

# Traditional Dance Practices of the Bukidnon Karul-anon

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## ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to identify the most influential social activities that developed the dances; the historical background of such dances; their classifications; and their implications for the lives of the indigenous people of Barangay Carol-an. The Historical Method was used in this study. The researcher sought the assistance of the IP leader to establish trust with the members of the Indigenous people. Thus, this study underwent evaluation and approval from the National Commission for Indigenous People. Furthermore, the researcher immersed herself in the community to thoroughly understand their dances. Thoughts, findings, and results from the study gave more understanding on the different cultural practices of the people, such as rituals and beliefs, customs and traditions, and traditional personal values. There were five identified folk dances of the Indigenous People (IP) of Carol – an, namely, the Sinugabin, Pandango, Binuy-u, Inagong, and Balitaw. These traditional dances were performed by the indigenous people as part of their rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions. They were classified as courtship and ritual dances performed by the IPs during and after their ritual ceremony called "Buhat". The documentaries gathered may be made as instructional materials for the K-12 program in teaching local dances in grade schools in the future.

**Keywords:** *Indigenous People, Sinugabin, Pandango, Binuy-u, Inagong, Balitaw, Buhat, Traditional dances*

## INTRODUCTION

Maintaining cultural practices and traditions for indigenous people that are trying to survive in a pluralistic, westernized, modernized/post-modernized, and globalized world continue to be a big challenge. Even though practicality and shifting religious beliefs have diminished the significance of its components and other preparations, rituals are nevertheless practiced and observed in the Philippines' diverse communities (Anasin, 2015). Libraries and archives play a significant role in this because traditional performing arts are characterized by dynamic, culture-making activities that present issues for objectivity and static modes of recording (Arsenio, 2008).

Because it requires ongoing learning and memory of new steps, dancing is seen as an activity that activates both the body and the brain (Douka, 2019). According to Firenzi (2012), examining these publicly accessible and symbolically rich behaviors have a huge potential to deepen one's understanding. Dance practices can be an excellent source for examining community-wide, shared cultural experiences.

In addition, according to Aquino (1952), folk dance is one of the Filipino cultures that combines influences from conquerors and immigrants while still keeping its unique national character. While Filipinos were working in the fields and celebrating feasts, harvests, births, and weddings, they created the dances of the Philippines.

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Kabankalan City, more specifically, is a place of rich cultural and historical background and is considered the home of one of the country's indigenous groups. Castro (2013) mentioned that Barangay Carol – an in Kabankalan City has amazing stories about the Spanish colonization. As a mountainous barangay, the majority of the people living in the place are mostly indigenous people (IP) who still practice a primitive way of living even today. The traditional dances of the "Tumandoks" of Carol–an remain intact, which reflects their strong and deeply grounded traditional practices and beliefs (Castro, 2013).

There has never been extensive research conducted on the practices of the Indigenous People of Barangay Carol–an that would identify and document their folk dances. Thus, it is from this premise that this current investigation was anchored. The current study was conducted to identify the origin of the traditional dances of the Indigenous People of Carol-an.

This study aimed to meet its two-fold purpose. The first was to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the cultural life of the IPs in Carol–an, and the other was to provide authentic teaching materials for the teachers in the integration of culture and the arts as part of the competencies in the K–12 program.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aimed to trace the origin of the traditional dances including the different movements and the daily activities that influenced the development of the dances of the indigenous people of Barangay Carol–an, Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental. A documentary investigation was conducted in order to investigate and document substantive data on the cultural and traditional dances.

More specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the different social practices of the indigenous people according to the different aspects:
  - a. beliefs and rituals;
  - b. custom and tradition; and
  - c. traditional values?
2. What are the most influential social activities that influenced the development and evolution of their dances?
3. What are the preserved dance activities as evidences of the Indigenous people in Carol-an?
4. What are the implications of these dances in their life as indigenous people?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Given the formulated problem, the ethnographic research design (Gusterson, 2008) deals with the discovery and description of the culture of a group. Culture is as people do, a combination of various types of knowledge, beliefs, custom, art, morals, laws, habit, the attitude of mind, the pattern of human activity, literature, language, religion, and religious activity, transmitted from person to person, transmitted from generation to generation, consisting of everything people think, consisting of efforts and adjustment, gratifying quality, continuous process, accumulative, interconnected with each other, changing and dynamic, vary from one society to other society, etc.

The researcher immersed herself from January to April of 2014 in the Indigenous People community to gain a more vivid and in-depth understanding of the IPs' characteristics and behavioral patterns. This research study was conducted at Brgy. Carol-an Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental. More specifically, the researcher worked with the IPs community in their festivity to document the existing dances. The documentation and recordings of these dances were very significant to identifying and preserving their cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions as it supports the mandate of the Republic Act 8371.

