# Northern Philippine Highland Dancing as Indigenous Knowledge: Enculturation, Embodiment, and Performativity

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ABSTRACT

Since the late 1950s, metropolitan Manila and other urban-based dance groups elsewhere have created "Cordillera dances" as part of a Philippine nation-making project underscored by the perspectives of some Philippine National Artists about notions of "fading" or "lost" indigenous dances. Social media video postings of Manila and other metropolitan artists performing "Cordillera dances" typically garner strong and terse responses from commentators, each of whom self-identify as a person of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in the northern Philippines. This article foregrounds the contemporaneity of performative practices in the CAR as Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and the ways that movement is manifested in dance through a process of enculturation and embodiment. Referencing comments on metropolitan videos on "Cordillera dances", this article interrogates related discursive practices of nation making such as the seminal book on Philippine dance written by National Artist, Leonor Orosa Goquinco, titled Dances of the Emerald Isles (1980). As a precursor to a longer work, this article suggests that the ways in which one moves while dancing is reflective of one's culture so that a person's birth into human bodily form is over time, shaped by and navigates within the culture and society that one is raised and cultivated in.

**Keywords:** Cordillera, dance, enculturation, embodiment, indigenous knowledge, indigenous movement systems, performativity

## Introduction

While watching videos on the social media website YouTube featuring choreographies representing peoples of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in the northern Philippines, I began to take note of an interesting phenomenon: commentators who self-identify as Cordilleran, Igorot, and/or Ifugao posted comments that were strong, terse, and overwhelmingly critical in response to uploaded videos that metropolitan Manila and other urban-based groups label as "Cordillera dances" (and other terms such as "Uyaoy" and "Bumayah"). This article inquires into a seeming divide between heritage owners of

dances originating in the CAR and professional dance groups in metropolitan Manila and elsewhere that create, perform, and promote "Cordillera dances." This article is a precursor to a more elaborate work on transmission, agency, embodiment, enculturation, performativity, and indigenous movement systems in the CAR, northern Philippines.

"Cordillera dances" is a term used by metropolitan artists and dance groups denoting what they display as standing-in-for or dancing-in-lieu of people of the CAR. "Cordillera dances" have been choreographed and performed by metropolitan[1] artists for several decades on live performance stages in the Philippines and internationally that have become prolific on social media in recent years. If not for video uploads on social media, people in various northern Philippine highland communities might not otherwise be aware of what artists in Manila and elsewhere have been creating and continuing to perform in lieu of people of the CAR. However, commentators on social media who self-identify as persons of the CAR respond to "Cordillera dances" on social media with an overwhelming sentiment that, "this is NOT what we do." Performing groups such as the Bayanihan National Folk Dance Company, the Filipinescas Dance Company,[2] and the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group are three of several examples of metropolitan dance groups whose professional dancers perform "Cordillera dances" on behalf of peoples of the northern Philippine highlands. While the Filipinescas Dance Company no longer performs live, the Filipinescas repertoire on YouTube is part of a lineage of Philippine folk dance choreographies by metropolitan artists and maintains a performative presence via the Internet seen by thousands of viewers and commented on by commentators who self-identify as originating from the CAR.

This article is a prolegomenon to a book project and explores dance embodiment vis-à-vis what and how people in and of the CAR perform highland enculturated movements that are distinct from what Manila and other metropolitan groups display and promote as "Cordillera dances" keyed to an urban culture of dance and arts making. To introduce the idea of embodiment, I begin with the idea of habitus by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In his publication titled *Logic of Practice* (1990), Bourdieu framed habitus in terms of "society written into the body" and "a state of the body" imbricated with "motor schemes and body automatisms" (Bourdieu 1990, 68–69; 104). While "society written into the body" can elicit various discussion possibilities, this article takes the approach of deploying Bourdieu's socialized body within the frame of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), a system encompassing a range of practices that have sustained native communities and that have contributed and continue to augment cultural, environmental, linguistic, political, scientific, and other knowledge. In the case of the CAR, a few examples of IK would



include the making of terraces and rice cultivation, management of forest resources and water sources, animal husbandry of pigs and chickens, and local governance models such as the *dap-ay* or *ato* in Mountain Province communities such as Sagada and Bontoc. Other practices that have led to the making and sustenance of communities over generations and that have also changed according to the needs of CAR communities would include traditional rituals, dances, and music. This paper focuses on one aspect of IK, what I call Indigenous Movement Systems of the CAR, otherwise referred to as "our dances of (*sic*) the CAR" by individuals who self-identify as persons of/from the CAR. Enculturation and embodiment are used in this article to help frame why it is that social media and other commentators express aversions to the ways metropolitan dance groups perform "Cordillera dances." What this article suggests is that the ways in which one moves while dancing is reflective of one's culture so that a person's birth into human bodily form is over time shaped by and navigates within the culture and society that one is raised and cultivated in.

## Ethnochoreology and Indigenous Knowledge

In the field of ethnochoreology, "ethno" as a prefix relates to the study of different peoples and cultures while "choreology" refers to the logic of organized conventional movements recognized by societies as dance. Hence, ethnochoreology is *the study of dance and movement in culture(s)* and is a field that is highly interdisciplinary. To say "in culture" situates a particular group of people within agreed upon, prescribed, and proscribed ways of living and behaving including how one moves while dancing with music, that a group of people claims as "ours" and inherited from "our local ancestors." Dance and movement in culture are thus premised upon the ways people use their bodies via a process of enculturation, making for specific ways dance is conceived and performed.

