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### “Bugsay-Balod-Kapa-kapa”: The Peculiar Movements in the Lawig Festival of Palompon, Leyte, Philippines

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#### Abstract

One of the major components in preserving one's traditions and culture is to have literature. The lack of dance literature can be seen when you look up the Lawig Festival. The peculiar movements of the Lawig festival in Palompon, Leyte were documented and notated through a descriptive qualitative study. A focused group discussion of ten lumad Palompongonans participated in this study utilizing a semi-structured interview guide as the secondary tool. The analysis of data collected for the dance movements was anchored through Braun and Clarke's Thematic analysis and Movement analysis of Francisca Reyes-Aquino. The researchers analyzed three basic dance steps that reflect the theme of the Lawig festival namely: (1) Bugsay which is derived from the English word "to paddle", it is the act of

rowing or turning an oar parallel to the water between pulls; (2) Balod, from the English word, "wave" a movement that involves a change in the position or location of something, the ripple movement of the surface of the open sea;(3) Kapa-Kapa, it is the motion made by flapping up and down, moving in a wavy pattern with a rising and falling motion. In conclusion, the basic dance steps associated with the Lawig festival have fallen into disuse, thereby giving rise to an apparent erosion of these foundational dance steps. It is recommended that the implementation of the basic dance steps of the Lawig festival should be disseminated throughout the municipality for the benefit of the Palompongonans, choreographers, and performers.

**Keywords:** Peculiar Movements, Basic Dance Steps, Lawig Festival, Movement Analysis

#### Introduction

Peculiar dance steps in every festival are unmistakably unique. Certain dance steps can be found to be more entirely essential when it comes to performing a festival dance. Festival dance is a type of dance that depicts the customs and traditions of the early inhabitants of the area (Batohinog, 2021). Every hand and foot motion carries or reflects the way people lived in the past (Akas & Egenti, 2016) [2]. Due to the innate nature of festivals to be found everywhere in the Philippines, Batohinog (2021) described that particular dance steps can be found to be similar from one festival when compared to another. However, the resemblance of steps does not hinder the significance that the festival dance is meant to impart to its audience. Thus, analyzing the peculiar dance steps of a festival is an imperative thing to do for the festival's dance to be able to have its own identity that is apparent and distinct. This study documented and notated the peculiar movements of the Lawig Festival of Palompon, Leyte. Festivals are held to celebrate one's culture and tradition. Mair (2019) [4] defined festivals as events that are short-term, long-running, and accessible to everyone; and that are usually held based on different dances: mimic animals, livelihood, lifestyle, and other culturally significant figures. Festival dances have two categories: secular and non-secular. Secular refers to a type of festival that commemorates any cultural affairs; a non-secular or religious festival held to honor a town's patron saint. Festival dance utilizes unique actions and figures (Descriptive Essay on Festival Dances, 2022). According to Akas (2013), learning every hand and foot figure of festival performers/dancers allows viewers to acknowledge their ancestors' lives better and respect ancient times. And people need to understand these movements for proper interpretation.

According to Doria *et al.*, (2014) [9], Philippine festival dances represent a variety of variables that are mostly dependent on the community in which they are performed. They depict people's ways of life, beliefs, and customs, among other things, "through movements, costumes, and implements inherent to their place of origin." There are two types of festival dances; secular and religious. Religious festivals are held to commemorate their patron saint or any other religious figure. In the secular, industry

and way of life are also linked to culture and serve as the basis for the idea of dance. As they depict the way of life and the most typical businesses or what the location has been renowned for producing best, the movement and tools are probably frequently found in the business and serve as the dance's inspiration. (Tolentino *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[8]</sup>. Furthermore, the Philippines is home to a diverse range of festivals, both religious and secular in nature. Certainly, what distinguishes a festival dance from others is not just an examination of its aesthetics as expressed in its clothing and music, but also a detailed examination of the fundamental steps that are common to each. (Salonga, 2013). Dances were observed to be a part of almost all forms of festival festivities in many places around the world. It could appear as a movement reflecting their culture and traditions. These are particular people, creatures, or occurrences that were found to be noteworthy on the foundation for this kind of staging. These dances have the uniqueness of a country or belief system, an identity that has persisted since the dance's conception and is maintained today because the art form has been successful in preserving the culture for which the performance was intended. (Tolentino *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Festivals are used to highlight the varied culture of Leyte. Festivals help a location or community become well-known by attracting visitors from the neighborhood. A type of dance that depicts the cultures and traditions of the ancient people is the celebration dance. Every hand and foot action represents or carries the customary lives of people in the past (Akas & Egenti, 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>. Festival dance is essential to the success of a festival since it serves as a means of defining the origin, location, and culture that has been passed down through the years. They have been employed as tools for cultural preservation and are crucial for advancing tourism in a particular area.

