

Ritual Dances: The Case of a Manobo Tribe in Cantilan, Surigao Del Sur, Philippines

VanessaEileene Gay P. Rosil¹.JohnManuel C. Buniel²

*Cantilan National High School.
Surigao del Sur State University-CantilanCampus*

ABSTRACT: This ethnographic research involves the Manobo's ritual dances of Surigao del Sur. It relied on observations, analytical description and qualitative judgment or interpretation to obtain a picture of the Manobo ritual dances. The Manobo ritual dances such as *Sinagudsod*, *Inadgawanon*, *Inamag* and *Binanog* are dances performed during "Kahimunan" or full moon prayer ceremony. The music is in 4/4 signature and their music has no lyrics. In all of the four dances, the male dancers wear kabo (polo), sawei (pants), and patadjong/saja (skirt) while the female dancers wear saliko (blouse) and patadjong/saja (skirt). The performers use panyo (handkerchief) and "pinuti" (bolo) during the ritual. Gimbe-e and gong are their musical instruments. The common dance steps used are: chasing, shuffling, skip, leap, jump, stamp, pivot turn parallel tortillier and mincing. The study found that the Manobo ritual dances are enduring reflections of their history, thus, it is important that these must be preserved, respected, and promoted to gain a deeper appreciation of their culture and the Philippine culture in general.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ritual traditions of Filipinos are best understood in terms of their intentions. The fundamental belief that there is a delicate balance between man, nature and the spirit world is at the core of any ritual. Rituals can be interpreted as an attempt to improve and maintain this equilibrium. When the balance is lost, misfortune in various forms may happen and rituals must be performed to restore the state of affairs. As a consequence, there are also countless practices that can fix this disparity. It helps to explain the Philippines' wide range of religious rituals (Obusan, 2015).

The indigenous people engaged in many dances such as ritual dance. There are rituals that determine the future, relax the spirits, ensure good harvest, invoke protection from the unknown, provide guidance and advice, heal the sick, and bring good luck. Apparently, every facet of Filipino life is connected to some kind of ritual activity (2015 Villaruz).

The Manobo in Agusan is one of the native groups of people. Various Manobo dances are amusing, teaching, and propitiating the gods. Such dances are: Sinundo / Singangga, a ward off plague dance ritual; Pangaliyag, a dance of courtship; Pangasawa, a ritual of marriage; Kinugsik-kugsik, a dance of squirrels. Certain dances involve bathing, collecting honey, hair plucking, sex dancing, and dagger or sword dancing. The Manobo performs several kinds of rituals, ranging from the simplest and most private, to the most elaborate feasts lasting several days of singing and dancing. Rituals are meant to propitiate either the "diwata" or the "busaw," but there are none addressed to supreme deity (De Leon, 2015).

Nowadays mostly the elders remained practicing the culture and traditions because some of the young adherents of the tribe have gone into formal education. Such phenomenon results to gradual changes of their beliefs, and shift of their lifestyles. This move of perspective among the youth may pose a threat to the non-practice of their indigenous culture and tradition. In Cabangahan, Cantilan, Surigao del Sur a Manobo tribe used to thrive the area for more than a decade and used to perform ritual dances in consonance to their events. Unfortunately no available documentation that would keep their ritual dances in to record. The scenarios described above motivate the researchers to conduct this study especially that this endeavor helped the tribal community in the locality in persevering their rituals and tradition. The main objective of this study is to document and analyze the dances. The study relied heavily on observations, analytical description, and qualitative judgment or interpretation of the Manobo ritual dances.

The study assumed that being aware and appreciative of one's indigenous dances is tantamount to promoting one's cultural heritage. Article XIV, Sections 15 and 17 of the Philippine Constitution mandates that the State conserves, promotes and popularizes the nation's historical and cultural heritage as well as artistic

creation. It shall recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions. This obviously explains the importance of a dance as one of the many instruments of actualizing and fulfilling this purpose.

