

TUBONG/PUTONG IN MARINDUQUE AS A RITUAL-DANCE OF HEALING, THANKSGIVING, AND VENERATION

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As a preliminary project using the disciplines of anthropology, ritual, and dance, this paper investigates the coronation ritual *tubong/putong* practiced in Marinduque, Philippines. I build my methodological inquiry through the existing Philippine dance research methods borrowed from ethnochoreology and anthropology. In exploring *tubong* as a ritual-dance of healing, thanksgiving, and veneration, I employ Kaeppler's kinemic analysis and Ness' "choreographic experience". In this paper, I argue for movement knowledge competence because rituals, movement practices, dance traditions, or whatever term is possible, are part and parcel of indigenous knowledge and local traditions. In this case, I suggest that the *tubong* ritual-dance carries a particular set of movement and dance knowledge. Consequently, the incorporation of ethnochoreology (i.e., movement analysis) and anthropology in the study of dance, choreography and movement practice is an emergent need in Philippine dance scholarship.

Keywords: Tubong, putong, methods in dance research, dance form-structure analysis, anthropology of dance, movement knowledge

Introduction

*Lakad mga kasama iputong na ninyo,
Ang palma ay sa kamay, korona'y sa ulo;
Kahimanawari ay makamtan ninyo,
sambahi't igalang ang mahal sa Santo/a.*

(Come fellows we walk and crown,
Scepter on hands, crown on head;
Hoping that you receive,
Venerate and respect the honorable Saint.) (my translation)

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The above stanza is chanted with *lakad*, a walking motif or one-pace travelling step towards the *punsyon* (honoree/celebrant) in 4/4 time signature (*lento*). When the *manunubongs* (ritual initiators) reach them (*punsyon* as initiate), the chanting continues with the giving of palm or scepter and the coronation of a crown. The *manunubongs* invoke the presence of a Catholic Saint, as if the *punsyon* impersonates a holy persona. Then, they shower the *punsyon* with petals of flower and coins (*sensilyo*). The *manunubongs*, together with the *bisita* (visitors) shout “Viva! *Mabuhay!* (Long Live). This is the main section of the *tubong*, a coronation ritual practiced in the province of Marinduque, Philippines.

This essay explores the *tubong* as a ritual-dance of healing, thanksgiving, and veneration and employs movement analysis and contextual analysis. Following the well-established discipline of ethnochoreology, dance form and structures are at the core of analysis (see Giurchescu 1999; Kaeppler & Dunin 2007). In particular, I use dance anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler’s dance kinemic analysis from *Method and Theory in Analyzing Dance Structure with an Analysis of Tongan Dance* (2007). Using structural linguistics that is based on emic analysis (see Pike in Kaeppler 2007:55), Kaeppler takes language as an analogy in formulating kineme as similar to phoneme. Phonemes are significant sounds of a language and have no meaning in themselves.

Likewise, the kineme is the basic unit of a dance. Kinemes form morphokines. A morphokine is the smallest unit that has meaning in the structure of a movement language. It is put together according to the grammar of the dance to form a motif. Motifs are like words – the vocabulary of a language. Motif vary from one another depending on the length of the meaning being conveyed. Then, choremes are sets of motif which are analogous to a language clause (e.g., a subject phrase or a predicate phrase). Combinations of choremes are called phrases, such as poetic or musical phrases. They are put together to form larger movement units. Finally, these units create a dance which can be pre-set, spontaneous or improvised (Kaeppler, 2007:53-54; Table 1).

On the other hand, the basis of the anthropological analysis of the *tubong* comes not only from the ritual meaning and context of the ritual (e.g., movement practice), but also from the informants’ personal stories and local communities’ narrative (i.e., *punsyon*, *manunubong*, *bisita*). To contextualize the study, I follow anthropologist Sally Ann Ness’ dance ethnographical approach. Ness, in looking at the social life of Cebu City, used a research method she called ‘choreographic experience’ (Ness 1992). She states that

choreography is not just something that “set” on somebody’s body. It is also something that occurs in “a space.” It is something that happens in and to a certain area of the world (Ness 1992:12-13).

Here she expands the concept of “choreography” so that it becomes almost analogous to ethnography.

Table 1. Kinemic System (derived from Kaeppler 2007)

Unit of Analysis (dance grammar)	Description	Linguistic Analogy
dance	specific choreographies	novel, play, or speech
phrases	external to movement	sentences
choreme	a constellation of motifs that occur simultaneously and sequentially	poetic or musical verses; a subject or predicate phrase
motif	a combination of morphokines	words
morphokine	smallest unit that has meaning in the structure of a movement/dance grammar	morpheme (smallest unit that has meaning in the structure of a language)
kineme	basic unit of a movement; has no meaning in themselves	phoneme

Dance anthropologist Deidre Sklar argues the need to include the researcher’s body in movement ethnography (Sklar 2000). Sklar says that

[w]hile it has been traditional practice to erase the researcher’s body from the ethnographic text, “subjective” bodily engagement is tacit in the process of trying to make sense of another’s somatic knowledge. There is no other way to approach the felt dimensions of movement experience than through the researcher’s own body (Sklar 2000: 71).

In an attempt to theorize the tubong ritual-dance as an embodied knowledge, I “employ” my body in this ethnographic work. I started this project in 2009 in the province of Marinduque as an undergraduate research

project. My personal participation as a punsyon since 1989 has been an experiential basis and a strong motivation to continue my interest in embodied knowledge and movement practice.

