and practitioners in an anthropological contemplation.

**Key words:** *Putong/Tubong, staged ritual, folk dance, dance anthropology, ethnochoreology*

## Introduction

The *Putong/Tubong* as ritual represents a complex form of expressive behaviour in which chant, music, poetry, magical act, and dance movement are entangled in significant social events. In Turnerian sense, these social events are “rite of passage” where the *punsyon* (honouree, celebrant) is crowned by the *manunubongs* (ritual initiators) with the visitors (Turner 1969). All participate in and witness the socio-cultural meanings embedded in its enactment – healing, veneration, and thanksgiving (Viray 2015b). In ritual enactments, dance is integrated with the community's life cycle (Obusan and Villaruz 1992). Practiced on the island of Marinduque, located in the southern Tagalog region of the Philippines, the *Putong/Tubong* has a primary intention to “heal” human spiritual illness of the *kaluluwa* or soul. These illnesses are presumed caused by supernatural elements, and there are unknown reasons for cholera, fever, and convulsion. The coronation ritual is also a way to celebrate birthdays (1st, 7th, 18th, 21st, 60th, 65th, and so on), weddings, baptismal, commemorations, anniversaries, and other special events. It is also a welcome gesture of locals to guests who visit the island.

National Artist for Dance Francisca Reyes-Aquino with composer Antonino Buenaventura included the *Putong/Tubong* in a collection of folk dance and music notation, *Philippine Folk Dances Volume 1* (1953, 1996), a product of nationwide field dance research and documentation. The notation has four musical parts: A, B, C, and D, and nine sections highlighting habanera steps, together with sway balance steps with a brush and sway balance with a hop. The dance and music notation of *Putong* or *Putungan* was also included in *Duyan ng Magiting: The Folk Culture of the Southern Tagalog Region* (1989). This is the third volume in a series on Philippine folk culture. As a result, the Tubong as a ritual has been included in folk and traditional staged dance repertoire in the Philippines and abroad.

This article investigates how dance companies like the PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company (San Diego, California) have translated the crown (Putong/Tubong) ritual into a staged choreography. The first section presents the “structural units” of *Putungan* based on the company’s filmed dance<sup>3</sup> taken from Youtube (Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007:22-23). The succeeding section relates the staged choreography or “a dance realization” with reference to its original ritualistic contexts and social function or “dance concept” (Bakka and Karoblis, 2010:172-173). Then finally, the essay argues that the most significant motif (both in dance concept and realization dimensions) in the *Putong/Tubong* ritual has vanished, specifically, the sense of touch during the coronation section through which the participative element is enacted. This core movement motif is also essential in that the ritual’s space (i.e. proximity) is shared among the *punsyon*, the *manunubongs*, and the visitors. While the essay articulates how meaning and important nuances of the ritual are lost, the last section juxtaposes the choreographic choices of the company with the *manunubongs*’, the cultural-bearers, in order to unfold decision-making process in staging a ritual and/or folk dance. Through this analysis, the article aims to engage dance artists and practitioners in an anthropological contemplation.

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# Filmed dance: Anamaria Cabato, (2013) *PASACAT performs Putungan*, [YouTube] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZULCJ8d8g>

## PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company

The Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe or PASACAT is based in San Diego, California with a mission to preserve and promote Asia Pacific culture through the arts (see PASACAT website). PASACAT was formally formed as a Philippine Dance Company in 1970, a year after Filipino-American Community Association of San Diego County hosted San Diego's 200th Anniversary. During this event, a group of fifty Filipino-American youth was organized to dance Philippine folk dance. Paz Marquez Uro and Dr. Bill Yumul choreographed a three-hour folk dance performance for the special occasion, considered as the first Philippine Cultural Extravaganza, which was held on 7 September 1969 at the Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park, San Diego, California.

At present, Anamaria Labao Cabato manages the company as its Executive Director. Joji Ramirez Castro, who joined PASACAT's artistic staff in 1986, is the company's choreographer and dance director. She was a member of Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company in 1972. She trained under the late National Artist for Dance Lucrecia Reyes-Urtula, dance director of Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company (founded in 1957 by Helena Benitez of the Philippine Women's University). The PASACAT, through Castro, has choreographed and created folk dance pieces for the stage like *The Cordillera of Northern Luzon* (15-min), *Ecos de Manila* (15-min), *Voyage to Mindanao* (25-min), *Lumad* (15-min), and *The Philippine Countryside* (30-min).