II. METHODOLOGY

To have an in-depth look on the ritual dances of the Manobo of Surigao del Sur, the ethnographic approach was used in this study. This is the art and science of describing a human group and its members' experiences and interpretations. Ethnographic data collection takes place mainly through observations, interviews, and examinations of documents (Holloway, 2013).

The study was conducted at Brgy. Cabangahan, Cantilan, one of the barangays of the municipality of Cantilan in the province of Surigao del Sur, wherein the origin of the Manobo tribe in the locality is being situated. To ensure that the informants are generally knowledgeable about their cultural heritage the key informants of the study were head of the tribe, chieftain, Baylan, and the elders from the Manobo tribe residing at Barangay Cabangahan, Cantilan, Surigao del Sur.

Standard protocols mandated by the tribe in gathering information regarding the tribe rituals and practices were undertaken. There were three steps of data collection that were employed in the study: first is establishing rapport through informal interview or casual conversation. Second, the actual documentation through picture taking and video coverage, and third was the learning of the dance by the researchers.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Occasions/events do the ritual dances depict

Kahimunan is known to be major type of ritual activity for the Manobo tribe in Cabangahan which includes their intentions; hence, the occasions or events are classified as joyful and sorrowful as discussed in the succeeding paragraph.

Joyful Events. *LIPAY-LIPAY* (Gathering) is one of the intentions for performing the ritual. It is a gathering of Baylan and its members in the tribe for thanksgiving. Lipay- Lipay is originally done every month but as time passes, this intention of ritual depends on the demand of the members.

Another joyful event is, *MARAJAW NA ANI* (Blissful Harvest) which is usually done during harvest season. Prior to the day of harvest, the tribe performs the ritual so that their *Abian* would bestow them good harvest.

Sorrowful Event. *JAQY NASAKIT NA GRABI* (Serious Illness), "Jauynasakitnagrabi" (serious illnesses) is one of the reasons why they perform "Kahimunan." When one of the members of a tribe suffers from a serious illness, they perform the ritual to seek for help. The Baylan offers a prayer to his *Abianto* ask for possible treatment of the illness. However, according to the researcher's informant, ("*Dilitanansakitmahatagan nan tambay, jaoypanahonna mag balibad an Abiannadilini jamakayapagtambaysasakit*") not all sickness can be given treatment. There are situations that the *Abian* cannot give medication to such disease. Another sorrowful event is *PAMAYBAG* (Prevention for Advent of Major Diseases). This occasion which is usually held at the river is done for prevention of a catastrophic disease. It was recounted that "*Ja-oymuaginabarkonaitomnamagdaya nan sakitnapwedeikamatay nan mgataosatribu*" which means that a black ship that cannot be seen by one's naked eyes would pass through the river and would spread the disease to the tribe. In order for the ship not to reach the tribe, the river should be blocked.

The Manobo ritual dances of Cabangahan tribe are performed only during Kahimunan ritual. There were four (4) ritual dances that were presented to the researcher who also tried to learn and master the dances. These are *Sinagudsod*, *Inadgawanon*, *Inamag*, and *Binanog* dance. These dances are not performed in a particular occasion or event. These can be danced in other occasions.

Common costumes, accessories, and musical instruments used in these dances

In all four dances, namely *Sinagudsod*, *Inamag*, *Inadgawanon*, and *Binanog*, the common costumes used during the performance are *Kabo* (long or short sleeve polo). The one wearing the long polo shirt signifying that he has a high rank in the tribe and the short sleeves indicate lower rank. Red is the dominant color for the polo shirt with a yellow, white, and black stripes on the edges. The stripes on their costumes have no particular meaning. Another costume is *Patadjongor Saja* (long skirt), which has a black color with designs on it. This design adds beauty to their costumes. Moreover, *saliko* (blouse) commonly used by a female dancer has a dominant red color with stripes on the edges colored white, yellow, and black. *Sawie* (long pants) are likewise worn by male dancers during the performance. However, if these costumes are not available they use t-shirt, any blouse, and malong during the performance.

