

A Dance Notation of the Ata Manobo Dances in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, Philippines

¹Jezreel M. Abarca ²Maria Stella R. Salazar ³Armando R. Salazar ⁴Albert Francis Reginald T. Ramos
University of the Philippines Mindanao

Abstract : *The purpose of this study is to document the Ata-Manobo indigenous dances in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, Philippines. Most ethnolinguistic groups' dances are still undocumented and are typically passed down orally. To depict human motion, however, the Labanotation or Kinetography Laban Method was employed. The researchers also described and examined the unique movements of each dance. The researchers immersed themselves in the Ata-Manobo community in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. There are eight dances that have been identified Aabaka, Natarin, Bangkakow, Tagudturan, Inamungan, Kulutawi, Pungko, and Kalasag. The following procedures were used to notate these dances using Kinetography Laban: (a) captures the dances, emphasizing the body motions; (b) translates the dance movements into a descriptive analysis; (c) examine every bodily movement and identify the notation that goes with it. The goal of this research paper is to support the frameworks that are being developed for the analysis of Ata Manobo traditions and practices. Additionally, it suggests to become the group's physical dance education resource for upcoming and younger generations that aim to preserve their cultural identities.*

Keywords: *Ata Manobo, Indigenous dances, Labanotation or Kinetography Laban*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural revolution is one of the challenges of ethnolinguistic groups (Sharma, 2004). Numerous academics have argued that people alter their own lifeworlds in some way as a result of their interactions with different cultures. A decline in "indigenous" existence has resulted from this cultural state, which has a significant impact on expressive cultures including music, dance, and various crafts (Sharma 2004). Notably, the vast majority of the traditional systems in the Philippines are undocumented and are typically passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition (Abarca 2019). The preservation of cultural identities and historical continuity of ethnolinguistic groups is facilitated by the initiative to document cultural and traditional knowledge (Yamut 2009).

The goal of this research project is to support the frameworks that are being developed for the analysis of Ata Manobo traditions and customs. Additionally, it suggests that it serve as the group's physical dance teaching resource for upcoming and younger generations who want to preserve their cultural identity (Abarca 2019) . The purpose of the research study is to categorize and explain the distinct motions found in different Ata Manobo dances. Moreover, it intends to use the labanotation approach to convert the reported dances into descriptive analyses. A notation system called Labanotation or Kinetography Laban is used to track and examine human movement (Guest 2005). According to the ethnographic practice of considering the social meanings associated with specific types of social action, it documents action from the perspective of the moving individual (Feinberg and Santos 2015). For Labanotation or Kinetography Laban, the researcher takes the following actions: (a) captures the dances, emphasizing the body motions; (b) translates the dance movements into a descriptive analysis; (c) examine every bodily movement and identify the notation that goes with it.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research study employs the descriptive technique of research with the goal of connecting the expressive cultures represented in their dances to pertinent facts on the socio-cultural, political, and economic domains of Ata Manobo. The researchers immersed personally in the community of the Ata Manobo in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. They led focus group discussion, direct participant observation, and key informant interviews. As anthropologists and other social scientists do to comprehend indigenous knowledge, they also took photos and made dance videos (Mensah et al 2014).

Eight Ata Manobo dances—Aabaka, Bangkakow, Inamungan, Kalasag, Tagudturan, Pungko, Natarin, Kulutawi, and Pungko—were recorded during the fieldwork. However, in this particular study, only three were converted into descriptive dance analyses and translated with labanotation. The researchers need more time to verify the data and thoroughly examine each dance move in coordination with the Manobo Tribal Council and dance experts.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ata Manobo

The Ata Manobo people are located in the northwest of Davao del Norte, Bukidnon, and the Compostela Valley. Talaingod, a town in Davao del Norte, is currently located approximately 101 kilometers north of Davao City. Currently categorized as a second-class municipality in the province of Davao del Norte, the town was established on July 2, 1992, under Republic Act 7081. The three barangays (or villages) that make up Talaingod are Barangay Dagohoy, Barangay Palma Gil, and Barangay Sto. Niño. According to the Kalinawa Art Foundation, Ata Manobo make up 72% of Talaingod's population.