PASACAT also attended workshops under Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG, founded in 1971) when they visited the Philippines. In 2002, PASACAT performed National Artist Ramon Obusan's *Pigapir and Kasanduayan* for the 45th anniversary of the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company at the Cultural Centre of the Philippines, Manila. In 2007, ten members of PASACAT, including Anamaria Cabato and Joji Castro, attended the Golden anniversary of the Bayanihan in Manila, where the ROFG performed their version of *Putungan*. Executive Director Cabato said that the dance welcomed them with a sincerity that was so Pinoy. After watching the performance of ROFG, the PASACAT took five years to bring *Putungan* in their repertoire.

.According to Cabato, they “were touched by the heartfelt performance that connected the ROFG and the Bayanihan for the Golden anniversary...we fell in love with the dance because it captured the Philippine spirit we love and are proud of...” (Cabato, 2016, email correspondence).



Photo 1: Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group's *Putungan* during the Golden anniversary of Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company in 2007 (photo credit:Jomy Omila).



Photo 2: PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company's *Putungan* during the Extravaganza 2012 Concert (photo credit: Anamaria Cabato).

PASACAT performed *Putungan* to open their Extravaganza 2012 Concert. Anamaria Cabato posted the recorded performance of *Putungan* in youtube; hence the basis of analysis is a filmed dance or dance on film. While the source is a filmed performance, the essay is part of a bigger anthropological study on *Putong/Tubong*. Two ethnographic works have been undertaken in 2010 and continued in 2014 in Marinduque Island, particularly in the towns of Boac and Gasan (see Viray 2010, 2015a, 2015b). From these emic analyses, I now bring in an etic view using the syllabus of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). The syllabus aims to produce movement text and understand the dance primarily in its structural level.

### Dance Form and Structure Analysis

The syllabus of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), former International Folk Music Council (IFMC), on dance structure analysis is an 'outcome...of almost half a century of efforts of analyzing, in the framework of cultural traditions, the grammar of the dance performance or of a movement system' (Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007:13). The essay uses the revised version of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology collective work: 'Foundation for folk dance structure and form analysis' (1962-1976).

In this analysis, *Putungan* is considered as T, the Total form of the staged ritual. The choreography has two Parts-(P): P1 and PII which are defined by its musical meter 2/4 and 3/4 respectively (i.e. *martsa and balse*). Parts are then divided by Phrases (Ph). Phrases are defined by the following 'structure relevant factors' as identified in dance segmentation which concentrates on the syntactic level of a dance (Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007:24):

- (a) geometrical formation (line, open circle, closed circle, column, scattered couples, etc.);
- (b) direction of pathway or orientation of dancers in space (in place, forward, backward, lateral, circular, etc), and
- (c) direction of pathway (in place, forward, backward, lateral, circular, etc).

As *Putungan* used a proscenium stage orientation, the Western stage terminologies identify the parts of a particular dance space<sup>i</sup>. This is based on the dancers' point of view. Moreover, phrases are composed of repeated steps which could be considered as the motif of the dance.

The *Putungan* is composed of four main kinetic motifs (M). 'A motif is the smallest significant Form-unit having meaning for both the dancers and their society and for the dance genre/type within a given dance system' (Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007:28).

Motif 1<sup>ii</sup>: one pace-step or the first travelling step {count 1, 2} or lakad (walk);

Motif 2<sup>iii</sup>: the step-close {count 1, 2} or pahagod;

Motif 3<sup>iv</sup>: three pace-step or the second travelling step {count 1, 2, 3}; and

Motif 4<sup>v</sup>: waltz with turn {count 1, 2, 3}.

The first two kinetic motifs (1 and 2) are executed in part I which follow 2/4 time signature. In part II, the last two remaining kinetic motifs (3 and 4) follow the 3/4 musical metre. Note that sets refer to the number of repetition each kinetic motif executed by the dancers. For example, the first travelling step or the one pace-step takes at least two walking steps to create one set {count 1, 2}. The second travelling step or three pace-steps takes at least three walking steps to create one set {count 1, 2, 3}.

