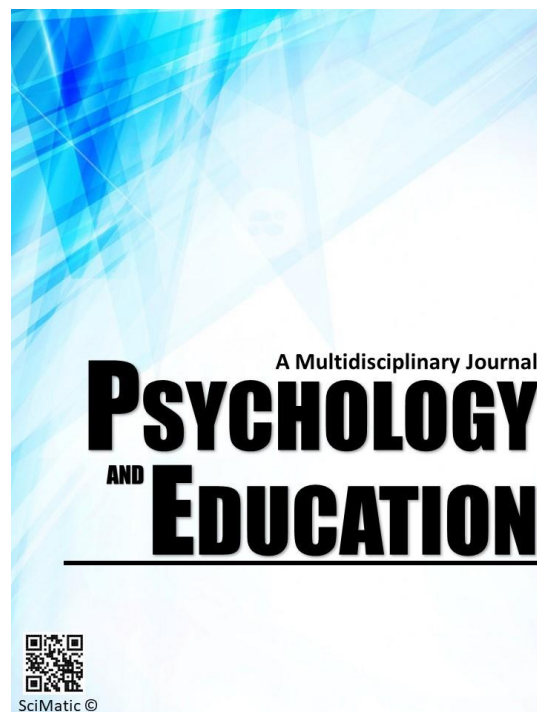


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Philosophical and Histo-Cultural Perspectives of Local Folk Dances

Nestor A. Castaños Jr.*

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

Folk dances have been part of Philippine culture which makes the country unique and have been preserved through documentation. The documentation of intangible cultural heritage has been a long stand challenge within the archival community. Early records on Philippine dance had been written by foreigners and true documentation of dance only came in the second quarter of the 20th century, by Francisca Reyes Aquino in the late 1920s. As dance research, this study will be qualitative and ethnographic in nature which will engage in the philosophical and socio-cultural underpinnings of the unpublished local folk dances of Merida, Leyte. More so, this study will end in view of developing dance literature for cultural preservation and aims to contribute to Aquino's pioneering works. As a method, this study will adopt the Philippine Folk Dance Documentation Framework visualized by Domingo and dance analysis will adopt Cariaga's guidelines for analysis of specific movements. "Ang Kutsero", "Binaylehan" and "Pamabhas" are folk dances that depict the rural life of the town folks. "Jota Merida" is a Spanish derived local version of the folk dance of Merida, Spain. This study will foster nationalism and patriotism, promote appreciation for one's own native dances, and develop awareness for the need to preserve and disseminate traditional dances.

Keywords: Unpublished Philippine Folk Dances, Notation and Documentation of Local Folk Dances

Introduction

The road map of arts education (UNESCO) emphasized that dance is in the process of continuous solution and development. The lack of a readily accessible body of information is deemed as a major setback for improving practice, influencing policymaking, and integrating the arts into educational systems. Hence, it is significant that a current investigation on its present state is conducted.

Section 14, Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution states that "The State shall foster the preservation, enrichment and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture." Section 15 mandates the state to conserve, promote, and popularized the nation's "historical and cultural heritage and resources as well as artistic creations." Also in the same Article, Section 17 mandates the state to recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultural traditions and institutions" (Bernas, 2012).

R.A. 10066 or the "National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009" likewise mandates the state to conserve, develop, promote and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage and resources, as well as artistic creations. Section 16 of the said Act also mandates local government units to document traditional and contemporary arts and crafts.

This study is anchored from Article 14, Section 18 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution entitled Education, Science, and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports, (De Leon & De Leon 2014) which states that: "(1) The State shall ensure equal access to cultural opportunities through the educational system, public or private cultural entities, scholarships, grants, and other public venues, (2) The state shall encourage and support researches and studies on the arts and culture." Moreover, R.A. 10533 contemplates that contextualization is given emphasis and that the curriculum shall be flexible enough as to its respective educational and social context.

A related study of Smigel (2006) reveals that reliable records of dance could further aid in the reconstruction of dances that are culturally obsolete and have been discharged from the present repertoire and confirms the need for this kind of study. Through different documentation methods, dance enthusiasts would be able to learn and understand further the multitude of forms and styles of their field.

Folk dance perceived as being beyond change is represented as being under threat from development. Gonzalez puts forward the idea that folk dance must be found and rescued, or it will be "drifted". Dance research can be used to demonstrate the strengths of a comprehensive dance curriculum in addressing educational needs. Topics such as problem-solving ability, self-concept, and holistic approaches to

learning can be included in the dance research agenda. Findings of such research could help build the case for the inclusion of dance, as well as the other arts, in education (Santos, 1998).

Since ages past, our forefathers have been performing folk dances occasionally during social functions and young people have been dancing them during town and barrio fiestas for the entertainment of the people. In the wake of diverse contemporary entertainment, it is apparent that these folk dances are gradually but surely being forgotten and, like the tamaraw, are on the verge of extinction. Only a few folk dances from Leyte province and in Eastern Visayas, in general, had been gathered into a collection to perpetuate and to conserve a particular cultural art of the province for the next generation, and the next, and possibly, for posterity. The Leyteños famous folk dances “Tinikling” and “Alcamfor” documented and written by Francisca-Reyes Aquino (F.R.A.) and fifteen folk dances of Samareños by Juan C. Miel were considered as just a fragment of the culture of the Region VIII, adding up to the wealth of folk dances of the Philippines which have already been published and whose performances have become popularly acclaimed.