Furthermore, the accessories used during the performance are the following: "pinuti", a sharp bolo which is used in *Sinagudsod* dance. Such dance is done by swaying the bolo while dancing; "panyo", a handkerchief preferably in white color; "palio" a necklace, with a combination of red, white, black, blue, and

yellow beads and head dress used by a female dancer during the performance. To them, there is no particular meaning to these accessories except that they add beauty when they perform the dances.

The kind of instruments used by the Manobo in their ritual dances reveal the resourcefulness of Manobo tribe. In all four dances, the tribe uses gong and gimbe. Gongs which are made of brass produces sound by striking it with a wooden stick. Gimbe which is a small drum is made up of dried skin of a deer and it is beaten using a “kajawan” or small and tiny bamboo stick.

What do the dance steps and patterns communicate?

SINAGUDSOD; its classification is ritualistic. This originated from Cabangahan, Cantilan, Surigao del Sur and the ethno-linguistic group of this dance is Manobo tribe.

Background and Context. This type of ritual dances is performed during kahimunan or full moon prayer ceremony. This dance is performed by a male dancer with the use of “pinuti” (bolo) performed by one or by pair.

Dance Properties. The male dancer wears *skabo* (a polo with short sleeves) and *sawie* (long pants). The time signature of this dance is 2/4 signature and the count pattern is 1, 2 or 1, and 2. This dance uses *gimbe*, as their musical accompaniment during the performance. The tempo is moderate. There is no definite formation in this dance because performers move in any direction their feet would bring them. The ritual dance equipment used during the performance was “*bangkaso*” or altar, “*apog*” or powdered shells, “*bujo*” or betel leaves, “*mam-on*” or betel nuts, wine, and pig. Pinuti (bolo) for the dancers.

Dance Steps and Pattern. The movement of their hands, body and feet are suited to the music. “Sinagudsod” dance steps include chasing steps, skip step, and shuffling steps. While doing these steps, the male dancer uses the “pinuti” (bolo) by swaying it in front, side and overhead. The head, trunk, and knees are slightly bent forward-downward. Since this is a solo dance, no definite formation was observed. The dance steps which are accompanied by simultaneously swinging of the “pinuti”, implied an action which they believed could drive away bad spirits.

Tempo. The tempo of the music in “Sinagudsod” is moderate to accompany the male dancer’s swaying movement as he performs the dance and swings the “pinuti” or sharp bolo.

Basic Steps. Chasing Step is to step R (L) forward (ct. 1) and step L close to R (L) in third in rear or first position (ct. and). This step is executed with one foot leading in all directions. The steps are small and there are two chasing in a measure. Another is Shuffling Step, which is executed as follows: Step R (L) sideward left (ct. 1) and step L (R) and step R (L) (ct. and) and step L (R) (ct. 2). Tiny sliding steps are executed on the balls of the feet as many times as required. This is usually done forward. And Skip Step is described as follows: Step R (L) in fourth in front (ct. 1), hop on R (L) in place (ct. ah). There are two skips to a measure in 2/4 time. This is executed in any direction.

Below are Figures 1-3 showing the movement of “*Sinagudsod*.” It is performed as follows:

FIGURE I

a. With the knees and trunk slightly bent and feet in second position and flat on the ground, execute four chasing steps in any direction. Have both hands move obliquely upward executing *kumintang* inward and arms in lateral position ----- 2M

FIGURE II

b. Take two shuffling steps in any direction with arms obliquely forward, and in lateral position -----
----- -2M

FIGURE III

a. Execute four skip step in any direction with the hands hand holding the “pinuti” or sharp bolo, swing forward, sideward, and overhead. ----- -2M

b. Repeat Fig. I and Fig. II with hands holding “pinuti” or bolo ----- 2M

c. Repeat a and b three times-----12M

The figure below shows the musical score of Sinagudsod. The time signature is 2/4.



Another dance is “*Inadgawanon*” notation. The classification of this dance is ritualistic and it originated from Cabangahan, Surigao del Sur. The ethno-linguistic Group of this dance is Manobo Tribe.