The word "Ata" means "human," but "Manobo" means "high place." The term "Ata" is used to describe people who live in high areas or at the top of mountains, but its usage is complicated because it is similar to "Agta," which is more frequently used to refer to Negrito groups in Luzon (Ragragio and Paluga 2019). The Manobo leaders refer to individuals who reside in the highlands as "Pantaron Manobo" and "Talaingod Manobo," believing that the term "Ata" carries negative connotations for them. Following the locations and areas of their ancestral dominion are the preceding terms. The Ata Manobo, Pantaron Manobo, and Talaingod Manobo regard one another as family who share a language and material culture despite these titles (Ragragio and Paluga 2019).

Whenever they trade their cash crops and buy necessities, the Ata Manobo move to the lowlands, or población. They thus get to experience the various lifestyles of the población's residents. They watch and mimic modern dances and music while on these excursions. Merely three out of ten younger members of the community are still acquainted with their cultural dances, as stated by the group's elders and leaders. This sociocultural fact validates previous theories that suggest expressive cultures, like dance, deteriorate over time (Abarca 2019).

Government forces and communist elements are also well-known for being present in the municipality of Talaingod in Davao del Norte. The Ata Manobo have been displaced as a result of the presence of these groups in their society, particularly those who reside in isolated places. This is among the causes for the group's relocation and preference to live far away from one another in order to prevent conflicts of this nature. Because people must ensure their survival and well-being in such a situation, cultural customs—including dances—are impacted and disrupted. The datu, or chieftain, is revered by the Ata Manobo as their leader and the one with ultimate authority over the entire community. Additionally, they have a tribal head who handles any grievances pertaining to Lumad activities and mobilizations (Caduaya 2019). The Ata Manobo elders and other "tribal leaders" are currently cooperating to keep promoting Talaingod's development and transformation.

The Eight Dances of Ata Manobo

The Ata Manobo elders claim that of their eight dances, three—Aabaka, Bangkakow, and Inamungan—reflect human activities in the community. The other four—Tagudturan, a tribal hip-hop dance, for social events, Pungko, ceremonies and rituals, Natarin, an expression of grief and mourning, and Kulutawi, a courtship dance—reflect human activities. Since these dances are frequently unstructured and lack admission and egress, the Ata Manobo dancing moves do not adhere to set protocols. The dancer/chanter's emotions and mental state during the dance determine how long the dance will last. As a result, Ata Manobo dancing moves are unique and exclusive (Abarca 2019).

Dances	Description
Aabaka	Abaca fibers are reaped with the performance of this dance. The dance depicts the pulling of the trunk.
Bangkakow	This dance is done to beseech Manama, the Creator, for a bountiful harvest. The log dance is another name for this dance. The performance typically consists of six people: two male dancers who beat the bangkakow to accompany their dancing movements, and four female dancers who circle the log in a rhythmic manner.
Inamungan	Also known as the harvest dance. To celebrate their abundant harvest, the entire sitio or town comes together on this occasion.
Kalasag	Two male dancers portray a combat with a kalasag (a shield) and a bangkaw (an arrow) in this performance.
Natarin	Two dancers—one man and one female—perform this dance. It's also done when a group member dies or misplaces something. The expressions of grief and mourning are conveyed through the dancing moves.
Kulutawi	Also known as the courtship dance. One male dancer and one female dancer are present. The dancing routine captures the motions of the birds as they hop and fly in an attempt to court one another.
Pungko	Pungko signifies taking a seat. A crippled person is doing this ceremonial dance as a request for total healing from Manama (Creator).
Tagudturan	Also known as the "hip-hop" dance. A male dancer and a girl dancer, both with fast-paced dancing moves, are typically present.

The carefree and modest qualities that are characteristic of the Ata Manobo group are embodied in the dance moves. The Ata Manobo elders and leaders claim that the group's care for the needs of its other members is what makes them kind and modest. The collaboration of the group is similar to how the abundant flora and wildlife in the mountains distribute their abundance of gifts (Abarca 2019).