According to Jaime Antonio Jr. (National Commission For Culture and the Arts, 2019), essentially, cultural mapping and resource profiling is one of the systematic approaches in identifying, recording, and classifying all existing cultural properties or resources of a particular community to record, describe, visualize, and understand them. It is an ongoing process of many of its benefits that can be achieved through the sustained efforts in generating and updating cultural databases over time. Cultural mapping is a process to identify and document the cultural resources or assets of a community. Across the country, more and more communities are turning to cultural mapping as an important new tool to support economic development and to enrich the quality of life in a community.

From September 2 to October 5, 2019, the local government unit of Merida, province of Leyte in partnership with DepEd Merida District conducted a cultural mapping activity. Cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) were uncovered and discovered that served as a basis for further cultural development and preservation projects of the municipality. Local folk dances were identified and considered the undiscovered and undocumented treasures of Merida. These local folk dances include “Ang Kutsero”, “Binaylehan”, “Jota Merida”, and

“Pamabhas”. The entertainment evolved-dance “Ang Kutsero” is performed by men as “kutsero” and women as “pasahero”. The “Binaylehan” is a courtship or entertainment dance in which barrio folks have a notable version of the close- hold position while dancing. The Spanish-influenced dance “Jota Merida” is considered to be a localized version of the Spanish jota of Merida, Spain. “Pamabhas” is a mimetic or entertainment dance commonly performed among villagers during a bountiful catch of fish and when the full moon occurs. These local dances need to have continuous research since these dances must be recorded and preserved, not to be left in antiquity.

The main purpose of this study is to document and notate local folk dances of Merida, Leyte with the end in view of developing dance literature. As a cultural advocate and a lifetime member of the Samahang Tagapagtaguyod ng Katutubong Sayaw Ng Pilipinas, the researcher strongly believes that as an outcome of this study, these dances will be preserved as good material in promoting appreciation and love for Meridanons’ cultural heritage. Thus, it needs to be preserved and treasured by the people and must be introduced to the students. In this regard, it contributes to the repertoire of dances that were pioneered by Mrs. Francisca R. Aquino (F.R.A.), who provided a source of materials for schools in the field of dance as well as in the allied-disciplines that needs a better understanding of our culture. Through developing dance literature as an outcome of this study, it will be easier to integrate these dances into the lessons, particularly in Physical Education classes.

This study will also be an integral part of the Meridanons’ way of life handed down from generation to generation. Similarly, the study will promote awareness of the existence of local folk dances of Merida, Leyte; awareness of the richness of their cultural heritage through the people’s local dances; and awareness of the importance of preserving such dances that speak of character traits and lifeways of the people. Along these lines, it will boost the morale of the Meridanons to make them proud of their distinct cultural identity.

It is in this context that the researcher is motivated to document and notate local dance research in Merida, Leyte depicting the ways of life of the Meridanons, their beliefs, culture, practices, traditions, livelihood, and values to revive the lost portion of the history of Merida and bring it to the new generation through dance literature. It is the researcher’s fervent hope that, with the publication of these dances, our countrymen will understand the Meridanons better and appreciate

more their aesthetic values as a people of whom little is known, seen, or heard up to the present time.

Research Objective

The main purpose of this study is to document and notate local folk dances of Merida, Leyte with the end in view of developing dance literature. Specifically, it will look into account how the philosophical perspective is used as underpinnings of the dances and the histo-cultural perspective of the dances.

Literature Review

The documentation of intangible cultural heritage has been a longstanding challenge within the archival community. In its 2003 Convention, UNESCO describes intangible cultural heritage as “traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional craft.” Furthermore, the UNESCO Convention stated, “The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next.” Intangible cultural heritage is evolutionary because the practices are passed from person to person and generationally change according to the natural circumstances of the community. Because of this, each heritage element selected for safeguarding has a documentation plan tailored to the needs of the community and its traditions. Since UNESCO’s first selections for preservation in 2008, over 500 intangible cultural heritage practices have been targeted for safeguarding and documentation; 180 of these selections are cultural dances, mostly from developing countries. Very few western cultural elements have been selected for safeguarding, especially within the dance field. Instead, the documentation of western dance falls on libraries and cultural research institutions, but challenges arise when organizations are faced with archiving materials that require substantial interpretation and institutional knowledge (Carlson, 2019).

Dance, according to the Dance Heritage Coalition as cited by Domingo (2018), being the highest form of art receives the least number of research outputs, merely because of the lack of availability of resources (dance literature) as well as very few individuals who are passionately want to do research and documentation. It

was further noted that “with good record-keeping of the role of dance in art and culture, scholars can better develop both the theory and the criticism that will ensure dance’s place in the academe”. Through dance notation, dances can be well-preserved and be passed on from generation to generation.

Dance is part of our personal and cultural experience and its past, present, and future deserve to be safeguarded. The purpose of documentation is to provide access to that experience over time. The tools that can fully document such a three-dimensional form has not been available until this century. Although these tools have evolved and are still evolving, there is now the opportunity to engage in significant documentation, to take on the challenge of preservation, and to focus on how the tools for documentation are used.