Methodologies in Philippine dance research

Problems and issues on choreographic practices among folk, traditional or ethnic dances in the Philippines have been the favorite theme of Philippine dance research. Research methodology in dance is always implicated in these. One of the early dance researchers in the Philippines who employed a dance methodological fieldwork to collect and document dances was Francisca Reyes-Aquino, former physical education teacher and now Philippine National Artist in Dance. Like some of the studies in Philippine dance (e.g., Gaerlan 1999, Perillo 2011, Sarmiento 2009), my essay recognizes the works of Reyes-Aquino in setting up the terrain of Philippine dance research. Dance and performance professor

Patrick Declan, in his article “Filipino Dance and the Academy” (2014), proposes that “embodied practice” was being employed to study Filipino folk dance in the academy but with different methodologies. He examines the approaches of Reyes-Aquino, dance anthropologist Sally Ann Ness, and his own method of practice as research. Declan describes Aquino’s methodological strategy as an “ethnography that ignored, to a very large extent, the cultural and academic positioning of the research, assuming a hierarchical cultural structure with the research positioned at the very top” (Declan 2014: 402-403). He situates Reyes-Aquino’s dance research method taking into account her position as

a Filipina within an American-influenced institution, a foreigner in many of the cultures she studies within her own country, a researcher who constructed a canon of dances, inserting her own creations into the canon and affording them the same status in inscription as any other dance in the collection. (Declan 2014: 405)

Here he highlights the double role Reyes-Aquino played: as a dance researcher (i.e., ethnographer) and dance practitioner (i.e., choreographer). This privileged position, in an attempt to revive folk and traditional cultures of the Philippines, would perhaps affect the general understanding of “dance” as it is now considered as a canon in Philippine dance pedagogy. As he ends his discussion of Reyes-Aquino’s methods, he states: “Aquino took her own choreographed dances, supported by her ethnographic research and critical reflection, and placed them in the canon of Filipino folk dance” (Declan 2014: 405).

Reyes-Aquino's ethnographic research and critical reflection that Declan examined differs somewhat from an appraisal posited by Filipino musicologist Elena Rivera Mirano. Mirano studied the *subli*, a movement practice in Batangas, and published this as *Subli: Isang Sayaw sa Apat na Tinig* (Subli: One Dance in Four Voices) (1989). It was followed by another book, *Ang mga Tradisyonal na Musikang Pantinig sa Lumang Batangas* in 1997. Her publications are critical of Aquino's methods of collection and documentation as she challenged earlier accounts of subli movement's understanding. For Reyes-Aquino, the subli is a result of two conjoined words: *subsob* (head bent down or to fall face downward) and *bali* (bend or bent) which are characterized as "*kiya ng mga lalaking tila lumpo at nakabalukto*" (stance of men that appear crippled or bent).

Through this strong historical and stringent anthropological (i.e., context) and ethnochoreological (i.e., formal and structural analysis) approach, Mirano discovered that *kiya* (stance) is not about subsob and bali, but rather was characterized as *patumbak* or "*masisigla at kamukha ng mga kumpas ng arnis de mano*" (lively, resembling the gestures of arnis de mano, a weapon-based martial art). These findings have led Mirano to suggest the need to revisit and review Reyes-Aquino's work.

Kailangang suriin muli ang material nito at balikan ang larangan kung saan ito nagmula upang malaman kung aling bahagi ng dokumentasyong ito ang totoo sa orihinal at alin ang binago dahil sa pangangailangan ng naunang panahon ng pananaliksik pangkalinangan (Mirano 1997:151).

(There is a need to review her [Reyes-Aquino] material and return to the source communities to discover which part of the documentation was true to the original and which material was altered as a consequence of the needs of an earlier period of cultural research.) (my translation)

This paper is a response to Mirano's invitation. The *tubong* is one of the many folk and traditional dances that Reyes-Aquino took from the field as a ritual practice. While Reyes-Aquino included the *tubong* in her collection *Philippine Folk Dances* (Volumes 1-5, 1953, 1960, 1973), the "alterations" made must be discovered and recovered (Patrick 2014: 403). Referring to the version of the *putungan* of the Philippine Performing Arts Company, it may be possible that this was also influenced by Reyes-Aquino's dance canon. This paper expands on Reyes-Aquino's earlier methodological work which to some extent lacked self-reflexivity, rigorous analytical examination, and sensitivity on local communities' choreography as cultural knowledge.

Embodied participation and movement ethnography

Boac, Marinduque (Figure 1, next page) was the ethnographic area in which I focused my work from 2009 to 2010. I studied *Putong ng mga taga-Bayan* (of Boac town), and *Putong ng mga Maestra* (of the teachers), or what is commonly known as *Marinduque Putong*. Tubong and putong are used interchangeably.

Apart from personal experience, I have collected narratives from fellow punsyon, the manunubongs, and bisita (visitors) of ritual events. My main collaborators were eighteen manunubongs who are members of various tubong groups in Boac, six punsyon or celebrants who celebrated their birthdays and/or anniversaries during the period of fieldwork, and six bisita or visitors who attended the coronation ritual. I also interviewed cultural officers, public officials, and local researchers in Marinduque province. I was also able to collect brief descriptions of various *tubong* versions, which came from oral accounts of local practitioners who inherited the tradition, based on the comparative study done by Marinduque State College students Laila Alojado et al. (1999). Table 2 identifies the tubong versions practiced in each town.