## T) *Putungan*

In PASACAT's staged choreography, the *rondalla* is played as an introduction before the dancers enter. The dance description is based on PASACAT's dance realization. In identifying the dancers, F1 is used as first female dancer to enter the stage until F6 as the 6th female dancer. Likewise, M1 is the first male dancer to enter the stage until M6 is the 6th male dancer. The dancers also sing while dancing<sup>vi</sup>.

<b>Female PI</b>	
<b>Phrase and Kinetic Motif</b>	<b>Direction (of the Phrase)</b>
Entrance <sup>vii</sup> : 14 sets of 1 pace- <i>travelling</i> step	From DSR, six female dancers enter in a line horizontally. They take curve or semi-circle formation and form another straight vertical line at the centre stage.
Ph1: 10 sets of first <i>travelling</i> step	F1 goes to SR; F2 to SL; F3 to SR; F4 to SL; F5 to SL; and F6 to SR. They form two separate triangular formations in the right and left of the stage. They start singing.
Ph2: 8 sets of <i>step-close</i>	In their triangular formation <sup>viii</sup> . See photo 3.
Ph3: 16 sets of first <i>travelling</i> step	Clockwise rotation.
<b>Female PII</b>	
Ph4: 4 sets of waltz with turn	Both triangular formations move DSR and DSL
Ph5: 8 sets of 3-pace <i>travelling</i> step	From two triangles, they form one big circle in clockwise rotation.
Ph6: 8 sets of 3 pace- <i>travelling</i> step	Females go In & Out of the circle in the following sets 1st set: inside the circle; 4th set: outside; 6th set: inside; 8th set: outside They end in 4 not so perfect vertical lines; each line has 3 dancers; male are inside the stage; while females are outside occupying the right and left most part of the stage. After teh 8th set, females who are in the left side of the stage hold basket using left hand; males who are in the right of the stage hold palm leaf using left hand.



Exit: 16 sets of first travelling step	Females on the right side take a counter-clockwise rotation; while females on the left take clockwise rotation. Males are inside the rotation. Then, couples hold free hands. Couples on the right: female's left hand and male's right hand. Couples on the left: female's right hand and male's left hand.
16 sets of first travelling step	Each couple goes to opposite direction (e.g. from right to left) alternately towards the right wing of the stage to exit.
<b>Male: PI</b>	
<b>Phrase and Kinetic Motif</b>	<b>Direction (of the Phrase)</b>
Ph1: 13 sets of 1 pace-step	Male dancers enter (as seen on the video) on the 7th set of female's Ph1; but could be argued that men enter at the same time during the 1st set of female's Ph1; thus 13 sets of 1 pace-step. They enter in one horizontal line singing.
Ph2: 5 sets of step-close	
Ph3: 4 sets of 1 pace-step	Horizontal line splits into two. Male 1,2,3 go to the right side; while M 4,5,6 go to the left. M1,2,3 occupy down most part of the stage.
Ph4: 4 sets of step-close	
Ph5: 8 sets of 1 pace-step	M1&4, M2&5, M3&6 rotate clockwise while touching arms with palm leaf forward middle.

Male: PII	
Ph6: 16 sets of 3 pace-steps	M1,2,3 go to CSR and take clockwise rotation while M4,5,6 go to CSL take counter clock-wise rotation; on the 10th set, they meet at the CC to form one circle
Ph7: 8 sets of 3 pace-steps	Counter-clockwise rotation.
Ph8: 8 sets of 3 pace-steps	Males go In & Out of the circle in the following sets 1st set: outside the circle; 3rd to 4th set: inside; 6th set: outside; 8th set: inside
Exit	See female direction

Where is the crown in PASACAT's staged choreography?