Included in the Ata Manobo social activities and lifestyle, such as planting cash crops like abaca, rice, and corn, among other things, are also demonstrated by these dance motions. Generally, these virtues have taught the Ata Manobo to defend and protect their lands because it is the "only source of their life." These are some of the Ata Manobo dance movements: banloy (the swaying of hips); hug-ot (the act of pulling the abaca trunk); kios (floor scratching); kotong (straightening the body after bending [popoko]); kuddol (bending of knees); popoko (body bending); pulutawi (wooing movement); sadiow (staying on the post, swaying of hips/body, and stamping of feet with or without chanting); sikal (walking movement); pangadiow (two male dancers in a fighting stance, each holding an arrow for striking and a shield for protection), pungko (both legs crossed and hands making bouncing movements), undok / muduko (the bowing of the head), and takurang (forcibly stamping the feet; this movement is performed when crushing rice and corns) (Abarca 2019).

THREE ATA MANOBO DANCES WITH DESCRIPTION AND LABANOTATION

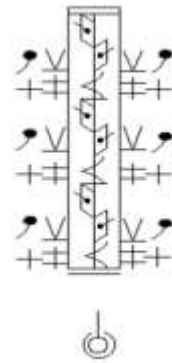
1. Aabaka

Abaca is a cash crop grown by the Talaingod Manobo people. As they are the ones who perform the labor, the elders claim that the harvesting process is physically taxing, particularly for the male Manobo. Since the dance depicts the tugging of the abaca tree's trunk, Aabaka is performed in order to facilitate the harvest process, especially when reaping abaca fibers. In the past, the abaca harvest season is when Aabaka is done. On exceptional events like festivals and social gatherings, it is now danced, though, due to cultural shifts. Typically, this dance is performed by a guy and a female dancer. The male dancer/chanter utilizes a wooden instrument called kudlong, while the girl uses a two-foot-long bamboo guitar called saluroy (Abarca 2019).

The female dancer takes a single post, swinging her hips elegantly and taking "fine" or "tiny" steps with her feet. In order to represent the pulling of the abaca plant's trunk, the male dancer approaches the female dancer and completes a full clockwise spin. The dancers'/chanters' emotions and mental states determine how long the dance will last. It is imperative to emphasize, too, that the dance that was videotaped was short—just two minutes. Furthermore, the beats of the dance movements' accompaniment determine the counting (cts) or repetitions of those motions (Abarca 2019).

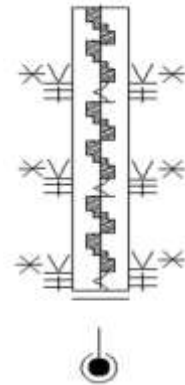
The female dancer with the *saluroy* instrument

1. Sway the hips (banloy) and bend the knees (kuddol) turning obliquely forward and left and doing so with beautiful stamping movements. 40 cts.

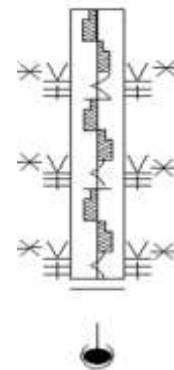


The male dancer with *kudlong* instrument

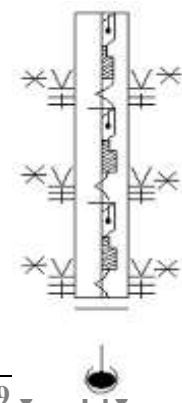
1. Step forward toward partner and backwards away from partner with precise stamping steps, bending the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol). 8 cts.



2. Moving obliquely forward, as though pulling the Abaca trunk, bend the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol) with fine stamping movements. 8 cts.

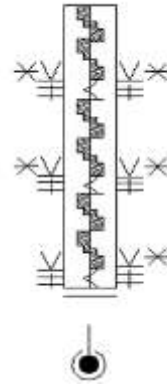


3. Approaching the female dancer and completing a full clockwise turn, bend the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol) with fine stamping steps. 8 cts.



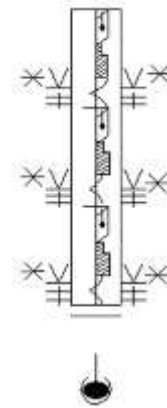
4. Step forward and backward, bending the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol) with fine stamping steps to and from the female dancer's stance.