Table 2. Versions of Tubong/Putong practiced in each town of Marinduque.

Town (Bayan)	Particular Baranggay	Putong Version
Mogpog	Mataas na Bayan	Putong sa Pasyon
Boac	Poblacion, Poctoy	Sinalampakutan (Sari-Sari Putong) or Putong ng mga Taga-Bayan or Marinduque Putong, Tubong Banahaw
Gasan	Bangbang	Putong Kinse Misteryos or Putong Bangbang
Buenavista	Libas	Kalagyo o Panawagan
Santa Cruz	Sentro	Putong Banahaw
Torrijos	Sentro	Putong nga Mataas na Bayan, Boac

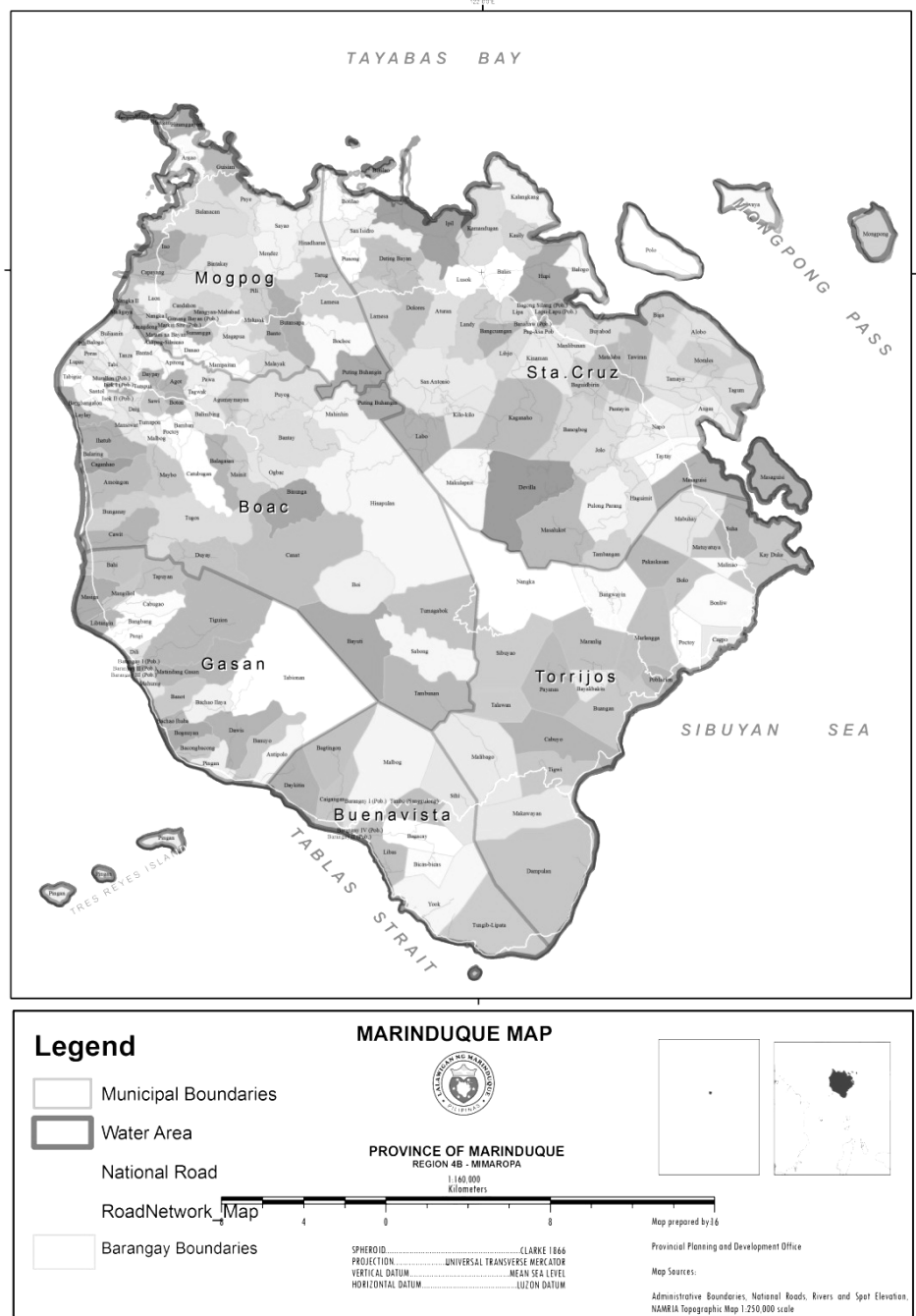


Figure 1. Marinduque (Source: Marinduque Provincial Planning and Development Office)

Dance form and structure: an ethnochoreological analysis

In my earlier research *Putong in Boac, Marinduque: Performance of Thanksgiving, Veneration, and Healing* (2010), I found out that the tubong/putong ritual-dance has three main performance elements: chanting (*musikang pantinig*) accompanied by one or two guitars or other string instruments, choreographed dance (*sayaw*) or/and movement (e.g., gestures, *galaw*), and sometimes poetry (e.g., prayer or *dasal*). The ritual is done for about fifteen to thirty minutes or days depending on the ritual variant. I refer to ritual variant as a version of the ritual-dance itself, but not necessarily a variant of a dance structure (or in any case, a kinetic motif) within the ritual (for discussion of dance realization and dance variant, see Bakka & Karoblis 2010).