The Dance Heritage Coalition, Inc. (2006) cited three important components of dance documentation: (1) representing the process, (2) representing the performance event, and (3) representing the cultural impact. If each of these three aspects of the dance event can be preserved and examined, then people looking back will have enough information to evaluate its significance and cultural impact. Giving the forethought to dance documentation, then, contributes to both the recognition and the identification of what is essential to dance and dance studies. Nevertheless, dance documentation serves different needs and uses, for both the long and the short term. In the bigger picture, the documentation of a dance ensures availability to students, scholars, cultural commentators, and others for performance, study, and analysis. Some methods of documentation enable a dance to be reproduced in future times and contexts. In the short term, documentation may serve as a tool for audience-building, publicity, grant applications, rehearsal aids, and other uses. The long-term uses of dance documentation are often not seriously considered by practicing dance communities, for reasons of economics, time, and resources.

Dance notation scores function like music scores: they provide a stable written record based on codified symbols that can be used later to recreate or study the work. Various dance notation systems provided the first conscientious technique for documenting dance. They are primarily used to fix a dance’s form and style by creating a written record through notation results in an intentional and highly accurate documentation product.

Labanotation or Kinetography Laban is a notation

system for recording and analyzing human movement that was derived from the work of Rudolf Laban who described it in *Schrifttanz* ("Written Dance") in 1928. Labanotation uses abstract symbols to define the (1) direction and level of the movement, (2) part of the body doing the movement, (3) duration of the movement, (4) dynamic quality of the movement, and (5) direction and level of the movement. The shapes of the direction symbols indicate nine different directions in space and the shading of the symbol specifies the level of the movement. Each "direction symbol" indicates the orientation of a line between the proximal and distal points of a body part or a limb, that is, "the direction signs indicate the direction towards which the limbs must incline". The direction symbols are organized as three levels: high, middle, and low or deep (Wikipedia).

Benesh Movement Notation (BMN), also known as Benesh notation or choreology, is a dance notation system used to document dance and other types of human movement. Invented by Joan and Rudolf Benesh in the late 1940s, the system uses abstract symbols based on figurative representations of the human body. It is used in choreography and physical therapy, and by the Royal Academy of Dance to teach ballet. Benesh notation is recorded on a five-line staff from left to right, with vertical bar lines to mark the passage of time. Because of its similarity to modern staff music notation, Benesh notation can be displayed alongside (typically below) and in synchronization with musical accompaniment (Wikipedia, 2020).

Eshkol-Wachman (EWMN) movement notation is a notation system for recording movement on paper or computer screen. Eshkol-Wachman (EWMN) is a dance notation system created in Israel by dance theorist Noa Eshkol (1924–2007) and Abraham Wachman (1931–2010). Eshkol-Wachman movement notation treats the body as a sort of stick figure. The body is divided at its skeletal joints, and each pair of joints defines a line segment (a "limb"). For example, the foot is a limb bounded by the ankle and the end of the toe. The system is used in many fields, including dance, physical therapy, animal behavior, and early diagnosis of autism (Wikipedia, 2020).

According to Villaruz (2020), for the most part, early records on Philippine dance had been written by foreigners; among the most notable ones are Antonio Pigafetta (Ferdinand Magellan's historian), Fr. Francisco Colin, and Jean Mallat. True documentation of dance only came in the second quarter of the 20th century, by Francisca Reyes Aquino in the late 1920s when she worked on her thesis and further went out to

the field with Ramon Tolentino and Antonio Buenaventura as a team under the auspices of the University of the Philippines president, Jorge Bocobo. These also resulted in the formation of the UP Folk Song and Dance Club that toured the provinces, and the publication of *Philippine Folk Dances and Games* (1935) with Petrona Ramos and *Philippine National Dances* (1946). Aquino further extended her research and publication through the years, the most outstanding of which is the six-volume *Philippine Folk*

Dances (1953 – 1979). She was assisted by some other researchers like Emerita Basilio in Luzon and Jose Balcena in the Visayas.

Emulating her example, others followed with their regional researchers: like Libertad V. Fajardo with three volumes on Visayan dances (1961 – 1975); Juan C. Miel on Samar dances (1973); Jovita Sison Friese on Pangasinan dances (1980); Teresita Pascua Ines on Ilocano dances; Petronila Suarez on Iloilo dances; Lourdes Buena and Leon Tuy on Bicol songs and dances; Gloria Cabahug on Cebuano dances; and coordinated research on Antique dances led by Abelardo Villavert. Ramon Obusan also had the largest collection of video- films on Philippine dances, with several of them used in the Cultural Center of the Philippines-produced the *Tuklas Sining* series on the arts. Two of the four video- documentations on dance directed by Obusan and scripted by Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz have won national and international awards.

Johnson and Snyder (*Securing Our Dance Heritage: Issues in the Documentation and Preservation of Dance*) highlighted the opportunity to engage in significant documentation, to take on the challenge of preservation, and to focus on how the tools for documentation are used. Visual and written documentation provides fragmented glimpses of the presence and significance of dance throughout the history of humankind. The reality is that dance is multidimensional, perhaps the most complex of all expressive forms. Dance is part of our personal and cultural experience and its past, present, and future deserve to be safeguarded. The evolution from simple verbal descriptions to more multidimensional "bird's eye views" made the literature more plausible. Before the Renaissance period, dance played a large role in Western European societies. Dance documentation books in the American period combined symbols, signs, pictures, and word descriptions which were the first to present dance from a multidimensional perspective. Hence, they were the first to have a specific demonstration on the ability to document and preserve the dance and the first to advance toward