This study provides for further understanding and appreciation of the Lawig Festival's cultural legacy and artistic expression. This will provide insight into the historical and social settings that shaped the evolution of the dance forms as well as the festival itself. Furthermore, this can help to preserve and promote dancing traditions and the festival as part of the community's intangible cultural heritage.

Several studies have explored the significance and impact of dance festivals on cultural identity and social cohesion. For example, a study by D. D. Reddy and K. S. K. Rao (2012) examined the cultural and social significance of the Bonalu festival in Andhra Pradesh, India, which features the unique dance form of "Potharaju." The study found that the festival and the dance form serve as a unifying force for the community and contribute to the maintenance and transmission of cultural traditions. Another study by T. C. Lo and M. L. Yeh (2019) focused on the impact of the annual "Taiwan in Tango" festival in Taiwan, which showcases Argentine Tango. The study found that the festival provides opportunities for cultural exchange and can enhance social cohesion by bringing together people from different backgrounds and communities. Given that, studying the peculiar movements of a dance festival provides insight into the cultural and traditional practices of a community. It can also promote cultural understanding and preserve cultural heritage.

On December 2, 2011, the first Lawig Festival in Palompon, Leyte was officially launched. The 1st Lawig Festival, which was planned and led by the Palompon Local

Government Unit, included 12 vibrant contingents from all around its municipal boundaries. Every year on December 2, a celebration is held to commemorate the feast of Saint Francis Xavier. Because Palompon is a coastal town, people commemorate a religious non-secular festival called Lawig Festival, meaning "to sail on", to pray to the patron saint for a successful fishing harvest and beautiful weather. It also includes street dancing competitions and competing groups performing to impress audiences which is the highlight of the festival. However, the competitors of the said festival tend to overuse the presence of the aesthetic aspect of the dance by using too many props and not focusing on the dance. With this, the audience's attention diverts to the props instead of the dance which makes it difficult to determine if there are existing basic steps. Hence, the researchers conducted this study to document and notate the peculiar movements of the Lawig festival to create its basic steps.

However, one of the major components in preserving one's traditions and culture is to have literature. The lack of dance literature can be seen when you try to look up the Lawig Festival. Demetrio (2013) asserts that every dance move conveys an important message. Yet, the Lawig Festival prioritizes more on the visuals: the costumes and props. The researchers noticed the gap between the dance literature of the Lawig Festival, therefore encouraging them to delve deeper into the study. The researchers are hoping that this research will be useful to society as a whole as well as the organization where they operate. This study will teach dancers and viewers the significance of each gesture and movement displayed during dance festivals. No matter how the inquiry turns out, the result can be used as teaching and learning resources, with local literature serving as a launch instead of other works of literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to document and notate the peculiar movements of the Lawig Festival of Palompon, Leyte.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the usual peculiar movements of the Lawig Festival in terms of its:
  1. hand movements?
  2. footwork?
  3. gesture or non-verbal communication?
2. What are the proposed peculiar movements of the Lawig festival?

### **Materials and Methods**

#### *Design*

The study employed the descriptive qualitative research method. This design seeks to describe the data's relationships, patterns, and trends, as well as to offer a full and accurate picture of the population or phenomenon under consideration. Surveys, observational studies, and case studies are all examples of descriptive research designs (Sirisilla, 2023). Since the researchers will be involved in compiling the data for the festival dance, a descriptive research design is an ideal technique to document and notate the peculiar movements of the Lawig Festival of Palompon, Leyte.

#### *Informants and Sampling Design*

Ten participants from Palompon, Leyte who were familiar with the Lawig Festival dance, were purposely considered to

participate in this study. To select participants, this sampling technique used specific criteria or purposes (Creswell, 2007) <sup>[11]</sup>. They were selected on the basis of the following criteria: 1) they must be from Palompon, Leyte; and 2) they must have watched or participated in the Lawig Festival for at least three years.

#### *Locale*

This study was conducted in Palompon, Leyte. This was the location of the study since this is where the Lawig Festival is celebrated. Palompon is a 2nd class municipality in the province of Leyte.

#### *Instrumentation*

The researchers were the study's instrument (Creswell, 2007) <sup>[11]</sup>. Hence, a focused group discussion (FGD) utilizing a semi-structured interview guide served as the secondary tool. Focused Group Discussion (FGD) is a method that involves gathering a small group of people who share the same backgrounds, and experiences. Furthermore, this allows participants to agree or disagree with one another, providing insight into how a group believes about an issue, the range of thoughts and notions, and the differences and variations that exist in specific communities in terms of beliefs, experiences, and practices (Research Tools: Focus Group Discussion, 2009). The participants were guided by the researchers who served as the facilitators. This was to guarantee that no pertinent questions or information was left unanswered or unsettled by the participants.