As described earlier, the tubong is for the punsyon (honoree/celebrant) and initiated by a manunubong, a group of women and men who chant, play musical instruments, and dance or move. “Marinduque Putong,” a hybrid version of the tubong may have four sections (i.e., phrases): (Ph1) *pagsusunson/entrada* (picking up), (Ph2) *putong* (coronation), (Ph3) *sayaw* (dance), and (Ph4) *indakan*, or improvised dancing after the ritual (Viray 2010). The whole ritual is accompanied by 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 rhythmic patterns which correspond to a musical quality of *martsa* (march), *balse* (waltz), and *lento*, respectively. (Watch the online video posted by Lagar [2011] to see the ritual-dance.)

In adopting Kaeppler’s kinemic system, I propose the following ritual-dance structure. It is important to note that the process of adopting Kaeppler’s system is based on the premise that the manunubongs chant as they move and dance. There is an assumption of syllabic-kinemic relationship that is being established during the performance.

As a case study, let the version “Marinduque Putong” be the whole ritual. The ritual is composed of four phrases (or dance sections): Phrase 1-Entrada, Phrase 2-Putong, Phrase 3-Sayaw, and Phrase 4-Indakan. A choreme (C) can be divided by either the change of narrative/chant context (i.e., place and story) or intention and the change in the music rhythm. It can be one or more poetic stanza. A motif (M) is derived from either a line or two of a poetic stanza with corresponding morphokines. The motif level is central in my preliminary analysis, particularly the putong (crowning) – the most significant motif. Morphokines are sets or a combination of both hand and foot movements (i.e., a dance step) which are the kinemes.

Table 3 shows the phrases of the tubong. Phrase 2 (shaded portion) consists of two motifs with combinations of kineme such as walk (*lakad*),

stand (tayo), hunch (yuko), giving of palm or scepter, and the coronation or putting a crown on the head of a celebrant.

Table 3: Marinduque Putong Dance Realization / Movement Description

Units of Analysis	Chant	Movement	Rhythmic pattern
<p>Entrada Ph-1 Choreme-a: Intention for the manunubong to be recognized</p> <p>Kineme: <i>pahagod</i></p>	<p><i>Narito po kami, mahal na may bahay,</i> <i>Tinugtog na naming instrumentong taglay (2x)</i></p> <p><i>Ugali ng una at magpakailanman, Dalawi't aliwin ang may kapistahan (2x)</i></p> <p><i>O kawili-wili panahong tiwasay</i> <i>Ang buwan ng (____)</i> <i>ipagtatagumpay (2x)</i></p> <p><i>Ang dahil at pakay ang mahal ninyong ngalan</i> <i>Ang mga Santo't Santa'y aming dinadalaw (2x)</i></p> <p><i>Di man kami dapat sa oras na ito</i> <i>Ang nasa'y magdiwang sa kamahalan nyo (2x)</i></p> <p><i>Aming hinahanap sa lugal na ito, Sapagkat dumating ang kapistahan nyo (2x)</i></p>	<p><i>pahagod</i></p>	<p>$\frac{3}{4}$, balse / waltz</p>
<p>Choreme-b</p> <p>Kineme: <i>pasadsad (doble)</i></p>	<p><i>Anong dikit nitong oras panahon ay aliwalas,</i> <i>Anong sadyang karirilag, nitong lugal na mapalad</i></p> <p><i>Ang lugal na kawili-wili nitong hapon/umaga/gabi agradable,</i> <i>Pabo real sa kandili, ang may piyesta'y ipagbunyi</i></p> <p><i>Nang kami'y dumating sa inyong harapan</i></p>	<p><i>pasadsad (doble)</i></p>	<p>2/4, <i>martsa</i></p>

Units of Analysis	Chant	Movement	Rhythmic pattern
	<p><i>Agad sinalubong ng kaliwanagan May dalawang anghel na namamagitan Tig-isang kandila ang hawak sa kamay</i></p> <p><i>Kami po'y may dala ng mga korona Sa kamahalan mo ay natatalaga Ang kasama nito'y marikit ng palma Sampu ng bulaklak na kaaya-aya</i></p>		
<p>Choreme-c Intention to enter the house (<i>bulwagan</i>)</p> <p>Kineme: Walk, one-pace travelling step</p>	<p>Lakad mga sama tayo ay sumulong, <i>Sa loob ng bahay masok magpatuloy Awiti't purihin itong aming putong Dito sa may bahay na may pista ngayon</i></p> <p><i>Nang kami ay dumating sa loob ng Jerusalem Ang mabunying Santo/a ang nadatnan naming Nariyan sa altar nakalagay sa Belen Diyan ipinanganak ang Mesiyas natin</i></p>	<p><i>Lakad, walking</i></p>	<p>4/4, <i>lento</i></p>
<p>Choreme-d Intention to present the crown</p> <p>Kineme: standing, presentation of the crown</p>	<p><i>Ang koronang ito'y malaon ng handa Sa kapistahan mo'y unang nabalita Kaya naparito sa iyo ang sadya Korona'y iputong sa ulong sanghaya</i></p> <p>SOLO: <i>Ang korona naming tangan ay</i></p>	<p><i>nakatayo, presentasyon ng korona (standing, presentation of the crown)</i></p>	<p>4/4, <i>lento</i></p>