overcoming the time/space dichotomy. Still, photography came into being in the mid-nineteenth century. Soon the photograph was considered capable of capturing “reality,” but it was still a two-dimensional medium, another stepping stone on the way to more accurate documentation. The member institutions of the Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) are grappling with these very issues and, in so doing, are setting high standards for documenting and preserving the performing arts and other events that take place in time and space. It is often said that dance is ephemeral and therefore eludes documentation. The growth of electronic media in the 1990s brought new potential for the documentation and preservation of dance and access to dance materials. Electronic media embrace the capabilities inherent in the computer itself, and such forms as CD-ROM, DVD, and other emerging tools of telecommunications. Videotape has become a central tool for the documentation of dance during the past 15 years and serves as a form of currency in the dance world. As the late dance videographer Michael Schwartz wrote in the *Poor Dancer’s Almanac* (1993): “Of all the arts, dance has been the most profoundly affected by the wide-spread use of video technology. Choreographers, dancers, critics, historians, and producers now have a tool that can preserve the ephemeral material of rehearsal and performance - for repeated, detailed viewing. Video has affected not only the preservation and teaching of established repertory but also the work process itself. Instant replay allows the dancer and choreographer to rework and edit a dance as it evolves, edited into promotional tapes, video documentation has become an essential part of the business of all performance - a tool required by funders and presenters to determine who receives funding and who is presented”.

The recording of the dance and music culture can be considered as the first phase in the ethnographic research of the research and documentation of traditional folk dances. Dance ethnography is the analysis of the movement systems created in the context of a geographical and historical process and ethnic structure to understand the cultural structure of society. Dance ethnology aims to understand society and its culture via dance analysis and together with dance ethnology that tries to understand dance via society these have become a two disciplined field of study combined under the branch of ethnochoreology (Ozbilgin, 2016). Ethnochoreology (also dance ethnology, dance anthropology) is the study of dance through the application of some disciplines such as anthropology, musicology, ethnomusicology, and ethnography. Accompanying the trend toward dance ethnography is the discussion of subdisciplines under

dance research. Iyer (2018) differentiates dance iconography from dance anthropology, the latter analyzing movement systems of societies that generated living dance traditions. Her forte, dance iconography is the study of documented dance poses that hopes to present movement phase, movement cadence, or stance rather than static positions. She also explains that dance history’s concern is more on the evolution and development of particular forms. Logically, interdisciplinary studies are relevant to folk dance research as well and communicate her strife to intersect anthropology, indigenous studies, dance studies, and African studies. Thus, examining dance ethnographically is to perceive it “in the contextual web of social relationships, environment, religion, aesthetics, politics, economy, and history.

In retrospect, folk dance researchers can reveal patterns in Philippine folk dance research and publication. In doing so, the dance research community can greatly advance how they study dances. In his dance study on approaching dance, Luna (2016) shared common ideas with Giurchescu and Torp (1991) which urges other dance researchers to support movement research as it is a “necessary instrument” in revealing the “dance process”, its constituents, their meanings and functions in the society. They expound that knowing these helps people and their means of expression to be understood within the “framework of socio-cultural community.” Besides, they claimed that dance iconography provides only additional information but is out of the movement context. For field research, they encourage the recording of full dance textures using film, videotapes, and occasionally in pencil notes.

The traditional dance can be identified generally as a physical and emotional behavior created as a result of the individual’s creativity in the movement system with aesthetic and rhythmic meanings common in society. The dance contains individual physical, psychological, and mental qualities and social, historical, and environmental factors. Dance analysis is made in terms of structural movement system (body and movement concepts), profound and superficial structures (cultural philosophy), social (ethnic and cultural identity), motif and choreography (as language analogies and components), local genre categories, ethnohistory (icons, historical writings, oral history), teaching methods and learning, composition, and improvisation (Kurtisoglu, 2016).

From this respect, to record traditional dance as an ethnographic value, one has to identify the significance of the “dance event” where the movements are used

symbolically and in addition to focusing on “dance performance” that occurs via the conscious awareness of the body. The recording of the dance and music culture can be considered as the first phase in the ethnographic studies of the production of traditional folk dances. For the ethnographical dance recordings to be successful, it is important to identify the emic perceptions of the traditional dance culture that members created in the frame of their consciousness. The field research consisting of the basis of the dance ethnography contains reality (Ozbilgin, 2016).

In the Philippines, the folk (traditional) dance began to be collected from the late 1920s by Francisca Reyes Aquino, known before her second marriage as Francisca Reyes Tolentino. Filipino folk dance expert Ramon P. Santos points out that the ideas of fixing and standardizing forms (such as through notation) are “western” based. As she started collecting folk dance in the Philippines in the 1920s, a development described in one authoritative source as follows: “Realizing that with the further impact of Western culture many of these indigenous dances would be lost or extensively modified”. This quote, and the rest of the introduction it comes from, illustrates a model elaborated and discussed by John Storey in *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* in 2003.

The Aquino’s way of notating and documenting traditional and folk dances became the mainstream of mostly all Philippine folk dance researchers in the country. She influenced the direction of folk dance took through her methods of investigation, collection, and inscription. Dances were recorded and to include the title, dance culture, the place of origin, ethnolinguistic group and classification, the costumes and the props, the music, the musical instruments used, and the instruction of the dance which includes the figures with respective dance steps and movements, counts and number of measures. She made her own decisions concerning what could be considered folk dance, how much could be altered and for what reasons, as well as how her choreographic work would fit into the developing canon. Aquino took her choreographed dances, supported by her ethnographic research and critical reflection, and placed them in the canon of Filipino folk dance (Declan, 2015).