Typically performed with *gangsa* (flat gongs) and other musical instruments in the CAR, highland dancing is conceived within a holistic social-spiritual framework and performed within the scope of other practices such as propitiations to ancestors, chants, and animal sacrifices comprising sacred rituals, social status enhancing feasts, and wedding celebrations.[3] In contrast, metropolitan Manila "Cordillera dances" are conceived within a dance and theatre arts-making context as part of the construction of Philippine nation, and performed for domestic consumption and international audiences of dance aficionados as in the case of the well-known Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, a resident troupe at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) in the country's capital of Manila. Each of these two different tracks of conceiving and performing dance comes out of the cultural

milieu in the CAR or within metropolitan Manila culture, and produces distinct, observable ways of moving in dance.

Here, I reiterate the concept of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) as a knowledge system constituted by parts of a complex whole, comprised of ways of knowing and knowledge-making, living, and behaving. This includes how the body is used, as manifested in how people dance. The ways a group of people dance with each other is a manifestation of *dance in culture* and must be considered from the perspectives of the primary sources and holders of the knowledge and practice of movement, in this case, the indigenous peoples in and of the Cordillera Administrative Region. Additionally, how a group of people dance is more than just steps organized to music as choreography. Dance embodiment and the ways that Cordillera peoples dance, whether for a sacred ritual, as part of festival entertainment, competition, or at a local wedding, may be explored as belonging to Indigenous Movement Systems in the region.

Dance scholar and anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler (2007) contributed significantly to what is known in ethnochoreology as "structured movement system," a term of reference for analyzing a dance as a hierarchy of smallest to largest units of movement. Kaeppler conceived of terminologies for units of movement inspired by the linguistic model of morphology that analyzes the structure of words from their smallest units such as phonemes and morphemes, to larger sentence structure and grammar. Using this model, Kaeppler calls the first two levels of dance structural analysis kinemic and morphokinemic (also referred to as kinemes and morphokinemes) forming larger combinations of movements called motifs and choremes. Together, they constitute a complete structure called "a dance," that is reflective of a people's identity and agency. Kaeppler's method of analyzing a dance as structure came out of her decades of research among people in the Pacific nation of Tonga and their social and other events within which dance choreography, musical instrumentation, and poetry comprise an art form, as in the case of a Tongan performative called *Lakalaka*. According to Kaeppler, Tongan people demonstrated movements as meaningful for them in ways as "culturally recognized units and descriptions from the point of view of participants themselves" (ibid., 94). Kaeppler's analytical approach to dance(s) as being comprised of smaller to larger units of movement is one method that dance scholars can choose to apply in writing about dance in culture.

In this article, however, I do not segment dancing into a hierarchy of movement units in choreography. I instead take another approach situated within the emergent field of IK by embarking on what I call Indigenous Movement Systems to explore dance performativity in the CAR. While it may be possible to attempt to create a taxonomy



of movement units and structure making for what people of the CAR perform for social and sacred occasions, Indigenous Movement Systems proffer an alternative potential for considering knowledge and knowledge transmission by and through the dancing body. Put in another way, the ways that the Cordillera peoples manifest movements in their dances is a process of highland enculturation versus, for example, the ways that metropolitan dancers perform "Cordillera dances" as urban dance and as part of the building of an art culture under the rubric of Philippine nation making. I also suggest that this dichotomy is not fictive but is detectable in the ways commentators who each self-identify as a person of the Cordillera region (and as collective advocates of indigenous movements systems of the CAR) respond to the kind of "Cordillera dances" that metropolitan Manila and other urban artists promote. Further below, a few examples of qualitative movement distinctions are offered from an ethnochoreology perspective to augment views expressed by Cordilleran commentators articulating differences between what is displayed in videos of metropolitan "Cordillera dances" versus what is performed in the CAR. Also included later in this article are the perspectives of audience members from the oral presentation of this paper on 14 July 2017 during the 2nd International Conference on Cordillera Studies (ICCS2) in Baguio City. The comments of ICCS2 audience members seem to signify that they too are holders of highland indigenous dance knowledge and similarly support the postings by social media commentators.

## Social Media Postings of "Cordillera Dances"

Social media is used at the discretion of researchers within an ongoing, dynamic process of crafting frameworks for ethical use and with the recognition that social media sites such as YouTube are open to the public for various purposes (Casilli and Tubaro 2017; Moreno, et al. 2013; Townsend and Wallace 2016). Since 2015, I have followed YouTube postings of commentators who self-identify as Igorot, Ifugao or i-Kalinga, for example, and have made screen shots of postings to keep an archive of reactions to Cordillera dances. As such, YouTube has become a forum for self-identified Cordillerans to voice concerns and observations on uploaded videos that purport to represent Cordillera people and their dances. Distinctions in embodiment are perceived by these social media commentators whose comments I suggest reflect their own perspectives of metropolitan videos, as may be seen in the examples below.

The first sampling of YouTube postings is taken from a comment thread on a video titled "Filipinescas Igorot Main Dance (Maysa)" (8 September 2008), a choreography created by Philippine National Artist

in Dance, Leonor Orosa Goquinco.[4] As mentioned earlier, the Filipinescas Dance Company no longer performs live. However, its repertoire on YouTube is part of a lineage of Philippine folk choreographies created by metropolitan Manila artists whose "Cordillera dances" continue a life beyond real-time existence. The video titled "Filipinescas Igorot Main Dance (Maysa)" has been viewed over 112,446 times as of 5 April 2019 eliciting strong reactions and commented on by many viewers. The YouTube names of commentators are included along with the time stamp (year) of each person's posting. YouTube comments throughout this paper are reproduced without altering spelling, grammar, and use of punctuations and other characters.