Photo 3 and 4: Excerpts from PASACAT's filmed dance (Cabato 2012, youtube)

## (Re)Constructing (dance) Ritual Knowledge

In her collection of folk dance and music notations, Francisca Reyes-Aquino describes the *Putong* as a traditional and ceremonial dance, a customary in Marinduque to celebrate a dear friend's, relative's, or a landlord's birthday (Aquino 1996:100). Aquino continues with,

Friends, relatives, and tenants of the honoree gather together, prepare gifts and food, invite or hire musicians, **make a crown of flowers for the honoree** and prepare other things for the celebration. When everything is ready, the people go to the honoree's house and perform this dance accompanied with a song. This is called *asalto*...**The crowning and dancing are done in front of the honoree who is at the center of the room.**

(Author's emphasis, Aquino 1996:100)

In other words, the *Putong* is also an event for the members of the community to be together for the preparation even before the enactment of the ritual itself. Moreover, as explicitly prescribed, crown of flowers is needed for the crowning and dancing to happen in front of the honoree. As dance critic Basilio Esteban Villaruz suggests '...dance is created by its adornments, through make-up, costumes, and music, by the story that's being told, and the mood that's being made' (Villaruz, 2006:211).

What is the significance of the crown in the ritual? The essay introduces ethnochoreological concepts that I value in (re)constructing (dance) ritual knowledge. The aim is to elicit the meaning of the crown as part of the *Putong* knowledge; therefore the core of the ritual dance-movement grammar and/or vocabulary. As a former honoree, a son to a *manunubong*, and a native of Marinduque Island, this I believe is the integrity of the *Putong* tradition.

In a shared problem on the notion of dance knowledge and how to construct an empirical basis to analyse dance, ethnochoreologist Egil Bakka and dance philosopher Gediminas Karoblis propose that

dance has two integrated dimensions – the realisation and the concept. The concept-realisation is derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's *langue-parole* and Noam Chomsky's *competence and performance* (Bakka and Karoblis, 2010:173). Bakka and Karoblis define,

The realization is the actual dancing of a dance. The concept for the same dance is the potential of skills, understanding, and the knowledge that enables an individual or a dance community to dance that particular and to recognize and relate to each particular realization of it...The realization makes dance available perceptually. The skills and knowledge of the dance concept are invisible, but they are necessary for and integrated in the realization.

(Bakka and Karoblis, 2010:172-173)

In other words, the *dance* concept may refer to the semantic and cognitive understanding of the dance practitioners. The *concept* is not seen. The concept will only make sense and be available when it is danced or performed. In the *Putong and/or Putungan* case, the dance concept comes from and is practiced by different dancers – the *manunubongs* or the local community themselves who continuously realize the tradition, the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG) who performed the *Putungan* in 2007, PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Group, and other dancers who are interested in the tradition. Consequently, there are varying skills, understanding, and knowledge that enable them to perform the *Putong*.

Moreover, notice that Bakka and Karoblis' working definition caters to *an actuality of a dance*. This means a particular body movement, a single realization. In other words, one version of *Putong* can have numerous *dance realizations* which are always affected by the dance concept. As this paper deals with (a) the local practice of the ritual and (b) the filmed dance, there are two actualities or dance realizations that need examination.

## a dance concept and dance realizations of Putong/Tubong in Marinduque Island

In a master's dissertation *Transmission and Transformation: Tubong ritual as Knowledge, Practice, and Heritage in Marinduque, Philippines* (2015a), like Reyes-Aquino I highlighted the importance of the regalia in any ritual realization:

In some occasions, the punsyon is initially covered with white cloth. They greet the *punsyon* who is treated like a blessed saint. Presentation of *regalia* for the *punsyon* follows: crown, sceptre, flowers, *sensilyo* or coins, and sometimes with *palara* (glittering papers), *luminarya mayor* (moon made of gold paper), *labindalawang mga bituwin* (twelve stars), and *alampay* (shawl, for female celebrant). Then, a *manunubong* crowns the *punsyon*, sometimes inside a *kubol*, a makeshift altar that serves as the celebrant's holy throne. This is the most significant motif of the ritual with *sulong* (advancing) and *yuko* (sinking) as body movements.

(Author's emphasis, Viray 2015a:46)

Some members of the community say that flowers are for good health, *sensilyo* or coins are for prosperity, and the crown with sceptre symbolizes blessedness, reverence, and longevity (also see Viray 2010, 2015b). Although the communities in Marinduque Island have a very particular *Tubong* concept which is shared among them, each towns or even barangays have different realizations.