The use of movement has largely been confined to Aquino’s verbal and directional system, arranged into figures and fitted into counts and phrases. Larry Gabao teaches Labanotation at the Philippine Normal University and Villaruz teaches the Benesh system at the University of the Philippines. The use of these

more developed systems has not been widely accepted for lack of tutors and passivity among dance teachers. Two organizations in folk dance that seek to safeguard dance traditions are the Philippine Folk Dance Society and the Francisca Reyes Aquino Memorial Foundation. In theatrical dance, there are too few researchers. Oral history has been collected by the dance program at the UP College of Music and a few more by Marcelino Foronda. Among the early writers on Philippine theater are Vicente Barrantes (1889), Juan Atayde (1892), and Wenceslao Retana (1909), and comprehensively surveyed up to 1946 by Cristina Laconico Buenaventura (1994). In the 70’s and ’80s, the Ballet Federation of the Philippines published its newsletter *Sayaw Silanganan* (edited by Villaruz) and Ballet Philippines its *Dance Philippines* (edited by Nestor Jardin). Villaruz and Jardin have contributed to several foreign publications on the subject of Philippine dance. Leonor Orosa Goquingco has contributed to *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo* and *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and Reynaldo Alejandro to *International Dance Encyclopedia* (Villaruz B. E., 2020).

In her study, Luna (2016) cited that although textual in nature, Filipino folk dance publication in the last two decades has become more anthropological, and uses a more holistic approach with a research team involved in writing rather than a singular viewer of the dance. Three volumes of them were by Libertad Fajardo. Urtula’s PWU co-faculty, who helped stage the folk dance recitals, authored a book on Visayan dances. The book included the pronunciation of the dance title, notation of steps and formation in words, grade placement for each dance, a one-sentence history of the dance, the name of the informant, costume description in the text, photos of costumes at the start of the book and musical notation. These published books about folk dance for primary and secondary education were also adopting F.R.A methods of dance notation.

In his research findings, Declan (2015) addresses the work of researchers Francisca Reyes Aquino, Sally Ann Ness, and Benildanze, all of whom use embodied practices to study Filipino folk dance in the academy but with divergent methodologies. Aquino uses ethnography, Ness phenomenology, and Benildanze practices as research. It examines the process by which dances have moved from functioning rituals to representative artifacts and research tools. These processes reveal a complex and constantly developing relationship between dance practice and the academy. While all three have demonstrated embodied research methods, research aims were driven by different

imperatives, ranging from the desire to “save” the dances and preserve them through inscription which shows an enormous change in the perception of the functions the dance can perform and can be made to perform, from rewriting history. While organizations such as the Philippine Folk Dance Society exist to preserve the dances, perhaps the continuing role of academia is to explore how the dances can generate knowledge in other ways.

The researcher shared the same sentiments with Luna, Villaruz, and the rest of the folk dance researchers in the Philippines inspired by the pioneering works of Francisca Reyes Aquino’s way of notation and documentation. This study will aim to contribute to the repertoire of traditional dances, which have been started through Aquino’s pioneering works that provided a source of materials for schools in the field of dance as well as in the allied-disciplines which need a better understanding of our culture. As a major component of the fitness and values revitalization program of Deped, has one of its objectives to identify, document, and institutionalized the traditional songs and dances to enrich the present curricula at all levels.

Folk dances have been part of Philippine culture which makes the country unique from others and have been preserved through documentation. Through the different documentation methods and autochthonous practice, dance enthusiasts would be able to learn and understand further the multitude of forms and styles of their field. For dance authorities, scholars, performing artists, enthusiasts, teachers, and students, with a deep appreciation for the promotion and preservation of the rich Philippine folk dances, dance documentation is a form of retrieval to take one step towards understanding the window to the complex history of the Philippines showcasing customs, culture, and traditions (Domingo, 2018).

Methodology

Research Design

As dance research, this study will be qualitative and ethnographic in nature which will engage in the philosophical and socio-cultural underpinnings of the different local folk dances of Merida, Leyte. More so, this study will end in view of developing dance literature for cultural preservation and bring it to the new generation. As ethnographic research, questions and observations will generally relate to social and cultural processes and shared meanings of the local folk dances of Meridanons. Traditionally, it will be

associated with long-term fieldwork but some aspects are employed in applied settings. As a method, this study will adopt the Philippine Folk Dance Documentation Framework visualized by Domingo. To come up with dance literature, movement and dance analysis will be done adopting F.R.A.’s standard methods of transcribing and notating dance movements.

More so, the researcher intends to examine the philosophical basis of the local folk dances through ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. This philosophical stance is required in conducting the study to provide grounding on the perceptual perspective on what to look for and how methodologically describe the events in this study. Reality will be seen as multiple and subjective constructed by individuals. Quotes and themes in the words of the informants will be reported to provide evidence of different prospective (Valencia, 2014).

Ontologically, it will seek to determine the underlying reality, nature, beliefs, culture, and traditions as lived by Meridanons considering the physical, emotional, and cultural appeal as reflected in the dance movements.

Epistemologically, it will seek to determine the relationship between the researcher and what will be studied. Knowledge of the dance can be acquired through personal experience as expressed by the locales and gathering data through the collection of their stories. The narrative analysis will be employed as a source of data to generate a bigger scope of cultural meaning to their local dances. These will be done through an in-depth interview by the researcher and the informants. The different movements, dance positions, and formations will also be observed by the researcher. The researcher will observe and interact with the informants to gather all the necessary information and will attempt to minimize the distance between himself and that being researched. Utilizing fieldwork, the researcher will collaborate and spend time in fields with the participants.