> I am an Igorot and I am saddened by the way dance troupes modify our dances. (Arrieta 2015)
>
> I am an Igorot. This is not how we dance. Never title any video of yours if you are not sure. Thank you. This is much insulting! (alexander dulnuan 2015)
>
> Please understand that to some of us Igorots our ethnic dance is somewhat sacred. Though this dance is good it doesn't mean that it's an Igorot dance. I feel somewhat insulted while watching this video. Our ethnic dances are part of our culture and should be equally respected and that one (especially if your not igorot) should not take it lightly. (Sharizi Marie 2014)
>
> How dare you insult our culture. Don't make up your dance moves and label it as an Igorot dance. (Domingo 2013)
>
> To everyone who's enraged at this choreography not being authentic, I can assure you that it wasn't meant to be 100% authentic. This is the creative work of Leonor Orosa Goquingco, the National Artist for Dance, here in the Philippines. Her body of work is a stylized version of the Filipino traditional dances, traditions and folklore. Her background as a ballet dancer and choreographer is the main reason why most of the dances here are not the authentic dance steps you've been accustomed to. (leakingdreams 2013)

People are reacting to this because they say it is a bastardization of culture. Here are some reasons why:

> Most of the movements used are not Igorot in origin.
>
> The fabric of the attire is not from the Cordillera either.
>
> The music was produced using gongs but the rhythm and melody was changed so much it couldn't be recognized as Cordilleran anymore.



> I am an artist as well. But creative freedom also has its limits. Just because something is entertaining, it doesn't mean it's right. (andreiinso13 2013)
>
> This makes a mockery in our Igorot culture, though maybe some crave for changes and wants to add modern concepts, it is just not right to destroy what our forefathers bestowed upon us. (LasFederacion 2012)
>
> I'm afraid to say that's not an Igorot dance, please respect the originality of our Igorot dance, I don't even understand what was that all about? (Bordo 2012)
>
> For your effort and creativeness, I would like to applaud you. But on my perspective as an Igorot, I don't think that this is acceptable to called an Igorot Dance. As I notice, your group are interpreting the dance of the tribes of Kalinga and Ifugao, but by how you played the gongs and how you danced. You made them look like silly. (Liangan 2011)
>
> Well-performed good dance. However, I don't think it could be categorized as Igorot dance. No one can say they danced the tango when they incorporated ballet moves in it, right? Maybe it is more appropriate to call this as Igorot inspired or mixed Igorot-ballet or modern/neo Igorot dance. (Highlander 2010)

While the foregoing YouTube comments illustrate a strong sense of ownership and highland identities, references to movement begin to reveal IK with regard to appropriate highland ways of performing dances labeled as "Igorot" or "Cordillera." From the perspective of commentators, certain passages suggest ideas of embodiment and enculturation of movement: "This is not how we dance" (Dulnuan 2015); "Don't make up your dance moves and label it as an Igorot dance (Domingo 2013); "Most of the movements used are not Igorot in origin" (andreiinso13 2013); "your group are interpreting the dance of the tribes of Kalinga and Ifugao, but by how you played the gongs and how you danced. You made them look like silly" (Liangan 2011). For the commentators responding to the uploaded video, it is the ways in which the body physically moves that reveal differences between how "they" in metropolitan Manila move that is in contradistinction to the ways "we" dance in the northern Philippine highlands.

Commentators are "talking back" to the national center of dance and performing arts by asserting ownership of Cordillera heritage and are also invoking IK by indicating acceptable and unacceptable ways of performing dances that are labeled or marketed as "Cordillera," "Igorot," and "Ifugao." In other words,

commentators assert that what metropolitan Manila dance groups promote as "Cordillera" contradicts what is desirable and culturally appropriate. I argue that they are making such judgment of what is desirable Cordillera dancing within the purview of IK manifested through enculturated movement.

In additional excerpts below, responses from commentators to a YouTube video of the Bayanihan Philippine National Folkdance Company in a dance tutorial titled "Bumayah uyauy" (3 August 2008), and another video titled "Bumayah Ifugao suite" (22 September 2009) performed by the Filipinescas Group are more explicit, revealing a gulf between metropolitan makers and performers of "Cordillera dances" and commentators who claim highland descent and experience with flat gongs and dancing. The following example excerpts are from commentators responding to the Bayanihan video posted by a person with the screen name of Kay Orillano[5] along with the time stamp (year) of each person's comment.

> WHAT THE ******, you call this a bumayah-uyauy dance. I'm a native of IFUGAO and found the music and dance is badly BASTARDIZE by this performers. Please, research first the original dance before posting because it will mislead the non-Ifugao viewers. (roger namonne 2011)

> hahahhaha.... wew! Dont imitate the dance of Ifugao's. They don't dance like that. They have the best dance in the Cordilleras including the Kalingas. I myself as a performer and an Igorot myself dont know if the dance is correct. Even the way you play the gangsa... tsk! tsk! tsk! (Mark Liangan 2009)

The following are postings made by commentators in response to the Filipinescas video including the time stamp (year) of each person's comment.[6]

> NGEK!!!! This is not an ifugao dance!! (Jarold Martinez October 2016)

> its not ifugao[7] dance! (Ber 2014)

> this is sickening. i work for the ifugaos the last 25 years, danced with them.. and this one is NOT AN IFUGAO DANCE!!!!!!! garbage and insulting to the Ifugaos!!! (mamomoondok 2014)