8 cts.



5. As you approach the female dancer and complete a full clockwise turn, bend your body (popoko) and knees (kuddol) with fine stamping steps.

8 cts.



2. Natarin

Being compassionate is one of the Manobo's virtues. As such, their main priority is the well-being of the group's members. They usually come together to celebrate important holidays and events. Additionally, they exhibit empathy and sympathy when someone is sad or in sorrow. By dancing the Natarin, they express their concern for the impacted people. When an important treasure or trinket is lost, or when someone from the Ata Manobo tribe passes away, this dance is performed. A male and a female dancer are involved. Expressions of melancholy and mourning are depicted in the dancing moves. While the male dancer/chanter utilizes kudlong, the female performer also uses saluroy (Abarca 2019).

As they chant one after the other, the female dancer is one meter away from the male dancer. They chant while remaining on their designated places. They also moved in unison, either in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction. The dancers' and chanters' emotions and mental states also affect how long the dance lasts. Three minutes and 24 seconds were spent on the recorded dance. Furthermore, the dance movements' counting (cts) or repetitions are determined by the beats of their accompaniment (Abarca 2019).

The female dancer with the *saluroy* instrument

1. Straighten the body (kotong) while swaying the body hips and rhythmically stamping the feet to the beat of the chanter (male dancer).

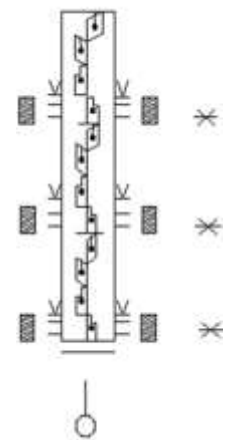
24 cts.



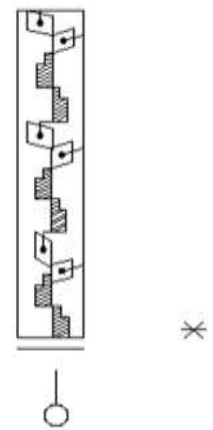
2. Move your right foot (R) sideways and bring your left (L) near to your right (R); move your left (L) foot to the side and bring your right (R) near to your left (L). 8 cts.



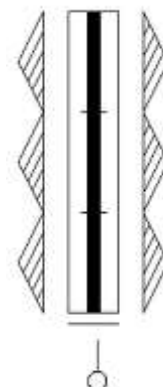
3. Step forward with your right foot (R) and then your left foot (L) (sikal), bending the knees (kuddol), and straightening the body (kotong) and head angled downward while performing small running steps, counterclockwise and taking small steps backward in between. This is repeated clockwise. 8 cts.



4. Step right (R) foot forward followed with left (L) Foot (sikal) while knees are bending (kuddol) and straighten the body (kotong) with head tilting downward then quarter turn, counter-clockwise movement with backward steps. 8 cts.

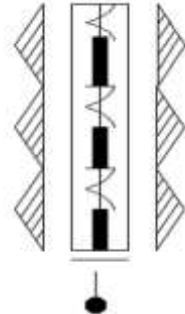


5. As you sway side to side with your body while remaining on post, with the feet stamping. 8 cts.

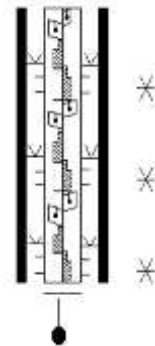


The male dancer with *kudlong* instrument

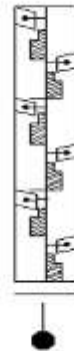
1. Staying position while swinging the body side to side, and stamping the feet while the dancer follows the chant (*sadiow*). 24 cts.



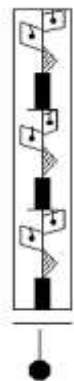
2. Step forward with your right foot (R) and then your left foot (L) (*sikal*), bending the knees (*kuddol*), and straightening the body (*kotong*) and head angled downward while performing doing small running steps, counter-clockwise and taking small steps backward in between while following the girl. This is repeated clockwise. 8 cts.