From an axiological perspective, the dance movement will then be analyzed according to the underlying values, emotions, expressions, ethics, and aesthetics which will form part in the notation of the local folk dances. The study seeks to answer a question on the role of values in the inquiry and assume that subjective values are inevitable, desirable, and value-laden. Personal interpretation of the local folk dances will be reported in conjunction with informants’ interpretation. This is termed positioning where the

values are openly discussed and biases will be presented and acknowledged.

Methodologically, in observing the rhetoric assumption, the language to be utilized is personal and engaging. The data gathered during the cultural mapping activity will be chronologically arranged and sequenced from the key informants. Subjectivity might occur since the researcher has insider knowledge of the local dances because he is a native of the place. Along the documentation process, non-quantifiable qualities might become an object for subjectivity such as the emotional appeal of the dance. To avoid subjectivity and emerging interpretations dominating the process, certain guidelines must be adopted especially in the analysis of movements. Since this study is field research, the researcher uses an opportunistic or emergent sampling that is flexible and makes sampling decisions during the process of collecting data. As the researcher gains more knowledge on Meridanons' local dances as the informants unfold, the researcher can make sampling decisions that could take advantage. Flexible research and sampling design is an important feature of qualitative research, particularly when the research being conducted is exploratory in nature. When little is known about a phenomenon or set, a priori sampling decisions can be difficult. In such circumstances, creating a research design that is flexible enough to foster reflection, preliminary analysis, and opportunistic or emergent sampling may be a good idea. This will indeed result in a more context-bounded or contextualized research outcome. To come up with dance literature, the analyzed dance movements will be written in a narrative presentation with qualification analysis that seeks understanding, especially on the movement patterns.

Research Environment

Merida is a fifth class coastal municipality in the province of Leyte. Located south of Ormoc City, facing the Camotes Islands and the Camotes Sea, Merida is nestled at the Westside of Ormoc City where agriculture, including fishing, is the major livelihood among the populace. A tradition and a rich heritage since the Spanish regime is sustained by the inhabitants tracing back from the original settlers up to the present.

The town was formerly situated in a place now known as Betaug. It was then called "Siapun" after a river near the settlement. The town used to be a barrio of Ormoc. In 1860, however, the barrio was organized as a town and was promulgated in 1867 by Domingo Fernandez, the District Governor of the Province of

Leyte. The first Spanish overseer nostalgically named it Merida after his native city in Spain which, like their own, lies along the bank of River Guardiana.

Along the coast, Merida lies between the City of Ormoc and the progressive town of Isabel, 17 kilometers to the south. Concrete roads and bridges link Merida with the adjacent towns and cities direct to the city of Tacloban. It may be noted that Isabel, formerly named "Quiot" was made municipality by the Spaniards in 1850 which lasted 52 years, and was merged into the town of Merida under Republic Act 954 of the Philippine Commission. However, through the help of ex-senator Carlos S. Tan and Pres. Manuel A. Roxas, it was restored as a municipality under Republic Act No. 191 of 1974, of the congress of the Philippines and Proc. No. 49, and named "Isabel" after the wife of the Senator. The newly appointed officials headed by Galicano Ruiz were included in office by the late Deputy Gov. Cipriano Macion of Merida.

Research Participants

One of the most important tasks a qualitative researcher can undertake is the selection of participants (Sargeant, 2012). Recruitment of the right participants in qualitative research is a crucial stage because the chosen participants should possess the right qualification for the study. Besides, a qualitative researcher must ensure to have access to their participants and that the participants have experience with the phenomenon under study (Sargeant, 2011). In the same article, it was emphasized that the first step is to identify and describe the type of participants in the study through setting the selection criteria in finding the potential participant of the phenomenon who has the experience and is willing to share or participate in the study.

The research participants in this study are the local historians who will narrate the history of dances and how the dances were performed based on their steps and movements including the appropriate costumes. They are the old settlers of the town who will be the key informants of the study.

Research Instruments

The four local folk dances identified during the cultural mapping of the municipality of Merida will serve as the instrument of study. The Philippine Folk Dance Documentation Framework will be used as a general procedure guide for data gathering. Emulating most of the country's folk dance researchers, this study will also adopt Francisca Reyes Aquino's (F.R.A.'s)

method of documentary analysis which will also be confined to the verbal and directional system, arranged into figures and fitted into counts and phrases. The researcher for this reason will adopt F.R. A's standards in dance notation since still more of the developed systems like Labanotation and Benesh have not been widely accepted for lack of tutors and passivity among dance teachers (Villaruz B. E., 2020).

Data Gathering Procedure

Data for this research will be generally gathered from cultural mapping output mainly through resourcing observation, interviews, and video recording. The interview will be narration, demonstration, and observation using a structured questionnaire as an instrument. The four local dances will then be analyzed and notated using F.R.A's method of dance notation. These can be done through a structured interview of the identified informants from the local folks. The interview technique will be utilized to gather information about the philosophical basis and histo-cultural background of the dances in terms of its classification and nature, technical descriptions, and dance properties such as music, costumes, props, counting, dance steps and movements, moods, and characteristics. A summary of figures will be made to make a clearer presentation, analysis, and interpretation using Cariaga's guidelines for the analysis of specific movements.