Background and Context. This type of ritual dance is performed during “kahimunan” or full moon prayer ceremony. This dance is performed by a male dancer (individual or group performance).

Dance Properties. The male dancer wears *skabo* (a polo with short sleeves) and *patdjong* (long skirt). The time signature of this dance is 4/4 signature and the count pattern is 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, and 2, and 3, and 4. This dance uses *gimbe* and *gong* as their musical accompaniment during the performance. The tempo is moderate and there is no definite formation in this dance because they move in any direction where their feet would bring them. The ritual dance equipment used during the performance is “*bangkaso*” or altar, “*apog*” or powderized shells, “*bujo*” or betel leaves, “*mam-on*” or betel nuts, wine, and pig. The dancers use “*panyo*” (handkerchief) when performing.

Dance Steps and Pattern. *Inadgawanon* dance steps include step hop, stamp, skip step, jump, shuffle, pivot turn with a stamp, and chase. These steps are performed in no particular formation and direction. The arms are shifted from lateral to oblique positions with elbows slightly bent. The trunk and head are tilted downward with knees slightly bent. Since this is a solo dance, there is no definite formation employed. The dance steps have no regular patterns. These steps are just performed to express or show individual dance skills and is merely executed for entertainment.

Tempo. *Inadgawanon* ritual dance applies fast tempo to match the movements of the dancers.

Basic Steps. The following steps are described as follows: Step Hop is to step L (R) foot in fourth position in front (ct. 1); hop on the same foot and raise the R (L) foot in front or in rear (ct. 2). This may be executed in any direction; another dance step used is stamp which is executed by bringing down the foot forcibly and noisily on the floor (like doing a heavy step) with or without transfer of weight. Skip Step is executed by stepping R (L) in fourth in front (ct. 1); hopping on R (L) in place (ct. 2). There are two skips to a measure in 2/4 time. This is executed in any direction. Another dance step is jump executed by springing one foot or both feet, landing on both in any direction; Shuffling Step is executed by stepping R (L) sideward left (ct. 1) and step L (R) and step R (L) (ct. 2). Shuffling is executed through tiny sliding steps on the balls of the feet and this is usually done forward and it is also executed by pivot turn with a stamp which is described as to step R (L) foot in fourth in front (or a little close to fifth position) and bend the R knee slightly (ct. 1), execute a quarter- turn right (left) with the push on the ball of the L (R) foot (heel of the L (R) foot is raised) and raise the R (L) foot slightly off the floor (ct. 2). Another step is chasing step which is executed to step R (L) forward (ct. 1) and step L (R) close to R (L) in third in rear or first position (ct. 2). This step is executed with one foot leading in all direction. The steps are small. There are two chasing in a measure.

These are the figures on how to perform this dance.

FIGURE I

a. With the left knee raised upward and trunk slightly bent and feet in second position and flat on the ground, execute four step hop in any direction - - - -4M

b. Take two shuffling steps in any direction with arms obliquely forward, and in lateral position - - - - - 4M

FIGURE II

a. Execute one quarter pivot turn to the left with eight stamps. Arms are in left oblique position - - - - - -2M

- b. Take four skip step backward, changing feet position and arms from left oblique to right oblique position. - - -
-----2M
- c. Take one leap step forward, arms in right oblique position - - - - -2M
- d. Repeat b - - - - -2M

FIGURE III

- a. With both feet flat on the ground, jump backward four times and arms in oblique position - - - - -
-----4M
- b. Take four stamps, arms in right oblique position - - - - -4M
- c. Execute four chasing steps in any direction, and arms in front - - - - -4M
- d. Repeat a - - - - -4M

FIGURE IV

- a. Execute four shuffling steps in any direction with arms shifted from left to right oblique position and have elbows slightly bent. - - - - -4M
- b. Repeat Fig. II- a and b - - - - -4M
- c. Take four jumps while turning in place - - - - -4M
- d. Repeat Fig. II - - - - -8M
- e. Repeat Fig. III - - - - -16M

These are the details of “Inamag” notation that were presented and documented as follows: This dance is called Inamag and the classification of this dance is ritualistic. It originated from one of the barangays of Cantilan Surigao del Sur and the ethno-linguistic group of this dance is Manobo Tribe.