From its intentions of communal healing and Catholic-influenced practice of worship, the Tubong became a welcome ceremony for visitors from outside the province. In the 1960s, foreign influences penetrated the cultural activities in Marinduque, particularly, the Moriones Festival (mask festival), and eventually the *Tubong* tradition. The popularity of the Moriones has paved the way for Marinduque province to become a tourist destination. It attracted many visitors who influenced the *Tubong* tradition's social function.

Mr. Julian Mogol, Schools Division Superintendent of Marinduque,

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and Mrs. Iluminada Nepomuceno, a music teacher, convened public teachers to gather, document, and study the music and dance of Tubong versions practiced in the towns of Boac, Gasan, and Mogpog. The result of this initiative was a new and shortened (30-45 min.) version of the performance. It is a mixture of Tubong versions from the three towns. They called it *Putong ng mga Maestra* (of the teachers) performed for guests and visitors of the teachers. Eventually, this version became popular in Boac, thus the name *Putong ng mga Taga-Bayan* (of the capital town). Marching band player, *Tubong* practitioner, and Mogpog town Mayor Senen Lvelo, quoting the old members of the community, calls this version *sinalampakutan* (*sari-sari*; variety) or an amalgam of all the *Tubong* versions practiced in Marinduque. The term has a derogatory tone which implies a negative reception from the old members of the community.

The local government officially called this version Marinduque *Putong*. As part of its institutionalization, the provincial government under the administration of Jose Antonio Carrion approved an ordinance declaring 11 February as “Putong Festival of Marinduque.” The Marinduque Provincial government has its own *Putong* group which usually performs for official functions. Carmencita O. Reyes herself, Governor and former Congresswoman of the province, played a part in transforming its elements. The crown, ideally made from flowers and usually made from paper, is now made from local nito material, a kind of climbing fern. At its center is a small centurion mask, another cultural icon of the province. She also added the element of flying butterflies towards the end of the ceremony to make use of the emerging *bila-bila* industries in the province.



Photo 5: A *Putong* celebration in Gasan, Marinduque taken on 23 July 2016 (Photo credit: Bryan Viray). Photo 6 (above right) and photo 7 (below right) are varieties of crown made from nito and paper (Photo credit: Wikipedia).

While there is an acknowledgement that a dance can have various realizations, any sensible dance practitioner or choreographer should take into account existing and well-established dance concept within the field/s of any folk dance tradition. The above brief description on how the communities in Marinduque Island understand the *Putong/Tubong* suggests that the regalia, specifically the crown itself, should always be present in any enactment or realization. The presence and appropriate use of the materials and/or regalia in ritual enactments also indicates its efficacy. This is part of the dance movement competence. The *Putong* concept (not necessarily a realization) from Marinduque Island should be the most vital information for PASACAT's concert.

Why did PASACAT not include the crown when they danced the *Putong* on stage?

### PASACAT's Putungan concept

The PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company always strives to bring something different and unique into their program – the Extravaganza Concert held every year. Situated in California, USA, the company is one of the many groups – some of them are in colleges and/or universities, which



present Philippine folk dance programs for and by the Filipino-Americans to learn about our culture. Executive Director Anamaria Labao Cabato said that no group or company has performed *Putungan*. The audience members, from San Francisco and Los Angeles, came down to Lyceum Theatre, Horton Plaza, Downtown San Diego, California just to watch the Extravaganza Concert in 2012. They gasped at their presentation as they loved the serpentine costume, tapis, and even the wavy hair (as wigs) to capture the turn of the century hair style.

After the 2007 performance of ROFG, PASACAT's resident dance director Joji Ramirez Castro recalled the lyrics to the song and they put it together. They also used several versions of *Putungan* available on youtube as reference. The live rondalla accompaniment was arranged by one of their members – a violinist and an Ethnomusicologist major at the University of California, Riverside. Their music arrangement is different from the music provided by Francisca Reyes-Aquino.

Definitely, the concept of *Putong* was used as the opening suit of their Extravaganza 2012 Concert. Cabato said that the dance is simple as it is a walking dance. Ramirez choreographed the dance for the girls and boys. As the first dance performed, “it was only a dance to welcome everyone,” shared Cabato. She continued:

There was no coronation at all. We did not know about the crown at all. We only knew of the palms because that's how ROFG performed it. In our case, it was intentional because there was no single celebrant.