> WTF!!!! I am from mabudubud mompolia hingyon ifugao and never in my entire fuckin' life have i seen this kind of fuckin' chicken dance. such a fuckin sick kind of dance that doesnt fuckin belong to us. delete or rename this fuckin video!!! peace men!!! (Morales 2013)



> is this the ifugao dance? is this the fuckin modern dance of ifugaos like me? this is a disrespect for us and our unique culture. respect the culture and traditional dance of ifugaos men PEACE (Mark aki 2013)

> Goodness! This is NOT an Ifugao dance. It is offensive! (Imie Belanger 2012)

> im sorry...i've just uploaded this video. (rhiyohmel 2010)

> to whoever dancing this, never ever destroy the natural dance of Ifugao! we as Ifugao never give any permission to re invent our dance into something like this! (Leny Gano September 2016).

Although a few commentators give positive responses, the overwhelming sentiment is by people who self-identify as Ifugao or Igorot and who also make aesthetic judgments in strong terms against metropolitan Manila-created "Ifugao" dances. In terms of indigenous embodiment of movement, I return to the last comment above that says, "never destroy the natural dance of Ifugao." The use of "natural dance" again suggests what is desirable or how in the commenter's view, a dance labeled as Ifugao, ought to be performed. Here I suggest possible meanings underlying the term "natural dance." It could refer to a performance that does not take on a proscenium or in a recording studio with related accoutrements such as recorded music and artificial, theatrical lighting. However, I also suggest that "natural dance" refers to culturally competent and appropriate ways of using the body while dancing, from an Ifugao point of view, a point that I discuss further below after providing a brief overview of metropolitan "Cordillera dances" that were invented as part of Philippine nation-making.

## "Cordillera Dances"

Prior to the spread of Internet use, the Philippine national dance arts category of "Cordillera dances" were categorized within what was termed "Tribal Suite" and had already become part of the repertoire of groups in metropolitan Manila. "Cordillera dances" and other categorizations such as "Muslim dances" were and continue to be situated within the national arts and culture paradigm in response to historical-societal conditions brought about by colonialism; it is a repertoire that has extended into the diaspora (Gonzalves 2010). As noted in Quintero (2012), an urge by metropolitan artists to create choreographies that represent marginalized groups in the Philippines was and is driven by strong sentiments and impulses to recover what is claimed to have been lost or taken away over the course of 350

years under Spanish rule and Roman Catholic tutelage. At the same time, it underscores a corresponding assertion that the forebears of present-day people in Mindanao, Sulu Archipelago, and the northern highlands had successfully resisted full colonization and therefore retained dance and music practices from an undeterminable historic time (Quintero 2011; 2012; 2013).

Gonzalves (2010) provides a cohesive background on the social, historical, and political changes that led to the creation of national folk dances in order to fulfill a performative Filipino identity. In particular, the national arts and culture paradigm was created through the efforts of arts and culture advocates including national artists[8] such as Philippine folkdance pioneer and National Artist Francisca Reyes-Aquino, who ventured into various communities to document and "collect" dances in central and northern Luzon in the 1920s that then became part of the physical education curricula in the Philippine public school system. Additionally, other scholars such as Castro (2011) and Peterson (2016) in sections of their book publications along with Alcedo (2018) argue that nation-building impulses, folklorization, and professionalization of Philippine indigenous peoples' dance and music practices led to the creation of folkdance repertoire and the international reputation and success of metropolitan companies such as the Bayanihan National Folk Dance Company.

This article however takes a different approach whereby the perspectives of indigenous peoples of the Cordillera are foregrounded as part of a system of Indigenous Knowledge that point toward enculturation of movement, demonstrated through an ethnochoreological analysis of qualitative movement differences between metropolitan dancers and Cordilleran performers, that suggest a performative cultural gap between metropolitan representations and the embodiment of movement by peoples of the Cordillera region.

Prior to the cited works mentioned above, Leonor Orosa Goquinco, another Philippine National Artist in Dance who trained and performed primarily as a ballerina, produced a book called *Dances of the Emerald Isles* (1980). *Dances of the Emerald Isles* was heralded and continues to be upheld by Philippine dance aficionados as an authoritative source for its descriptions of dances and peoples throughout the archipelago. Under the section labeled "*Dances of Primitive Filipinos*" Goguingco explains that,

> Dance steps among primitive Philippine peoples include a variety of hopping, stamping, mincing, cutting, and pivoting steps, shuffling, brushsteps, and creeping (toes). A slight complexity of foot and arm movement appears only among relatively more-developed cultural levels… One begins the discussion of the dances found among non-Christian Filipinos with those belonging to its sub-head, "Dances of 'Pagan' Filipinos", and specifically, of the Mountain Provinces' ethnic groups inhabiting the Cordillera Mountains of Northern Luzon. Not only are these dances among the more ancient, they also are of remarkable vigor. (Goquinco 1980, 61)



While a newer generation of Philippine dance scholars such as Patrick Alcedo (2018) have moved the folk dance conversation in the academe away from explicit references to the term "primitive," in practice, contemporary companies such as the Lahing Batangas Company (whose artistic director comes from the Bayanihan National Folk Dance Company and whose repertoire is derivative of Bayanihan), continue to broadcast the "Cordillera primitive" through its performative choices. For example, I attended the 2012 International Folkdance Festival in Sabah, Malaysia and took note of Lahing Batangas' representation of Cordillera peoples as "dancing primitives" (Quintero 2013) echoing Goquinco's publication as an enduring reference source projecting "the primitive" displayed by a lineage of metropolitan folk dance makers such as Lahing Batangas.