The researcher sought approval from the following offices: the National Commission of Indigenous People, the Chieftain of the Tribe, and the local government unit. Upon the approval of all the requirements for the conduct of the study, with the help of the Chieftain, the respondents of the study were identified.

The respondents of this study comprised of ten (10) elders of the Tribu Karulano. Thus, the identified elders have the authority to tell, perform and teach the dances and their movement patterns, as well as to describe their characteristics and purposes since they were recognized by the National Commission for Indigenous People. The other five (5) participants in this study were identified as members of Tribu Karulano

who have resided in the place for no less than 20 years. This was to ensure the authenticity of the data gathered. With this, all the fifteen identified respondents in the study narrated the history and nature of the dances.

In this study, a self-made questionnaire was used to elicit information about Indigenous peoples' cultural practices, such as identifying their characteristics, beliefs and rituals, customs and traditions, and traditional values. Likewise, the open-ended questions were utilized in the conduct of the key informant interview and focus group discussion, supported by video documentation. In movement analysis, the recorded dance movements, including bodily expressions, were critically analyzed and documented as the primary basis in the formulation of the documentary on Carol-an's Indigenous People's dances.

Documentary Analysis was used to answer the queries of the study. Furthermore, the statements gathered in this research investigation were the necessary basis for formulating historical concepts provided by Carol-an IP dance. Through the information given by the respondents, which was validated by the IP elders, historical events were tied up and composed into a rich documentary of their cultural practices.

## RESULTS

The results showed that the traditional dances of the Indigenous People of Carol-an were affected by the following social practices and activities:

The elders detailed that there was a ceremony practiced during the early times called "Buhat". In the conduct of the ceremony, they offered wild pigs or chickens on a roofed altar. The dancing warriors surrounded the offerings on the altar with a bow and arrows in their hands. The dancers could not execute the dance without the possession of spirits over them, and these spirits would speak and give a message through the medium (the person possessed by the spirit). This practice was also called "hulog". This was usually done when a sick person was cured of an illness. The "tumandoks" or natives/aborigines strongly believed in the power of the "Pananghitan" or the "Surwanus" or faith healers. If a person is suffering from an unknown or unexplainable illness, people would consult the "Pananghitan" who could help formulate a treatment potion or antidote appropriate to cure the illness.

The mountainous stones called "Tuud" and "Manikyaw", thick forest, as well as big and old trees, were considered "bingtan" or inhabited by spirits. This is why when they passed by these areas, they say "tabi" which is a way of saying 'excuse me' or 'step aside'. One of these "bingtan" things was the "dalakit" or native tree in Sitio Camandag. It is a very huge tree, commonly called "aya." Another example was the mysterious Lulusbon Lake, which they believed to be the hidden place of the unseen spirits.

Meanwhile, the practice related to marriage was called "Isaka," wherein the groom and his family would go to the bride's house to settle the engagement of the future couple. The groom would bring a "sista" (a kind of guitar) and a banduria and would offer six pesos (Php 6.00) to the family of the bride. These things served as the dowry to the bride's family, given upon the marriage agreement. Only the parents of both sides were having the conversation. When the girl called "Iray" just kept silent, it would mean "yes" and that she approved of the agreement. After the Isaka, the man would now take the woman to their house.

Moreover, as to their customs of death and burial, there was no embalming done. Their coffins, called "Liya-Liya" were made of bamboo. The Carol-anon considered the "Binangkilan Cave" as their sacred ground or cemetery for the dead. It is a place considered precious by all the people of Carol-an. The IPs in Carol-an wrapped their corpse with Liya-Liya.

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents affirmed that the customary practice they observed during courtship was called "Balitaw". This courtship practice was done through singing and dancing as a way of expressing his love to a woman.

Among them, "Buhat" was the most influential social activity that influenced the development and evolution of their dances. This practice was performed during ritual ceremonies in honor of their gods, performed with communal purpose and responsibilities. This ceremony was especially useful for thanksgiving, as it allowed them to express gratitude for the cure of the sick's illness, rejoice for a good harvest, thank the deities for good health or weather, celebrate the birth of a baby, and thank their faith healers, or "Surwanus," for a successful healing ceremony. The ritual ceremony was sacred and solemn for every member of the tribe, and each played an important role in the said spiritual exercise.

The "Tumandoks" ensured the success of the ceremony by requiring every individual in the tribe, especially the elders, to attend the thanksgiving. Right after the ceremony, the "tumandoks" had their social gathering, wherein a male is allowed to court a female member of the tribe. This socialization would last until the morning of the next day.