(Cabato, 2016, email correspondence)

After *Putungan*, twenty-five dancers sang *Magandang Gabi* by Nonoy Zuniga and *Musika* by Ryan Cayabyab.

### On translating *Putong* tradition

On the 23rd of June 2016, an afternoon after I showed the *filmed* dance of Putungan, I requested the *manunubongs* from Bangbang, Gasan to comment on the company's performance. "...Folk dance 'yan, hindi *Putong*...makabago; 'yan ay *Putong na ginawang folk dance*", Angelina Julao shared in her both appreciative and curious voice (Julao 2016). Interestingly, Fe Cesista, a member of *Junior Putong Bangbang*, added that what the company did was a "sayaw", not *Putong* (Cesista 2016). Mercy Soleta also commented that "...'yung *kanila ay ni-remix...nasayaw laang walang intensyon, walang inakoronahan...*" (Soleta 2016).

Their concept of *Putong* is definitely affected by their personal involvement in the tradition as *manunubongs* or culture bearers. They appreciate the staged realization knowing that this is a "folk dance;" however it is not really the *Putong* that they are practicing. When asked what their understanding of "folk dance" was, everybody agreed to three descriptions: "interpreted," "to present," and "sayang dahil walang kinoronahan."

This dichotomy between the concept of "folk dance" and the *Putong* as ritual might have been influenced by the folk dance staged presentations done in elementary and secondary high schools in the province of Marinduque. Every year, the Department of Education, through its Physical Education department, releases folk dance competition memoranda for all the public schools nationwide. There are competitions at the school-level, division, regional, and then national – all strictly follows the dance and music notation of a particular dance published in *Philippine Folk Dances* (Vol. 1-5). The *manunubongs* know about this, some of them have sons, daughters, or relatives who were part of the competition. From the folk or people, the tradition has been translated to the stage, codified, and even stylized (Villaruz 2006:185-187).

In Philippine dance history, Reyes-Aquino is credited for the preservation and documentation of folk and traditional dances of the country (Villaruz 2006:185, 203). The arrival of Western thoughts and ideas in the country, most especially during the American occupation, urged and

challenged her to proceed into this project with native culture and tradition as its framework (Alejandro 1983). As National Artist Nick Joaquin said, “Kikay Aquino took the folk dance out of the sticks and into the schools...” (Joaquin in Alejandro, 1983). However, for a long decade, there has been a claim that “the use of movement has largely been confined to Francisca Reyes Aquino’s verbal and directional system, arranged in to figures and fitted into counts and phrases” (Villaruz, NCCA website). Aquino’s work has been canonized as the main source of our Philippine dance. Nowadays, Physical Education teachers who also handle dance courses aside from sports are not fully aware about the dance concept, except from the brief introduction, of a dance written with its music notation. Moreover, these canonized notations are also considered as the prime dance realization which disregards other realizations and/or versions in the field (see for example *subli* tradition in Mirano 1989 and Villaruz 2006:34). The PASACAT overlooked Aquino’s description of the *Putong* as mentioned above.

The brilliance and exposure of the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company during the 1958 Universal Exposition in Brussels reinforced the process of Philippine folk dance’s codification and stylization. As former Bayanihan Company director Isabel Santos once said, “Bayanihan’s contribution to Philippine art is its adaptation and transformation of authentic dances into theatre dance art” (in Alejandro 1983). Simple dances from the community were made into spectacular dance suites in stylized and theatricalized manner. As discussed earlier, the PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company has had a direct influence from the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company through its dance director Joji Ramirez Castro. The following section presents how *Tubong* has been theatricalized and was made into a spectacular dance – a codified and stylized *Putong/Tubong* on stage.

### Qualities of Spectacular and Non-Spectacular dance

Folklorist and dance ethnologist Andriy Nahachewksy (2012) compares spectacular dance traditions and non-spectacular ones. The filmed dance and the ritual practiced in the community can be considered as the spectacular dance and non-spectacular tradition, respectively.

Nahachewsky provides three points of comparison:

- (1) a performer/spectator distinction,
- (2) skill and practice, and
- (3) specialization in related genres (e.g. direction, choreography, costumes, props, lighting, etc).