Goquinco was a dancer from a family background of privilege who was primarily trained in ballet – an urban metropolitan artist gazing at what non-Christians ("pagans") in the rural highlands perform as "dances of Others." In *Dances of the Emerald Isles* (1980), Goquinco employs a sub-grouping called "Dances of traditionalist or 'pagan groups'" under the major grouping called "Dances of Non-Christian Filipinos" as listed in the following (Goquinco 1980, 29):

1. Dances of Non-Christian Filipinos
    a. Dances of traditionalist or "pagan" groups;
    b. Dances of Muslim groups;
2. Dances of Christian and Lowland Filipinos, or Western-influenced Dances

Goquinco immediately goes on to say, "The ethnic and regional dances of the Philippines are of profound significance, for they furnish the student of history, sociology, psychology, religion, and so forth with a rare and living documentary marking various and **recognizable strata of cultural development**" (Goquinco 1980, 29; emphasis mine). Here, a dichotomy is established, connoting a hierarchy of Category 1 "pagan" (highland Cordillera) as earlier (or lower) developed, and Category 2 "Western-influenced" as later (or higher) developed. This is an example of an urban artist's gaze upon non-metropolitan, highland, and other indigenous communities. The gaze[9] and its reversal goes beyond mere visual "looking at" but rather, positions Category 1 members as occupants of a strata of development with inferred trappings of "early Filipino" or "non-Christian Filipino"

inferiority. Gazing is an objectifying process, done by Category 2 members of the national, elite center of arts and culture who deploy the discursive power of the nation-state to describe, speak for, and dance on behalf of Category 1 members.

Metropolitan choreographers' portrayals of Philippine social and cultural development have also been noted in Gonzalves (2010), Quintero (2012a), and Magannon (2013): as part of pan-Philippine dance and music shows. These shows typically begin with dances of the "primitivized" Aeta people, followed by pagan groups of the northern Philippine CAR, then dances of Islamized peoples of the southern Philippines, followed by Spanish-influenced dances, often concluding with dances of lowland, Christianized groups. Thus, the repertories of metropolitan dance groups perpetuate a trajectory of dancing from "early Filipinos" to "civilized Filipinos." These kinds of pan-Philippine dance performances are examples of metropolitan performing arts practices reflecting nationalist textual discourses, whether or not metropolitan Manila and other urban artists are aware of possible Social Darwinist meanings within Philippine nation-building through the performing arts.

In the Preface of Goquinco's *Dances of the Emerald Isles* (1980), Philippine National Artist in Literature Nick Joaquin, who had advocated for what he called the "propaganda movement" for nation-building writes that:

> Curiously enough, it's the Christian Filipino… who has taken it on himself to preserve for the nation every bit of pagan and Muslim lore, ranging far and wide to search out and rescue and record even the most minor mimings of the minorities that he's supposed to scorn. Maybe he's doing it as a penance, but he's certainly alone in the doing. We still have to hear of some pagan dance troupe integrating into its tribal repertoire the Cariñosa of the lowlanders… In this job of cultural integration, the pagan and the Muslim still have to produce a Kikay Aquino and a Bayanihan, not to mention a Leonor Orosa and her *Filipinescas*. (Goquinco 1980, 9)

Joaquin's quote in a sense elevates individual national dance artists and metropolitan dance groups and their modernistic contributions to the nation-building project he termed as "cultural integration," foregrounding metropolitan artists as creatively superior and successful nationalists compared to "pagan" and Muslim peoples in the Philippines. However, contemporaneous to choreographic works by metropolitan national artists, peoples of the Cordillera region before and after the 1980 publication of *Dances of the Emerald Islands*, continue to dance, play music on flat gongs and other instruments, and make other kinds of performances that are synchronous with their contemporary lives—in wedding celebrations, in organized festivals throughout the



CAR such as the Lang-ay Festival in the Mountain Province, the Ullalim Festival in Kalinga, the Imbayah Festival in Ifugao, and as part of sacred rituals such as *begnas* in Sagada, Mountain Province for example.

Curiously however, the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company that gained an international reputation starting in the 1950s and that set the example for other Philippine dance companies to follow over 60 years since then, continues to broadcast arts and culture tropes on its website such as the following:

> BAYANIHAN is: The Treasure Chest of Filipino Dances and Culture: "the depository of almost all Filipino dances, dress and songs", and continues with, "Sad to say, but today, the descendants of those *katutubo* ethnic dancers of fifty years ago, have literally lost their indigenous roots along with their vernacular languages, dances and songs. Their assimilation into the "new Americanized culture" through education in compulsory English, or the pervasive media, has made them forget their memory of themselves."[10]

The aforementioned quote, delivered by the most renowned metropolitan Philippine performance group that has received accolades over the years in part by representing people of the CAR through choreographies of "Cordillera dances," offers a rather overt example of negating the agency of indigenous peoples in sustaining their own heritage practices and languages.