Units of Analysis	Chant	Movement	Rhythmic pattern
	<i>bulaklak manding tunay Tanggapin ninyo 't puputungan sa ulo ninyo 'y ilalagay.</i>		
Putong Ph-2 Choreme & Motif-a Intention to put the crown on top of the celebrant's head Kineme: <i>lakad</i> (walking)	core phrase (the significant motif) <i>Lakad mga kasama iputong na ninyo,</i>	<i>lakad</i> (walking)	4/4, <i>lento</i>
Kineme: Standing, giving of scepter and palm	<i>Ang palma ay sa kamay,</i>	<i>Nakatayo, giving of scepter / palm</i>	4/4, <i>lento</i>
Kineme: Standing, putting of the crown on the top of the punsyon's head	<i>Korona'y sa ulo</i>	<i>Nakatayo, putong</i>	4/4, <i>lento</i>
motif-b Intention to depart from the celebrant's space, and to prepare for	<i>Pagkaputong nila pagdaka ay umalis Kumanta ay ang lahat at nagsipag-awit Pagpupuri nila'y walang kahulilip</i>	<i>Ikot, lakad pabalik sa naunang pwesto</i>	4/4, <i>lento</i>

Units of Analysis	Chant	Movement	Rhythmic pattern
the dance Kineme: Turn, walk back to former space/place	<i>Hanggang sa dumating sa Glorya ng langit!</i>		
Ph-3 Sayaw (Dance) Choreme-a: Intention to shower the celebrant with flowers and coins	<i>Antanang angeles dito ay nanaog May dalang bulaklak nanggaling sa Diyos Kaya naparito sa inyo'y dumulog May pista ka raw pong dakilang alindog Vamos mga sama at at ing sabugan sari-saring rosas Damputin sa panyo at ipagsambulatan Sa harap ng Santo/a na may kapistahan Ang mga angeles dito ay lumapit May dalang bulaklak nanggaling sa langit Ito ay padala ng Birheng marikit Sa harap ng Santo/a'y aming ihahagis Sasabugan kita ng sampaga't rosas Lirio at mirasol sampung asusena At kung ito'y mamuko at tsaka mamunga Aming isasabog sa harap ng Santo/a</i>	Either/or & combination of Legs: <i>Balse; Hakbang na may Sadsad; "sway balance"</i> Arms: <i>Kampay; Sabugan</i>	$\frac{3}{4}$, balse / waltz
Choreme-b: Prayer intention	<i>Aming idinaraing sa Poong Maykapal Ang mabunying Santo/a na may kapistahan</i>	Either/or & combination of	$\frac{3}{4}$, balse / waltz

Units of Analysis	Chant	Movement	Rhythmic pattern
	<p><i>Kahimanawari siya ay idatal</i> <i>Sa madling panahon walang</i> <i>karamdaman</i></p> <p>Repeat <i>Vamos...</i></p>	<p>Legs: <i>Balse;</i> <i>Hakbang na</i> <i>may Sadsad;</i> “sway <i>balance</i>” Arms: <i>Kampay;</i> <i>Sabugan</i></p>	
	<p><i>Ititigil ko na yaring pagkakanta</i> <i>Mga kasamahan dito’y napasama</i> <i>At gayon po naman kami</i> <i>ipagpiyesta</i> <i>Karampatan nama’y humiyaw ng</i> <i>Viva</i></p> <p><i>Viva, viva, viva mabuhay</i> <i>mabuhay</i> <i>Buhayin ang Santo/a-ng aming</i> <i>pinutungan</i></p> <p><i>Viva, viva, viva ito ay tapos na</i> <i>Karampatan nama’y humiyaw ng</i> <i>Viva!</i></p> <p><i>Viva, viva, viva, Mabuhay!</i></p>	<p>Either/or & combina-tion of</p> <p>Legs: <i>Balse;</i> <i>Hakbang na</i> <i>may Sadsad;</i> “sway <i>balance</i>”</p> <p>Arms: <i>Kampay;</i> <i>Sabugan</i></p>	<p>$\frac{3}{4}$, balse / waltz</p>
<p>Ph-4 Indakan (post-ritual improvised dancing)</p>			

The movement description is based on the manunubongs’ role as the ritual initiators. The punsyon sits at the center of the space (e.g., house) during the ritual. They dance upon the manunubongs’ invitation after the ritual. During the ritual, the bisita can watch, or dance and sing along with the manunubongs, but not at the center of the ritual space. They pick-up coins which are thrown by the manunubongs before the punsyon.