Spectacular and non-Spectacular Dance (Nahachewsky 2007: 143-156)		
a performer/ spectator distinction	allows for the possibility that everyone at a dance event participates fully in the dance experience	this possibility is excluded by the definition; spectacular dance implies <i>spectators</i> ; some of the participants who are involved in the dance event but who themselves are not dancing; <i>spectators</i> participants but are not physically dancing themselves
	internal communications – tactile, kinetic, visual, aural, and sometimes olfactory – give plenty of opportunity for intense and profound experiences	Different senses become more or less dominant in the communication process (especially in the third circuit – between the dancer and the spectator)
skill and practice	Some demand a high skill of level, some do not	Virtuosity (especially in Western spectacular dance); a culture of dance rehearsal
Specialists in related genres	Musicians	dance teacher, rehearsal director, choreographer, musicians
*random differences in clothing (case to case basis)	Clothing that is normal in their culture, often “dressing up” – wearing their better, fancier clothing for special events	<i>costumes</i>
*the use of property managers, lighting specialists, stage managers, producers and promoters may vary depending on the dance culture and/or tradition		

Evidently, the PASACAT staged realization makes a clear distinction between the dancers and the audience. The choreography privileges the visual and aural experience of the spectator. In their proscenium staging, the tactile dimension – the touch when the *manunubong* puts the crown onto the punsyon's head – is absent as the crown, the most important regalia, is not used. PASACAT's choreography uses rondalla, plucked instruments which are played by specialist musicians. Moreover, the company has trained dancers, and even singers, led by its dance director (see PASACAT's website). The costumes of the dancers are visually appealing as compared to the “dressing up” usually wore by the *manunubongs*.

### On theatricalizing ritual and folk dance traditions (in and outside the Philippines)

In her essay Joel F. Jacinto (1999) provides an overview of Philippine dance in America, as an American-born Filipino and co-founder of *Kayamanan ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts*. She starts the overview with the legacy of Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company which impacted Philippine dance in America and provided an impetus to represent Philippine dance in the following conditions:

- (a) ...Philippine dance as a distilled form of cultural production based on the perspective of representation of the other, the foreigner, the recipient audience uninitiated to the rules and regulations governing Philippine culture...
- (b) ...the translated choreographies, performance structures, costumes and musical renditions of virtually all American-based groups who have adopted the signature model of dance presentation as a product...
- (c) ...there is a lack of understanding in the process that traces the evolution of dance from village to stage so that the dancer abroad (and even audience) understands both the traditional cultural processes of the dance experience and also the synthesized, stylized end products that are inevitably used as templates...

(Jacinto 1999:52)

Going back to ROFG's version of *Putungan*, it is surprising that they also neglected to include the crown – an ideology of presentational dances with over stylization and/or theatricalization, which is closely similar to Bayanihan. The understanding of traditional cultural processes of the dance experience – the participative dimension – was not translated onto the stage. The symbolic action of coronation reaffirms a necessity for the community to gather during special occasions. The Extravaganza 2012 Concert must have been more than a concert to entertain; rather, it was an event where audience members were closely integrated through touch felt from the PASACAT dancers themselves. This kind of gathering, even if ritual participants are suspended from their “real” everyday lives, creates a community of one-ness or *communitas* (Turner 1969). The Tubong's dance-movements are primarily communal and traditional. The communal relates to the participative relationship among the community members – the *punsyon*, the *manunubong*, and the visitors; and the traditional is related to the lineage and continuation of the ritual knowledge. In other words, everyone in the community continues a particular tradition and participates fully in a dance experience such as the *Tubong*. This is particularly the *dance concept* which the community members consider during a dance realization.

Nevertheless in this analysis, the ROFG also becomes the “other” and the members of the PASACAT have been their inexpert audience. The ROFG's dance concept with established dance style from Bayanihan prevailed and penetrated PASACAT's potential realization of the ritual. In addition, the PASACAT did not bother to go beyond ROFG's realization. While the company tries to bring in something unique every year, Cabato explains that there is really a financial challenge to research new dances in the Philippines. PASACAT's staged realization was merely a replication of ROFG's dance concept – a translated choreography which adopted the signature style of Bayanihan.