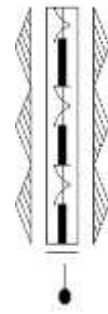
3. The dancer makes a turn while continuing to follow the girl proceed with "*sadiow*" to the right (R) and left (L). 8 cts.



4. Keeping the right (R) foot on the side and remaining on the post turning completely counter-clockwise and then clockwise. 8 cts.



5. Keeping the body swayed on both sides while remaining on post with footsteps stamping. 8 cts.



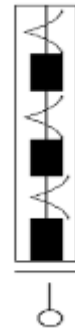
3. Tagudturan

This dance style, referred to as tribal "hip-hop," is typically displayed during social events. The male and female dancers perform a fast-paced Tagudturan dance. In this dance, as in the Aabaka and Natarin, the male dancer/chanter wears a saluroy whereas the female dancer/chanter utilizes kudlong (Abarca 2019).

The female dancer stamps her feet and sways her body while remaining atop one post. She jumps with fine "little," or "tiny" movements. The male dancer steps forward and backward from his partner to the position of the female dancer, positioning himself one meter apart from her. The dance's duration depends on how you're feeling and the chanters'/dancers' emotions. There were two minutes and thirty seconds in the recorded dance. Additionally, the dance movements' counting (cts) or repetitions are based on the beats of their companionship (Abarca 2019).

The female dancer with the *saluroy* instrument

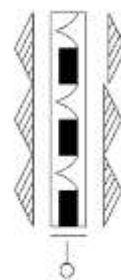
1. Keeping the body moving on both sides while remaining on post and using the feet to stamp (sadiow). 8 cts.



2. Fine leaping motions to the right (R). 8 cts.

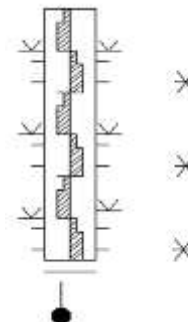


3. Remaining on the post and stamping your feet while swinging your body to both sides (sadiow). 8 cts.

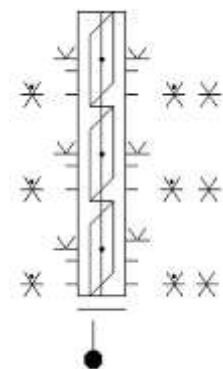


The male dancer with *kudlong* instrument

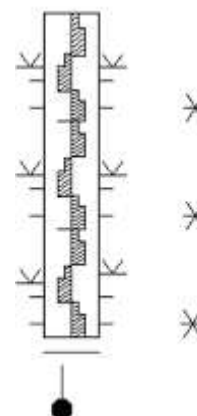
1. Bending the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol). Tilting the head (muduko) while stamping the feet, stepping forward and backward, into and out of the the female dancer's position. 16 cts.



2. Bending the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol). Tilting the head (muduko) while Performing around the partner. 32 cts.



3. Bending the body (popoko) and knees (kuddol) and stamping the feet while tilting the head (muduko) advancing and stepping in close, slightly stamping on the 1st ct. 10 cts.



IV. CONCLUSION

The three dances and the previously shown moves express the rich cultural customs. and the group's customs. They dance as a means of defining and expressing their feelings while also their lifestyles. The Ata Manobo participate actively in a variety of community-wide social events, including as gathering, as demonstrated by the Aabaka dance. They are kindhearted people that give affection and consolation, particularly in the company of fellow group members experiencing hardship, as demonstrated by Natarin. Additionally, the Ata Manobo dances are incredibly exciting and vivacious since they constantly incorporate communal events, as disclosed in Tagudturan. In all this, the Ata Manobo unite in all their undertakings. They simply cannot be compared to anyone else.

Within the discourse of cultural transformation, modern dance and music have the power to influence and transform a given group's expressive cultures. On the other hand, the Researchers expect that the Ata Manobo dance documentation through descriptive and dance notation will serve as the group's concrete teaching tool for next and younger generations. Additionally, the study seeks to support the Ata Manobo in preserving their historical continuities and cultural identities.

V. Acknowledgements

The Researchers would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Office of Research, UP Mindanao for their invaluable support to this research project. Their financial support played a pivotal role in the successful completion of this study.

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