Space and choreographic experience as basis of anthropological analysis

I value a general idea of anthropology as “a discipline based upon in-depth ethnographic works that deal with theoretical issues in the context of particular, local conditions” (Amit & Mitchel, in Eriksen 2010:vii). Ness’ *sinulog* movement ethnography in the *Body, Movement, and Culture: Kinesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community* (1992) explored Cebu in 1984 and 1985 as a particular macrospace of a Philippine coastal urban society. Through the “choreographic experience” she was able to investigate and analyze a particular micro”space” of the *sinulog*, an event that is central in Cebuano’s performance of faith. Ness grounded her kinesthetic and visual analysis on symbolic actions to consider the dance and its choreographies as a “space” to elicit meanings, hence an interpretive inquiry. Despite the variants she identified – individual and improvisational or the *Tindera Sinulog* troupe ritual, and secular and promotional or the *Cultural Sinulog* – she was able to find a common movement motif as the basis of creating a *communitas* among the *sinulog* participants. Ness posits,

[y]et the various performances of the Cebu City *sinulog* all retained a certain choreographic common ground that created...similar physical and mental experiences for their participants. Regardless of their differences, the performances all were viewed as generally “the same dance,” as variants of a single phenomenon, “the” *sinulog* (Ness 1992:2).

Table 4. Effort-Shape Analysis of a Lead Dancer
(Putong Bangbang Ritual-Dance Realization)

Prescription on chant (Filipino)	<i>Ang palma’y</i>	<i>sa kamay</i>	<i>Ko-ro-na’y sa ulo</i>
Prescription on chant (English)	The scepter	on hand	crown on head
Arm gesture-realization	Right arm gives the scepter to the celebrant		Both hands coronate the head of the celebrant
Leg movement-realization	Indefinite number of step towards the celebrant starting with the right foot		Standing on both feet, slightly bent
Effort description	Weight: light Time: sustained Space: very direct		<i>Dampi</i> (dabbing) Weight: moderate Time: sustained Space: very direct
Shape description	Sagittal: <i>sulong</i> (advancing) Vertical: <i>yuko</i> (sinking)		Vertical: <i>yuko</i> (sinking)

Accordingly, I wish to begin the anthropological analysis of the tubong movement practice from its core movement motif – the putong itself – Phrase two (motif a) of the ritual structure as the main kinesthetic, visual, and symbolic action of the ritual. To reiterate, Ph2 has the primary intention of putting the crown on top of the celebrant’s head. Aside from the kinemic analysis above, I also include in this essay a preliminary Effort-Shape analysis to describe the quality of the symbolic action of coronation. I discuss details of my Effort-Shape analysis in Table 4 above.

Moreover, I suggest that tubong “space” has two modalities: Boac, Marinduque as a macrospace and the tubong ritual-dancing itself as a microspace of inquiry. Both spaces implicate “choreographic experience” as Ness described in her movement ethnography. In the tubong experience, I propose that the punsyon, the manunubongs, and the bisita experience tubong as a ritual-dance of healing, thanksgiving, and veneration.



Figure 2. Photograph of Tubong ritual in Bangbang, Gasan, Marinduque.

(Photo by the author.)

Spaces of the tubong ritual-dance

The province of Marinduque is known as the “Heart of the Philippine Islands” as it is considered the geographical center of the Philippine archipelago by the Luzon Datum of 1911, the recognized mother of all

Philippine geodetic surveys (Figure 1). The province is a heart-shaped island with a total land area of 95,258 hectares. It is between Tayabas Bay on the north and Sibuyan Sea on the south. It is separated from the Bondoc Peninsula in Quezon province by Mompong Island. Southwest portion includes the Tres Reyes Islands and the Elephant Island. Marinduque is a part of Region IV-B, or MIMAROPA, composed of Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan). Marinduque has six municipalities, namely Boac (the capital), Gasan, Buenavista, Torrijos, Sta. Cruz, and Mogpog (Viray 2010).

Aside from Marinduque's shape and geographical location, the province may be considered the center of cultural activities in the MIMAROPA region, most especially during the Holy Week or *Semana Santa*. Theatre studies scholar William Peterson (2007) describes how the *moriones*, who impersonate Roman centurions using elaborate masks, enact *panata* (vow) during the week-long *Moriones Festival*. Aside from the Moriones Festival, the provincial government of Marinduque institutionalized in 2007 the Putong Festival every February 21 of the year highlighting the Marinduque Day Celebration.

The term *putong* is a shortened word from the verb *magputong* or *magtubong*, to put a crown on the head. There is perhaps a linguistic interplay between *patong* (to put on top) and *putong*. In Mogpog town, there is a belief that *magputong* was practiced even before the Spaniards came in Mataas na Bayan (High Town), formerly Anapog-Sibucan which was known for producing *apog* (lime). According to Rex Asuncion, music professor at the Marinduque State College, there are more or less fifty versions of the *putong* practiced by almost eighty groups of *manunubongs* in different barangays in six towns of Marinduque. In other words, the tradition of coronation is widely spread in the province. As a punsyon myself, I have experienced *tubong* celebrations in our own house. As a son to a *manunubong*, we have been invited to witness *tubong* in the town's covered courts during the *Semana Santa* (or Holy Week), other local community's *fiestas*, and special events. The *manunubongs* as ritual initiators create and transform places, not only as social events, but as learning spaces as well, where and when the transmission of cultural and indigenous knowledge takes place.

Social functions and intentions as ritual knowledge: healing, veneration, and thanksgiving

In this section, I discuss the social functions of the *tubong* based on movement analysis, the collected narratives, and the symbolic meanings

associated as the manunubongs perform the ritual for the punsyon with the bisita. The tubong tradition is still alive because Marinduqueños, the local people of Marinduque, live with a belief that the tubong is one way to express their gratitude and respect, aside from its primary intention to heal *sakit* or human spiritual maladies.