The guidelines for the analysis of specific movements that portray character traits and customs depicted in a folk dance (Cariaga, 2014) are as follows:

1. Friendliness
 - a. sweet smiles of the girls
 - b. shaking of hands
 - c. waving of hands
2. Industry
 - a. movements like pounding rice
 - b. fishing, the use of a fishing net, fish container
 - c. the use of wooden boat paddle
3. Cheerfulness
 - a. the clicking of the castanets
 - b. marching movements, holding a hat
 - c. striking of bamboos
 - d. singing by the old people as the children as well as they perform the dance
 - e. clapping of the hands or snapping of fingers
 - f. uttering or shouting a weird cry "hey" together
 - g. use of hop step, jump, and springing of foot
 - h. striking of the swords
4. Religiosity
 - a. bending of trunk and knees
 - b. movement of bamboo/wood from vertical to horizontal
 - c. nature of the dance which is to drive the evil spirits
 - d. anointing fresh blood of pig or chicken
 - e. kneeling position/trunk bent forward
 - f. holy crucifix/presence of chapel in every barrio
 - g. presence of the statue of the Virgin Mary
5. Hospitality
 - a. arms in reverse "T" position with palms up
 - b. serving simple snacks or lunch in case a visitor arrives
 - c. arms open to the second position
 - d. arms doing the "hapay" movement
6. Lovers of Celebration
 - a. observing wedding ceremonies strictly, baptism, and marriage are very important ceremonies
 - b. observing fiesta every year
 - c. mazurka in open ballroom position
7. Lovers of Peace
 - a. absence of fighting movement
8. Contentment
 - a. close step, change step, touch step, walking step, contraganza step
 - b. slow turning
 - c. slow tempo
9. Family Solidarity
 - a. kumintang inward
 - b. arms in reverse "T" position, with kumintang inward and palms closed
 - c. wedding dance, arms in reverse "T" position
 - d. hats used in the dance together in one post
 - e. hands joining together
 - f. partner following each other
 - g. plates, groom collects money and gives it to the bride sitting on the high knee
10. Close Family Ties
 - a. a married couple lives in the family of their parents
 - b. relatives are present in the match making-occasion as courtship arrangements before the wedding plans
 - c. at the age of four, boys and girls are trained by their parents and grandfathers on how to handle the swords and the knife for self-defense and to keep them prepared in case of emergency, such as a tribal war between their groups and other tribal groups

11. Respect for Elders

a. a parental consent is always secured by the children before accepting the invitation or request to dance.

b. children are taught to kiss the hands of their parents and other kin or made to do the what the call “bless”

c. bowing, children have to ask permission from their parents before dancing and respect the decisions of parents

12. Belief in Supernatural Beings

a. a “tambalan” or the old woman or man was known to possess supernatural powers/knowledge perform certain rituals. When an individual is seriously ill, the natives believed that the sick person was possessed by evil or bad spirits. With the ritual offerings and prayers of the “tambalan”, the sick are healed. If, however, this person dies, it means that the evil spirits are very strong or the healing of the “tambalan” is weak

b. believed in so many gods and goddesses to ask for favors. They believed that “Serena” or mermaids inhabited the deep rivers

13. Courtship and Marriage

a. parents of the groom give to the parents of the bride a dowry or “dote” in the form of cash, working animals, jewelry, hectares of land, house, and other goods

b. a one-day celebration before the wedding (likod-likod) by the members of the family of the soon to be bride and groom

c. waltz step in close ballroom position, pamustura, check-to-check position, palingiw-lingiw

14. Bayanihan

a. helping and working together of the village planting of rice and corn, fishing (pamaling, panudsod, pamabhas) and moving the house to another place or even during the wedding of their sons and daughters

b. being a hero by assisting strangers and community folks without expecting any return or compensations

15. Respect for Authority

a. allowing to deliver a speech by the highest official of the town or barrio during special occasions

b. quadrille formation, the cabeceras doing the movement first before the costados

16. Novelty

a. plain walking step, passing of plates with food from one woman to another during wedding luncheon

b. no required musical accompaniments to some of their dances

c. left or right arm bent in front at chest level

d. hand movement in sway balance

e. cross waltz step and arms in “Hayon-hayon”

17. Simplicity

a. costumes used which is ordinary and inexpensive

b. used of inexpensive props like bamboos, castanets, mortars, pestles, use of newspaper, plates, stool music, or the sound of any kitchen utensils

Research Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

The proponent’s reflection and position in this study will be an important factor to avoid subjectivity. Reflexive practices focus on examining one’s subjectivity and reflecting on how this shapes the research process and include subjectivity statements (Preissle, 2006). The typology of pathways as proposed by Finlay in reflexivity as followed by the proponent are recognize themselves, recognize the others, authorize the text in “getting it right, and transcend their subjectivities and cultural context. Therefore, in this study, the proponent will recognize its position relative to this study as a cultural advocate, folk dance researcher, and a cultural mapper. Possible biases in the interpretation of qualitative data may happen. With experts to validate peer validation, constant consultation, and peer validation will be employed to avoid misinterpretation of the responses of the participants and other sources of data.

Ethics is an integral part of conducting research, especially if the proponent is dealing with the people, the community, pertinent documents, animals, and the like. In this paper, an absolute observance and following the ethical consideration in conducting this study will be looked forward to avoiding fallacy or misconceptions of the participant’s views about the phenomenon under study, its integrity, and most especially to protect them from any harm by hiding their personal information using John Doe names. Lastly, the proponent will ask for the approval of the consent form from the participants, stating their rights and privileges including their role in the research and confidentiality of their responses.