Background and Context. This type of ritual dances is also performed during “kahimunan” or full moon prayer ceremony. This dance is performed by a male dancer. The dancer uses panyo (handkerchief) while performing.

Dance Properties. The male dancer wears *kabo* (a polo with short sleeves) and *patdjong* (long skirt). The time signature of this dance is 4/4 signature and the count pattern is 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, and 2, and 3, and 4. This dance uses gimbe and gong, as their musical accompaniment during the performance. The tempo is moderate and there is no definite formation in this dance because they move in any direction where their feet would bring them. The ritual dance equipment used during the performance is “bangkaso” or altar, “apog” or powdered shells, “bujo” or betel leaves, “mam-on” or betel nuts, wine, and pig and “panyo” (handkerchief) for the dancer.

Dance Steps and Pattern. Inamag ritual dance steps include shuffling, parallel tortillier, chasing, pivot turn with a stamp, and jumping steps. These steps are also evident in other Manobo ritual like other dances. These are performed in no particular formation and direction. The arms are shifted from reverse “T” to oblique positions with elbows slightly bent. Trunk and head are tilted downward with knees slightly bent. Sometimes shoulders are moving up and down as the dance step changes. Since this is a solo dance, there was also no definite formation observed.

Although these dances are quite different from other steps, there is no specific purpose these steps are performed. The elders in the tribe said that the steps are imitated from a local animal called “Amag”, during its search for food.

Tempo. Like other ritual dance, “Inamag” dance uses moderate tempo.

Basic Steps. The following steps are thus described in this dance. Shuffling Step is executed to step R (L) sideward left (ct. 1) and step L (R) and step R (L) (ct. and) and step L (R) (ct. 2). Tiny sliding steps on the balls of the feet are done many times as required. This is usually done forward and they are executed parallel tortillier that performed in starting position, feet together, toes pointed forward, and both feet flat on the floor. Heels are pivoted and toes turned to sideward left (ct.1); pivoting on balls of feet and turning heels to sideward left (ct.2), and so on. Another step performed is chasing step described as stepping R (L) forward (ct. 1) and stepping L @ close to R (L) in third in rear or first position (ct. and). These steps are executed with one foot leading in all direction. The steps are small and there are two chasing in a measure. Jump is to spring on one foot or both feet, landing on both in any direction. And leap is executed as springing from one foot, landing on the other foot in any direction

The succeeding figures show the movement performed in this dance.

FIGURE I

- a. With the knees and trunk slightly bent and feet in second position and flat on the ground, take two step forward, arms in reverse “T” holding the panyo (handkerchief) - - - - -2M

- b. Take two leap steps in any direction with arms obliquely forward holding the panyo (handkerchief)-----
-----2M
- c. Take two shuffling steps forward, arms in right oblique position ----- 4M
- d. Execute two parallel tortillier backward; arms in front and move the shoulders up and down. -----
----- 4M

FIGURE II

- a. Execute eight stamps with right foot, and shift arms from front to right oblique position-----
----- 8M
- c. Take four chasing step sideward left, and shift arms from oblique position to reverse “T”-----
-----2M
- c. Repeat Fig. I – d -----8M

FIGURE III

- a. With both feet flat on the ground, execute quarter –pivot turn and 8 stamps four times and arms in oblique position -----4M
- b. Repeat Fig. I – c ----- 4M
- c. Repeat Fig. III – a ----- 16M

Dancing continues as desired repeating the figures.

Another dance is Binanog, which is classified as ritualistic. This dance originated from Cabangahan, Cantilan, Surigao del Sur and the ethno-linguistic group is Manobo Tribe.