Mga Sakit at Pagkagaling

*Ang mga Angeles dito ay lumapit,
may dalang bulaklak nanggaling sa langit...;
Kahimanawari habaan ang buhay,
at sa madlang taon ay walang karamdaman.*

(Maladies and Healing

The angels come near,
with flowers from heaven...
Hoping to extend your life,
and protect from diseases for the whole year.) (my translation)

This chant is performed with either or a combination of *balse* (waltz), sway balance, and *kampay* and *sabugan* as arm movements in 3/4 music meter. Sabugan is a symbolic action of showering petals of flower and coins toward the punsyon – regalias for good health, prosperity, and fortune.

A grandson of Julieta Ogayre, from Poctoy, Boac, was *sakitin* (a sickly person). Even though Julieta did not promise (vow, *panata*) to give her grandson a celebration of tubong, her manunubong friends crowned him every year until he turned seven years old. Mark Julius Zurbano, my neighbor in Malusak, Boac, had a primary health complex, *sakitin* as described by his mother. When Mark turned seven years old, his mother hosted a tubong, believing that the *sakit* of his body would vanish (“*para maalis-alis ang sakit ng katawan*”) (Zurbano 2009).

Furthermore, my personal story is like the experiences presented above. In my master’s thesis (2015a), I started with my movement history:

My movement story started not as a dancer but as a punsyon (celebrant), a person who is crowned through a celebration of ritual Tubong. I was first crowned in 1989 when I turned one year old. Lina, my mother, had a *panata* (vow or promise) to perform this every year. She has been singing the solo part while the crown and palm of flowers are presented. This ritual was performed because I had a weak health condition. I had a difficulty in breathing every time I cried. We call this breathing condition *pay-uk*. She believed

that Tubong would heal my condition. She and her barkada (colleagues) as manunubongs performed this ritual with me as an initiate until 2009 when I turned 21 years old – the age when the Filipino male teenager moves into adulthood. (Viray 2015a: 5)

The tubong tradition has an embedded belief to diminish, if not totally “heal”, the sakit and dilemmas of a person who experiences this. A manunubong named Elisa Roca narrates her *paniniwala* (belief) that the tubong is a form of prayer:

...kinaugalian na [iyan] ng mga matatanda ay. Para raw humaba ang buhay. Halimbawa ay [may] nagakasakit na pinangakuan na hanggang pitong taon ay atubungan... ’yun kasing inaputungan ay nadarama mo ’yung mga wording, natimo sa puso mo ’yung parang panalangin. Kasi panalangin din ’yung tubong ano... (Roca 2009)
 (...the tubong is part of the custom of the old folks, to extend life. For instance, if there is someone who is sick, there would be an act of vow to crown him/her until seven years old...as a celebrant, you can feel the words of the chant, and it stays in the heart, it is like a prayer. Tubong is a prayer... (my translation)

This belief is related to a possible origin of the chant/text of the tubong. The tubong may have influences from the Catholic religion, particularly the book *Doctrina Cristiana*, with other sacred songs and hymns based on legends. The chant itself is a prayer as it is made up of sacred words. According to Ozette Manguerra, a mother of a celebrant, putong has *dala* (bring) or *salita* (word) (Manguerra 2009). In other words, the ritual brings words of prayer which can heal. In tracing the traditional healing practices in local communities, the spirit or *lagyo* is always implicated. In ritual performance itself, the celebrant and manunubongs are not only joined by physical beings, but by metaphysical beings as well. The ritual invokes the presence of the spirits, angels, and saints (i.e., Catholic tradition). The ritual is being offered for both the celebrant’s physical body and the spirit (i.e., soul, *lagyo*); hence, there is also a presence of *Santong Kalagyo* (Saint / the “other” soul). Moreover, the punsyon being regarded as a Saint also shares veneration with the *Diyos Ama, Anak, at Ispiritu Santo* (Holy Trinity), together with the *Birheng Maria* (Virgin Mary).

Pagpupuri sa Santo/a o Hari at Reyna

*...ang dahil at pakay,
 ang mahal nyong ngalan,
 mga Santo ’t Santa’y aming dinadalaw...*

(Veneration to the Saint, King, or Queen

...the cause and reason,
 our dear celebrant,
 we are visiting the Saints...) [my translation]

Pahagod (step-close) in 3/4 music meter is danced with the text above being chanted. The manunubongs bring crown and scepter or palms of flower, symbols for praise or veneration. The punsyon is addressed as a Saint or a King/Queen. Based on my interview, I listed below some of the reasons why the *tubong* is being celebrated for persons who are sick, a child who is one or seven years old, a person who is celebrating his or her birthday, partners who are getting married, visitors or tourists of the province, the saints or for Mother Mary during the Lenten Season. In other words, these above-mentioned persons are the celebrants or punsyon – the *pakay* (reason) who are being offered (*pinag-aalayan*) and for whom a celebration and banquet is hosted.

As the manunubongs enter the house, the punsyon is seated between two angels handling lit candles. Young members of the family usually perform as angels. In some occasions, the punsyon is initially covered with white cloth. They greet the punsyon who is treated like a blessed saint. Presentation of *regalia* for the punsyon follows: crown, scepter, flowers, *sensilyo* or coins. Then, a manunubong crowns the punsyon, sometimes inside a *kubol*, a makeshift altar that serves as the celebrant's holy throne. Sometimes, all manunubongs form a circle with the punsyon inside. They sing “*viva, viva, viva, mabuhay*” (long-live) while moving around the celebrant.