Qualitative Data Analysis

As qualitative research, this study will undergo three phases of data processes and analysis. The Visual Model on Study Framework presents the over-all framework on how the study will be conducted. Phase 1 will document the four local folk dances as an output of the cultural mapping activity of the municipality of Merida, Leyte. It will adopt the Philippine Folk Dance

Documentation Framework. This will represent an informal collection of dances by which informants will be carefully selected based on their knowledge about local folk dances in the local community through multiple types of gathering information. Observations and field notes on the content of their stories or narration are essential in this phase.

Phase 2 of the study will analyze the documented local folk dances as to their perspectives according to their philosophical and histo-cultural underpinnings. The informants' stories will be analyzed and then retold into a framework that makes sense. Retelling the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework. This framework may consist of gathering stories, analyzing them for the elements, and rewriting the stories to place them within the organizational sequence. One aspect of chronology is that the narration has a beginning, middle, and end. The storyline will include information about the setting or context of the local folk dances. Beyond the chronology, detailed themes may be discovered to provide a more detailed discussion about dances. In the end, the narrative study will tell the story of the local folk dances to unfold in chronology and including the important themes in their lives experience.

Narrative inquiries are stories lived and told (Clandin, 2000). The Cariaga's guidelines for the analysis of specific movements that portray character traits and customs depicted in a folk dance will complete the dance chronology.

Phase 3 will focus on the creation of dance literature based on the results of phase 2. The dance literature of the four local folk dances of Merida is the core output of this study which will then be good material in the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage of the Meridanons and for future generations to come.

Results

There are four local folk dances gathered, recorded and notated by the researcher which portrayed character traits and costumes among Meridanons.

Jota Merida and Binaylehan are Spanish-influenced dances localized by the old folks and became an entertainment/festival dance. Most of their basic movements depicts the art of courtship.

Ang Kutsero is an entertainment dance depicting Meridanon's sweet, loving and happy cultural traits

not only before but even in the modern times. Through this dance, the Tartanilya may not be grown in numbers, but it never goes out of sight.

Pamabhas, evolved as a mimetic dance inspired from a movement of a haluan (mudfish) and tambasakan (mudspringer) is also considered an occupational dance since movements depicted fishing which became a major livelihood among townfolks.

These four local folk dances typically are dances of cheerfulness, and danced with hapinnes, gladness and are mostly danced in a lively manner. The absence of fighting movements in all dances depicts that Meridanons are lovers of peace.

These dances are hereby summarized showing their description and properties:

<i>Folk Dances</i>	<i>Meaning/ Description</i>	<i>Music/ Count</i>	<i>Basic Dance Steps</i>	<i>Mood</i>
1. Ang Kutsero	A person who drives/manage a horse-drawn carriage known in Cebuano term as "Tartanilya"	• 2/4 composed of six parts (A,B,C,D, E,F) • 1,2 / 1 and 2 / 1 and 2 and to a measure	• Martsa Kutsero • Martsa Pasahero • Pamasada • Pamara • Panikad • Pamgarwahi	Happiness and lively
2. Binaylehan	A localized dance version or style of pair dancing during "Bayle"	• 3/4 composed of three sections with six parts, I (A,B); II (A,B); III (A,B)	• Paghimamat • Pagpunit • Binaylehan • Pakighalubilo	Happiness and gladness
3. Jota Merida	Jota version of Merida Leyte	• 1,2,3 to a measure • 3/4 compose d of five parts, (A,B,C,D, E) • 1,2,3 to a measure	• Paso Tikod • Balse Pagsaludo • Balse Pangulitaw Bining-bing • Pamugsay • Panikpaw	Happiness and gladness
4. Pamabhas	a method of fishing through "Pabhas"	• 2/4 compose d of three sections with five parts, I (A); II (A,B); III (A,B) • 1,2 to a measure	• Pinalangoy-langoy • Pamunit Isda • Hinalwan • Tinambasakan • Panlibud Isda	Happiness, tired and lively

Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned findings, it can be concluded that the four local folk dances of Merida:(1) were derived from Spanish colonization and occupation and traditions of the rural people converging into a story of the Meridanons. (2) depicted the ways of life of the Meridanons, their beliefs, culture, practices, traditions, livelihood, and

values to revive the lost portion of the history of Merida and bring it to the new generation through dance literature. (3) have several basic qualities and they are created by a group of people within a community. They are unregulated by central authority and is open to anyone who wants to participate, and is not exclusive to one sector of population. They remain pure and unique as the result of a mass popular consent rather than a privilege. (4) can be considered priceless heritage and can be classified as courtship, festival/entertainment, occupational and mimetic dances. (5) are indeed, rich in character traits and customs, which contributed to cultural identity of Meridanons which can be a good vehicle in preserving and showing Meridanons culture and values. (6) the dances can be a good material to educate people on unity, understanding of each other's uniqueness, love for one's own native cultural heritage, and love for country.

The following recommendations are advanced regarding the different folk dances: (1) These dances must be preserved because these are considered as treasures of the places where they originated. The preservation includes the correct and proper costumes, paraphernalias, music, proper movements of the dance steps including moods and characteristics. (2) These dances must be introduced to the school children and students and to interested organizations in the community. These could be revived during cultural celebrations like town fiestas and foundation days. A dance troupe could be organized showcasing the dances. (3) Conduct training-workshops on the different local folk dances at district level. (4) Request from LGU for support through a resolution or municipal ordinance in the utilization of the dance and integrating these dancing to any local culture and arts activities.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

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Nestor A. Castaños Jr.
Merida Vocational School
Department of Education
Leyte, Philippines

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