Another National Artist in Dance, Ramon Obusan, who gained acclaim for creating what he described as ethnographic influenced choreographies, offered a similar perspective:

> Our generation bears witness to the many traditions that are now fast fading into obscurity… the winds of change are ravishing the remaining cultural experiences and relics of a past that were once so dearly kept and cherished by our ancestors and forebears. (Obusan 2005, Preface)

Each of these examples (Goquinco, Joaquin, the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, and Ramon Obusan) provides a window into discursive practices that have shaped national arts and culture whereby metropolitan artists choreograph and perform "Cordillera dances" representing northern Luzon highland cultures and peoples while making claims to saviorship of supposed fading or lost languages, dances, and songs of the *katutubo* and obscuring the contemporaneous presence of northern highland local language speakers, bearers and practitioners of their dances, music, and rituals. I define discursive practices as the repetition of discourses (a myriad of written, spoken, and visual communications) that often serve to transmit and reinforce perceptions, beliefs and behaviors. Dancing

| | Ifugao Intangible Heritage and Performing Arts Society | Metropolitan "Cordillera dances" |
|---|---|---|
| Body effort | Bound | Free |
| Movements of legs | Sustained | Sudden |
| Torso position | Forward | Backward |

Table 1. Contrastive Qualities in Dances by Ifugao Dancers versus Metropolitan Dancers

While this chart is not exhaustive, it provides the reader a sense of qualitatively defined distinctions in movement embodiment. It augments what IK holders and stakeholder performers of Cordillera indigenous movement systems express in their social media postings as "ugly," "offensive," and "insulting" displays by professional metropolitan groups who perform dances which they promote as "Cordillera," "Ifugao," "Uyaoy," and "Bumayah."

## Performativity and Indigenous Knowledge

There is a saying that goes: "When a body moves, it's the most revealing thing. Dance for me a minute, and I'll tell you who you are." In other words, the way people move and dance can reveal one's subject position in society as a matter of embodiment, reflective of who we are. It makes ways of dancing and moving a performative phenomenon of embodied enculturation, considered here as IK, and as signified in the postings of social commentators who self-identify as persons of the Cordillera. Here, the term "performative" and its close sibling term "performativity" carry first level and second level meanings.

First, "performative" is applied to events often understood as *performances* such as displays of dance, music making, drama and theatre. Intrinsic to the making of a performative event are its context and the audience. Second and in the spirit of J.L. Austin's (1961) work, performativity proffers a "doing that constitutes a being," in other words a "deliverable." In this case, performers of dances purported to be representative of Cordilleran cultures and peoples are expected by social media commentators and others who self-identify as persons of the CAR to deliver ways of using the body that are affinal to Cordillera embodiment of movement; that is, they are expected to perform a "natural dance," not extraneous to "how we dance," and not exaggerated or "un-natural." What is danced by metropolitan



Manila performers does not deliver an embodiment of highland ways of moving seen in Cordillera dances; instead, what is generated is a kinesthetic aversion in persons of the CAR to the ways metropolitan Manila performers embody movement in dances that they purport to be "Cordilleran."

Responses to "Cordillera dances" by audience members who attended my oral presentation at the ICCS2 Conference on 14 July 2017 suggest further examples of kinesthetic aversion verbalized in the following ways:

> Never destroy the natural dances of the Ifugao people. Yes I am Alan, I'm a proud FBI, fully blooded Ifugao (audience laughter), and sir what was presented just flashed the first part of the dance, that was bastardized or (inaudible)ized. I was about to shout "stop it"! (audience laughter). Yes I have to take a deep breath just to relax myself. Anyway, it's nice there are people like you who studies the bastardization or the (inaudible) of our culture, and explaining to participants of conferences like this, for (inaudible) of information for those who would like to be informed. And my question now: Would it be proper to criminalize (audience laughter) the (inaudible) bastardization of our culture? (inaudible) is now criminalized. If you see what historical information do or suggest, it's being criminalized, sir. (Alan, ICCS2 audience member, 2017)

> Dance, as we perform it in our community, is never really separated from our spiritual and cultural milieu, it is not disconnected to the spiritual belongingness of where we are. If artists, for example, of the urban area sees it purely as an art, it has reason to, yung meaning is removed from it. The sense of reciprocity, yung reciprocity lang dancer, with his environment for his inventiveness to relations of reciprocity is dissolved. Once you perform outside the context of the community and perform as it were the same pattern of footwork, you put your back out too much and you move your bodies too much, that's in (inaudible) with the dance as you see it in the stagenized dancing, compared to when elders in the community continuously dance (Giovanni Reyes, ICCS2 audience member, UP Diliman, Urban and Development Planning, self-identified iSagada, 2017).

> Appropriation is alright as long as it comes out naturally. I'm just worried about what's happening now especially in schools where we bring out all of these dance troupes and instead of maybe getting an expert in the community to teach the dance, they get people trained in modern dancing and (inaudible). We get people that ah you know dance movements that are exaggerated or Filipinescas type of dancing. And when they are invited to the community, and to (inaudible), there is really a big difference and people cannot relate to them. So can we ask the educator to at least finally craft a

> policy regarding this because we can be always talking about it here and next conference year? We will be talking about the same topic. So can we come up with an action already. Thank you. (Female respondent, ICCS2 audience member not identified, 2017).

> Look at this in terms of the community and the dancer...flailing of arms, jumping up and down. It offends the community. Where is the limit? (Albert Bacdayan, ICCS2 audience member, i-Sagada, anthropologist, retired professor, 2017)

Again, these excerpts come from commentators in the audience at the ICCS2 oral presentation of my research, who each express an overall sentiment of aversion to social media postings of "Cordillera dances" by metropolitan dance groups. While these commentators share identity as persons of the Cordillera, their backgrounds range, for example, from teacher to professional advocate for Indigenous Peoples to scholar anthropologist, each in a sense claiming to be a holder of IK with corresponding claims to experience with and co-ownership of indigenous movement systems of the CAR. As such, what I suggest is that embodied knowledge in and of indigenous movement systems is vested in non-professionalized practitioners and holders of IK who create a forum for the "ethno" speaking back. Here, I use "ethno" to connote *people in culture* who are "accustomed to living together"[13] and who bring themselves into practices that are part of their cultural milieu, to which they attune their lives and by which meaning-making is framed as "among us" and "for us" (Quintero 2016, 123).