Here, a recognizable place of a celebrant's house, the town plaza or a makeshift altar is transformed into a sacred space through the ritual-dance's actions, regalia, and other performance elements. In particular, the symbolic action of crowning (and objects of crown and scepter), which is the second phrase (motif a) of the ritual structure, is a choreographic experience with an intention to praise and venerate the celebrant. Located at the center of the celebration, the punsyon has a metaphorical seat of power.

In my Effort-Shape analysis, I describe the quality of the core motif of the tubong as performed by the manunubong. This analysis supports a symbolic interpretation that the punsyon is the center through the *goal-oriented* effort description and *very direct* space orientation from the manunubong. In addition, the *light to moderate* weight of touch (or *dabbing* in effort/shape term) is relevant to the intentions of crown and scepter – again a quality of action which expresses respect and exaltation. Both the

‘advancing’ (*sulong*) and ‘sinking’ (*yuko*) as sagittal and vertical shape description, respectively, are strong confirmations of emic movement motif and gesture –and, which are recurring in the performance itself. The showering gesture was strong to moderate, emphasizing the very direct intention towards *punsyon*.

Biyaya at Pagpapasalamat

*Viva, viva, viva, buhayin, buhayin,
Buhayin ang Santong pinutungan natin.*

(Blessings and Thanksgiving

Viva, viva, viva, be, be alive,
Our crowned Saint, be alive.) [my translation]

Una, ‘yun ay talagang tradisyon na dito sa amin...pasasalamat kasi nga nasapit nila ‘yung ganung taon na sila ay malakas ang katawan, na sila ay nasa magandang estado na ng buhay...tsaka walang ano kung baga meron mang problema ay parang wala laang. Sabi nga ay ano, nasa lebel lang...kunwari may sakit siya. Kung baga, kahit hindi niya birthday, ‘yung pamilya niya by means of putong, dun nila ina-express ang kanilang pasasalamat. (Rañoso 2009)

(First, it [putong] is our tradition...thanksgiving because the celebrant attained a certain age with a good health, with a good state of life, as if no problem...the family expresses their gratitude through putong even if the person (who is sick) even if it is not the person’s birthday. (my translation)

Aside from its primary intention to “heal” the human spiritual illness of the *kaluluwa* or soul, or illnesses like fever, cholera, convulsion believed to be caused by supernatural elements and other unknown reasons, the tubong is also a way to celebrate special events such as birthdays (1st, 7th, 18th, 21st, and 60th), weddings, baptisms, anniversaries, and other life-cycle events. In other words, the tubong is a rite of passage. As I have discussed elsewhere (Viray 2015b:3), the tubong ritual-dance “reaffirm a necessity for the community to gather during life-cycle occasions which are markers of change.” In these life-cycle occasions, participants in a ritual create a community of one-ness or *communitas* (Turner 1969). Moreover, the celebration itself is an action or gesture of the participants’ gratitude to the community.

The tubong ritual-dancing, a community-initiated event among the punsyon, the manunubong, and the bisita, can be regarded as a communal

choreographic experience that carries tradition. The communal relates to an orderly and harmonious relationship among community members. Everybody in the community continues the tubong tradition (regardless of the many versions) and participates fully in a dance experience.

The above-mentioned intentions and social functions of the tubong are interdependent with each other. The ritual-dance of tubong is a socio-cultural choreographic experience of Marinduqueños who have an intention to deepen social relationships among community members; hence an expression of *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (humane relations with others). The ritual-dance of tubong has also a metaphysical choreographic experience where a communication, among the punsyon, the manunubongs, and the bisita including the lagyo and other sacred personas, happens through the symbolic actions of coronation and palm giving.

Conclusion: local communities' choreography as a cultural knowledge

In August 2013, I was able to watch a video recording of the Philippine Performing Arts Company's (PASACAT) *Putungan* on Youtube ([Anamaria Cabato 2013](#)). The PASACAT staged a choreographic performance of the *tubong* in their *Extravaganza Concert* on 28 September 2012 at the Lyceum Theater, San Diego in the United States. In another essay I discovered that in this particular staging, although it intended to use the dance as a welcome greeting, had omitted the most significant section which is the *tubong* itself. In other words, the company removed the ritual's main intention to crown the celebrant. PASACAT neglected two dimensions of ritual staging: precision of movement motif (i.e., the crowning of the celebrant) and the cultural significance of this ritual tradition. I have suggested elsewhere that their staging, whether it was based on local communities' choreography or not, carried and transmitted a particular cultural movement knowledge. Given this, I asked if their performance could still be called *putungan* (Viray 2015b).

In analyzing the tubong as a ritual-dance of thanksgiving, healing, and veneration, my paper highlights the urgency for both ethnochoreological and anthropological understanding of ritual and dance in the Philippines, with a special attention to movement practice. I argue for a movement knowledge competence because rituals, movement practices, dance traditions or whatever term is possible are part and parcel of indigenous knowledge and local traditions. In this case, I forward the idea that the tubong ritual-dance carries a particular set of movement and dance knowledge (Sklar 2001:32). Consequently, the incorporation of movement analysis (i.e., ethnochoreology) and anthropology in the study of dance and choreography,

in general, and movement practice, in particular, is an emergent need in Philippine dance scholarship.

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