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## Concluding Reflections

When dance critic Basilio Esteban Villaruz gave a message during the US West Coast Seminar-Conference on Philippine Dance in San Francisco in 1999, he emphasized the need for research and education. He said:

Our creation of dance needs to be rooted in an understanding of our culture, be this lived out in or recollected from the homeland, or transplanted/translated into Fil-American terms...Dance should be taught beyond steps and styles and be realized within a social context...Without education, dance may be perpetuated in performances that are bereft of substance and can mislead through so-called “bongga” spectacles or numerical success.

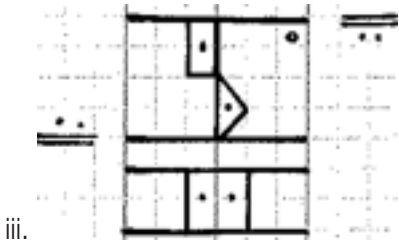
(Villaruz 2006:153-154)

Since 2009, I have researched various ritual realizations of two versions from the towns of Boac and Gasan in Marinduque Island. Prior to this academic undertaking, I was crowned from my 1st until 21st birthday – a personal story that is impossible not to include. The motivation to examine the roots of the *Putong* tradition comes from the current condition of Philippine rituals and folk dances that are being over stylized and theatricalized – with its participative dimension extracted. This is not to say that dance artists and practitioners must not use them in their creative endeavours; but to consider these as cultural knowledge. Companies, groups, or other communities, to ensure justice to perform rituals on stage, should have the knowledge that includes the dimensions of both *concept* and *realizations*. In addition, dance form and structure analysis should also provide empirical evidence to unpack vocabularies of a dance practice and eventually contribute to the complex reservoir of Philippine folk dancing traditions. Even if the cultural bearers did not express any disappointment, the analysis shows that the integrity of the *Putong* tradition was not present as the *Putong* action itself was not enacted. Accordingly, I ask if their performance should still be called *Putungan*?

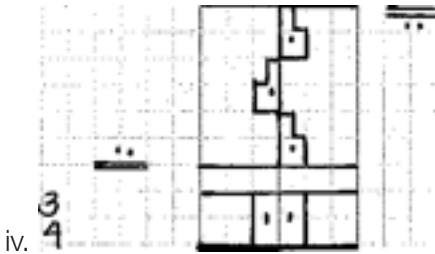
How important is anthropological knowledge in translating the (dance) ritual on stage? The discipline of cultural anthropology must be



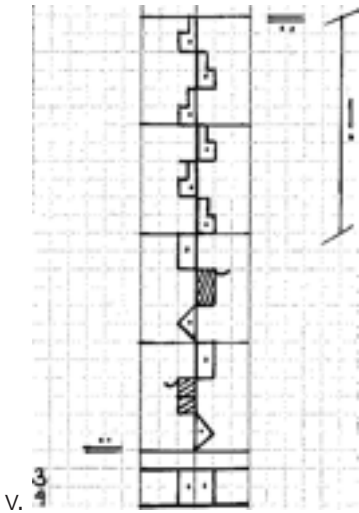




Step-close  
(with 2/4 time signature)



Three-pace travelling step  
(with 2/4 time signature)



Waltz with turn  
(with 1/4 time signature)

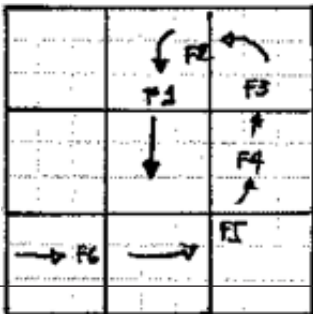
vi.

PASACAT's version of chant:

Nang kami'y dumating sa inyong harapan  
 Agad sinalubong ng kaliwanagan  
 May dalawang anghel na namamagitan  
 Tig-isang kandila ang hawak sa kamay (2x)

Viva, viva mabuhay mabuhay  
 (...) ginoong pinutungan namin  
 Viva viva buhayin buhayin  
 (...) ginong pinutungan namin

At sana wari'y habaan ang buhay  
 At sa madlang panahon walang karamdaman  
 (2x)



vii.

Female entrance



viii.

Triangular formation (see photo 3)