## The "Ethno" Speaking Back

Three decades ago, veteran scholar of Philippine performing arts Ricardo Trimillos noted that researchers and others were already beginning to problematize the works of the iconic Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company as ethnographically flawed (Trimillos 1988, 110–13). While scholars and researchers three decades ago may have already started to take note of and problematize "Cordillera dances" as ethnographically flawed, the ethno themselves are taking note and "speaking back" through the popularized space of the Internet in ways that refer to ownership, identity, and embodiment of culture. In a sense, what the National Artists and others who follow the Bayanihan model have brought upon themselves is an emergent gazing back at the national arts center by highland peoples through the Internet and its multi-channels of social media.

As discussed above, online responses to "Cordillera dances" assert dancing with the striking of flat gongs as performatively meaningful through the ethno body contraposed to the urban discourse of "Cordillera dances" performed by professionalized



dance bodies who appropriate signifiers of highland pre-Hispanic heritage. This appropriation of signifiers omits embodied performativity of the ethno. What commentators are bringing to light in the discourse is that what is meaningful for them has been cast aside by privileging an elite-engineered propaganda movement of Philippine nation-building. As mentioned above, this propaganda movement attempts to perpetually historicize the ethno as a relic or artifact of pre-Hispanic heritage in the making of "Cordillera dances" in order to satisfy an unquenchable appetite for nation-making. Ironically, these nationalistic proponents are perceived by highland commentators to have rarely meaningfully engaged with the ethno as contemporary bearers and primary transmitters of performative practices of the CAR.

Metropolitan Manila troupes such the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, Filipinescas Dance Company, the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, and other groups have been exceedingly prolific over the past 60 years, starting in the 1950s when Bayanihan was elevated onto the international dance scene.

Over time, groups outside of the Philippines have followed the ways that metropolitan Manila dance artists present "Cordillera dances" that have been commented on by social media viewers. In a video posting on YouTube titled "Uyaoy by Kayamanan ng Lahi" (Kababayan Weekly, 20 March 2015),[14] a performance group in Los Angeles, California called *Kayamanan ng Lahi* performs what is titled as "Uyaoy." The following are selected comments by commentators quoted verbatim on this YouTube posting:

> I am shock, where on earth this steps of dance came from....? Hindi ganito ang sayaw ng mga ifugao for goodness sake. if you want to get it real, come to the real Ifugao people and let them give you the whole thing correctly. (Christina Manuel 2017)

> They take our native dance culture and bastardize it before presenting it to the world that it was our native ifugao dance..... fuckin' disrespecful and annoying. (Toby Namonne 2017)

> yuck, please remove the title "ifugao dance" and change your attires and call your dance something else totally different. thank you for your understanding. (The Dreamer 2017)

> miss g toengi, you should first make sure if that's a real uyaoy dance of Ifugao, that's not an uyaoy dance! that's a shame! media don't destroy the original dance of Ifugao! (Leny Gano 2017)

> the heck- that is not an uya Uy dance- merely an uya Uy inspired dance step. So annoying - can't even watch the whole dance. (Cherry Baguilat 2017)

> We don't need these people to present our culture to the world.. Binaboy lang nila kultura namin!!!!!!!!!!!! (kring kring 2017)
>
> What the hell!!!! That's not an uyauy dance... (kring kring 2017)

In another example taken from the social media website Facebook, a group in Hawaii's capital Honolulu, the Linglingay Dance Troupe, performed what they also call "Uyaoy" in September 2016. Comments to this video include:

> Definitely not the Uyauy of the Ifugaos… The dance in the video seems to be an Ifugao inspired creative dance. The music seems to resemble the Kiangan Tobab or wedding dance music… I appreciate the dancers' and producers' effort. I know they did some research and i have a feeling that they patterned the dance steps and choreography from the performance of the philippine national dance troop which is available on YouTube. I was able to watch a similar performace at UHM years ago and they called it the "Ifugao Bumayah Dance"… From the perspective of an Ifugao, while the dance is creative, it looks funny :) the one I watched at UH (University of Hawaii) was quite offensive for me as they included imitations of movements of monkeys which we don't do in our traditional ifugao dances… I wasn't able to connect (to the performance) as an Ifugao who was born and raised in ifugao province. We still have living resource persons who could teach us about the dances and music... They are part of our being...they are part of us. (Jov Francis Ananayo, September 2016).[15]

These two examples of social media responses to uploaded videos of dance groups in California and Hawaii are provided in order to demonstrate the influence of the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company and other metropolitan Manila artists upon Americans of Filipino ancestry in the perpetuation of "Cordillera dances" while at the same time highlighting the reversal of the gaze by Cordillera commentators upon overseas choreographers and dancers. In a sense, the Bayanihan and other metropolitan Manila groups are models for the proliferation of "Cordillera dances" via social media and across national borders where choreographers in America and elsewhere mimic a metropolitan model of invention in the service of nation-building and Filipino identity.

An excerpt from a comment on YouTube responding to the 8 September 2008 video posting titled "Filipinescas Igorot Main Dance (Maysa)" reads: "Come at Cordillera to learn" (Ivadoi akmangu, 2014).[16] I suggest that this comment can be interpreted to invite, tease, or dare Manila and other metropolitan artists to live extended time within a Cordillera community to discern perhaps even learn local movement embodiment in place of inventions of "Cordillera dances."