Background and Context. This type of ritual dance is performed during “kahimunan” or full moon prayer ceremony. This dance is executed by a female and male dancer. The dancer uses panyo (handkerchief) while performing.

Dance properties. The costumes worn by the datu are kabos (a polo with short sleeve) and patadjong (long skirt). The female dancer wears saliko (blouse) and patadjong or saja (long skirt). The time signature of this dance is 4/4 and the count pattern is 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, and 2, and 3, and 4. This dance uses gimbe and gong as their musical accompaniment during the performance. The tempo is moderate and there is no definite formation in this dance because they move from any direction. The ritual dance uses “bangkaso” or altar, “apog” or powderized shells, “bujo” or betel leaves, “mam-on” or betel nuts, wine, and pig. Panyo or handkerchief is used by the dancer.

Dance Steps and Pattern. The Binanog ritual dance executed mincing, chasing, and pivot turning. The male and female dancers assume a slightly bent knees and trunk position with feet flat on the ground all throughout the dance and sometimes turning moderately fast especially for male dancer. The steps do not have any particular formation. They move in any direction where their feet would bring them. Arms are moved from second position, to front, and obliquely upward with elbows slightly bent while holding the panyo (handkerchief). These steps which are associated with graceful hand movements, according to the elders in the tribe are originally performed to show the determination of the male to do everything to win the heart of the girl he is courting.

Tempo. Binanog ritual dance has moderate tempo to match with the movement of the dance.

Basic Steps. One of the steps used during the performance are described as follows: mincing step which is executed as starting position, with R (L) foot in fifth position in front, heels are slightly raised or with the leading foot flat on the floor. The tiny steps are executed sideward right (left) as many times as necessary. It may be done with a one, two, or four tiny steps in one count. This movement is done down forward and backward. Another step is chasing step executed as stepping R (L) forward (ct. 1) and stepping L close to R (L) in third in rear or first position (ct. and). The steps are performed with one foot leading in all direction. The steps are small and there are two chasing in a measure. The stamp is executed by bringing down the foot forcibly and noisily on the floor (like doing a heavy step) with or without transfer of weight. And the pivot turn is done by stepping R (L) foot in fourth in front (or a little close to fifth position) and bending the R knee slightly (ct.1), executing a quarter- turn right (left) with the push on the ball of the L (R) foot (heel of the L (R) foot is raised) and raising the R (L) foot slightly off the floor (ct. and). Repeat all movements (cts. 2 and). These are the figures on how movement of this dance are executed.

FIGURE I

- a. With the knees and trunk slightly bent and feet in second position and flat on the ground, the female dancer executes eight mincing steps moving in any direction while male dancer takes eight chasing steps while moving around. Both hands are holding panyo (handkerchief) with arms obliquely swaying right and left alternately. -----
-----16M
- b. The male dancer executes eight stamps and moving forward and backward; both arms are swaying obliquely upward to right and left alternately. Female dancer continues doing the mincing steps -----
-----8M

FIGURE II

- a. Take two chasing steps forward and arms in right oblique position----- 4M
- b. Execute pivot turn, arms shifting from oblique to upward position and swaying it right and left alternately. - -
----- 4M
- c. Repeat a and b -----8M

FIGURE III

- a. Take eight mincing steps in any direction and hands on waist while shoulder moving up and down. - - - - -
----- 8M
- b. Repeat Fig. II (a and b) -----8M

FIGURE IV

- a. Repeat Fig. III -----16M

This shows the musical score of the Inadgawanon, Inamag, and Binanog dance. The time signature is 4/4.



IV. CONCLUSIONS

Manobo ritual dances are unique because of their rich tradition and cultural heritage. The important features like techniques, design, pattern, and rhythm depict the tribe's love and respect as a cultural community. The Manobo ritual dances under study do not point to particular occasions because these dances are performed in one gathering called "kahimunan" or full moon prayer ceremony. The diversity of their dances which are manifested in different dynamics and forms grew out of their experience as one tribe. In general, the Manobo ritual dances have stood still as inimitable and enduring reflections of the history of the Manobo people.

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