Through these activities, these people unconsciously developed a set of dance practices that they commonly performed during different events. These dance practices were accompanied by indigenous musical instruments such as the "sista", "tew-tew," kulintang, and many other instruments that created rhythmical patterns for their dances.

These dance practices were named Binuy-u, Inagong, Sinugabin, Pandango, and Balitaw.

The "Binuy-u" and "Inagong" are known as ritual dances during the ceremony called "Buhat". These dances may differ in the music used, but several of the dance steps are similar. In addition to this, each dance movement that the dancers performed had its deep meaning and value for the said ritual. But the elderly cannot exactly tell the specific meaning of each dance movement because, according to them, the elders before them didn't allow children to get involved actively or raise queries about the conduct and practice of the ritual. All they did before was quietly observe the ritual.

Moreover, the "Sinugabin" and "Pandango" were categorized as courtship dances. These dances were performed during the socialization of the tribe. The male would show his affection for the female through his gestures. He would express his feelings for the woman through various dance movements that resembled teasing gestures. Simultaneously, the female danced with movements showing how impressed and delighted she was with the male's showmanship and skills. Through the dance, a nonverbal agreement would likely exist between them.

Finally, the "Balitaw", another form of courtship dance, involves an exchanging of recitative statements in which both male and female dancers expressed their thoughts and feelings through the spoken language. This song and dance performance may last until morning because the males were courting the females through different songs and dance movements. They were free to express whatever they felt towards each other throughout the duration of the dance practice. According to the elders, several couples had stayed together for life just through the "Balitaw" dance.

In particular, the Bukidnon Karulano dances were categorized as tribal dances because these were part of their basic life and were left untouched by other cultures. They were performed essentially for their ancestors and gods. Their dances were closely intertwined with ceremonies, rituals, sacrifices, and life.

These dances are necessary for the preservation of the Indigenous People's culture and traditions. Through these dances, future generations are given the chance and privilege to understand their origins and identities. Understanding the basic entity of an individual creates the opportunity to get in contact with the realities of life. It allows them to get to know other people and, at the same time, to be known in other places. Some of the Indigenous people were allowed to go to other places to perform their dances. But above all, through these dances, the Tribu Karulano are very proud that they are indigenous.

As a significant part of culture preservation and promotion, the basic education curriculum has been designed with mechanisms allowing the teaching of indigenous practices to be taught as the basic foundation for Filipino children in school. This documentary of the Tribu Karulano dances facilitated a greater chance for Filipino Indigenous People and non-Indigenous People citizens to value and treasure what their ancestors had left them. The elders of Indigenous People are getting fewer in number. Therefore, this research study is responsive to the mandates of Republic Act 8371, specifically on the preservation of Indigenous People practices, culture, and identities.

## **CONCLUSION**

It was therefore concluded that the Tribu Karulano had their own different beliefs and rituals, customs, and traditions, as well as observed traditional values. They had existed for more than twenty years in Brgy. Carol-an and were considered legal residents of the said barangay. The "Isaka" was observed for the arranging of marriages. Furthermore, there was no evidence of embalming in the preservation of the bodies of the dead. They practiced the "Balitaw," in which the courtship process lasted all night. The Tribu Karulano always instilled the importance of respect for their fellowmen and all members of their families.

After a thorough analysis of the statements of the different respondents, it was concluded that the most influential activity that influenced their dance was the "Buhat".

It was concluded that there were existing dance practices that were performed by the elders during important occasions in the community, namely, Sinugabin, Pandango, Binuy-u, Inagong, and Balitaw. "Sinugabin" and "Pandango" were classified as courtship dances performed after their ritual ceremony. The "Binuy-u" and "Inagong" were ritual dances that were performed during their ritual ceremonies in honor of their gods and to expressed their different intentions. The "Balitaw" was a recitative dance activity wherein the male

and female exchanged their feelings and interests with each other through recitative and melodic conversations while dancing.

These dance practices brought different implications to the lives of the Tribu Karulano. The Tribu Karulano built the members' confidence by believing that they were not just beings that sprung from the earth, but instead, that they were individuals with dignity and a passion for a meaning filled life. This understanding provides more opportunities for these people, as mandated by R.A. 8371. Understanding and teaching the IP dances was an important initiative and endeavor that could preserve IP cultural and historical events.

It was concluded that this study would be a great help to the Tribu Karulano to keep their dances intact for several decades. Their cultural practices would be treasured in the history of the Kabankalanons. In addition, through this documentation, the Indigenous people group, along with its rich culture, will also be acknowledged in the country. Furthermore, the implementation of the K to 12 Program, would be a basis for the teachers assigned to Barangay Carol-an in creating teaching tools for the teaching of local Filipino dances. As mandated in the K to 12 Program, the teachers should localize and contextualize their lessons to maximize students' learning opportunities.

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