## Conclusion

Manila dance makers and other metropolitan dance artists fill their choreographies with performers who fall within parameters of Filipino identification, as bodies cast to be representative of Philippine nation and also of northern highland people and culture(s). However, commentators who self-identify as from the CAR in response to metropolitan representations, attempt to assert the ways people in the region dance – as autonomously embodied and distinct from what is performed by metropolitan artists. Social media displays of "Cordillera dances" generate a kinesthetic aversion expressed via pointed comments by self-identified Cordillerans directed at metropolitan significations of Cordillera-ness but that is not Cordillera dancing. Rather than continuing to marginalize the Cordillera peoples via metropolitan inventions of "Cordillera dances" and constant repetition of a national arts discourse of allegedly "primitive," "lost," "faded," or "forgotten" dances propagated by institutions such as the Bayanihan Philippine National Folkdance Company and by Philippine national artists, this paper advances Cordillera dancing as contemporaneous with the lives of present-day peoples in the Cordillera and that is imbued with enculturated nuances and qualities. As alluded to above by Indigenous Peoples advocate and Igorot, Giovanni Reyes, in response to the oral presentation of my paper at the ICCS2, Cordillera dancing signifies social-communal reciprocity, emanating in the natural environs of the highlands in contradistinction to urban art-making marketed as "Cordillera dances" by metropolitan artists. Cordillera dancing is its own kind of artistry rooted in and mindful of a past that is also subject to changes and innovations by the Cordillera peoples who are living practitioners embodying and sustaining enculturated movements, in the context of indigenous movement systems considered here as indigenous knowledge. As one YouTube commentator intimated in the post "Come at Cordillera to learn," metropolitan artists are invited to re-think their appropriations of Cordillera culture and their representations of the Cordillera peoples. Metropolitan artists could instead seek and cultivate long-term relationships with the peoples of the region, to learn from them and participate with them *in situ*. Furthermore, metropolitan artists along with arts institutions could robustly foreground Cordillera practitioners as living indigenous knowledge holders who continue to sustain their indigenous movement systems and who might be open to new opportunities to represent themselves and the Philippines on national and international stages.

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## NOTES

1. Relating to or denoting a metropolis, often inclusive of its surrounding areas: *the Boston metropolitan area*; Relating to or denoting the parent state of a colony or dependency: *metropolitan Spain* (Oxford Dictionaries).
2. *Filipinescas* is the name of the Manila-based dance group founded in 1958 by National Artist in Dance, Leonor Orosa Goquinco, a group that created and performed dances labeled as "Cordillera" and "Ifugao." While no longer performing on live stages, videos of the group on YouTube maintain a performative presence for viewers and commentators.
3. For example, in Sagada, Mt. Province, *begnas* is a weeklong series of non-Christian rites culminating with participation by all Sagada people who wish to attend and who have the opportunity to dance and to strike *gangsa* and other instruments.
4. "Filipinescas Igorot Main Dance (Maysa)." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qn-ItDqNVRo. Accessed 11 Sept 2015, from user leakingdreams.
5. "Bumayah uyauy." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSKB8hSK2Sc. Accessed 29 June 2017, from user rhiyohmhel.
6. "Bumayah - Ifugao suite". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkN_S0fbVFQ&list=PL0MgqHB-KbMGjkbtPdGei7ecegCFrum3C. Accessed 1 July 2017 and 11 Sept 2015.
7. *Ifugao* is a province in the Cordillera Administrative Region, and is also used to self-identify one's self and by others to identify a person as *Ifugao*.
8. The title of "National Artist" is conferred to individuals, by the Philippine government, in recognition of people who are deemed to have contributed significantly to the nation-building project through the arts.
9. This article's use of "the gaze," extrapolates from ideas about "the male gaze" put forward by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey. Mulvey published an essay in 1975 titled, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," as a discussion about asymmetries of power tied to patriarchy and inferiority-making underlying the subjectivity of directors and other filmmakers, typically male in Hollywood, and the objectification of women in film.
10. "BAYANIHAN: The Treasure Chest of Filipino Dances and Culture." http://www.bayanihannationaldanceco.ph/news/bayanihantreasure.html. Accessed 4 July 2017.
11. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/enculturation, n.d.
12. Indigenous Dance Competition during the 25th Anniversary of the Tam-an Multi-purpose Cooperative held at the Banaue Resort, Bayombong, N. Vizcaya. The IIHPAS formerly Ifugao Performing Arts Group (IPAG) is a community organization formed for the purpose of conserving and continuing the performing arts heritage of the Ifugao. https://www.facebook.com/visitkiangan/videos/1277973302216799/?hc_ref=ART_41frbveWkC-i9pzr7qNMQzhHcwHA-doD9ggpByGchFoSx0mFMHFjPy6eEICfTRM. Accessed 5 July 2017.
13. http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=ethno-. Accessed 18 September 2015.
14. "Uyaoy Ifugao Dance by Kayamanan ng Lahi". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3kGfTVJV6o. Accessed 29 June 2017.
15. "UYAOY. A communal blessing. And more. By the Linglingay Dance Troupe. At Ramrambak 4, FilCom Center." 25 September 2016. www.facebook.com. Accessed 27 September 2016.
16. "Filipinescas Igorot Main Dance (Maysa)." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qn-ItDqNVRo. Accessed 11 Sept 2015.



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