#### *Data Gathering Procedure*

The data gathering was commenced after the researchers received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee. An in-depth interview was performed with the respondents using a semi-structured interview guide and a focused group discussion. The data from these interviewees significantly supported the information gathered. Recordings were made using both cameras and video cameras. It took several viewings of the recorded film in order to clearly record or note each and every step pattern that the dancers took. The dance elements that were used were also very well described by the photos and the movie that was shot.

#### *Data Analysis*

The researchers used two kinds of data analysis. Braun and Clarke's Thematic analysis and Movement analysis of Francisca Reyes-Aquino. The Braun and Clarke thematic analysis approach consists of six steps: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) producing codes, (3) generating themes, (4) evaluating themes, (5) defining and labeling themes, and (6) locating exemplars. Either the topic is not adequately supported by the data, or the theme is not sufficiently supported by the text segments due to their excessive variety. A more comprehensive build may require renaming the theme or including it as a subtheme.

Therefore, the data gathered will be analyzed using the movement analysis of Francisca Reyes-Aquino following the movement dance notation. Dance notation is the symbolic depiction of dance movement; it is similar to movement notation but may only be used to express certain types of dances and human movement. It is used for technical exercises, choreographic documentation, analysis,

and reconstruction. Francisca Reyes Aquino's notation system will be used to record the dance instructions and analyze them. Moreover, Aquino's notation did not include dancing terms instead she used the local terms of the dance movement.

#### *Rigor of the Study*

The trustworthiness of a study is essential when assessing its worth. Lincoln and Guba (1985) construct their approach to trustworthiness on the following four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

*Credibility.* According to Maher *et al.* (2018) <sup>[12]</sup>, credibility affirmed that the study's measurements are on target and are an accurate reflection of the participant's responses. To accomplish this, the researchers will first gain the trust of the participants before gathering data. They will be informed in advance about the nature of the research. In this way, the researchers can gain their trust and gather information more quickly once they collect data. Furthermore, this staged approach allowed the researcher to effectively screen key informants to ensure that they met the set criteria. The researchers will use a purposive technique in which prospective key informants who do not meet the set criteria will be excluded from participation.

*Dependability.* According to Maher *et al.* (2018) <sup>[12]</sup>, dependability was utilized systematically to ensure that adequate information was presented and that the study permitted other researchers to repeat the findings. In this study, the researcher will document and notate the peculiar movements of the Lawig Festival of Palompon, Leyte. The data collected by the researchers are only in accordance with the responses of the participants. After documenting and notating the given information, the researchers guarantee that the information that will be collected has been verified by the participants. An expert validated the results after the data was analyzed.

*Confirmability.* To guarantee the study's confirmability, the researchers utilized data analysis techniques appropriate for the nature of the study and to act fairly. The researchers will follow the dance notation of Francisca Reyes Aquino through movement analysis and thematic analysis. This is done to guarantee the information gathered is properly analyzed. All information will be double-checked to verify that what was collected was based on the answers provided by the participants and that no bias occurred during the data analysis.

*Transformability.* This is utilized to relate the study's ability to another research (Maher *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[12]</sup>. The research focuses on documenting and noting the peculiar movements of the Lawig Festival in Palompon, Leyte. The researchers will be the study's instrument and investigator. Documentation and recordings using still cameras and video cameras will be used, as will information from the researchers about the unusual movements of the Lawig Festival. The specifics of the study, including the number and qualifications of participants, will be provided. The researchers will make it possible for other researchers to decide whether the study is relevant to their work.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

The research study underwent an ethical review which was later approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee (REC). The researchers proceeded to give informed consent to the participants who voluntarily

cooperated with the study and the confidentiality between the key informants and the researchers was practiced throughout the data collection. Appreciation was shown by the researchers through giving complimentary gifts to the participants for their cooperation.

**Results & Discussion**

**Lawig Festival**

Meaning: Lawig festival is derived from the Bisayan word "Lawig", meaning "to sail". It is a festival asking for abundant fishing harvest and good weather from their patron, Saint Francis Xavier.

Dance culture: Lowland

Place of Origin: Palompon, Leyte

Ethnolinguistic Group: Palompongonans

Classification: Religious

Performer: Men and Women

Movements Peculiar to the dance/ Basic dance steps

BUGSAY: The act of rowing or turning an oar parallel to the water between pulls.

BALOD: A movement that involves a change in the position or location of something, the ripple movement of the surface of the open sea.

KAPA-KAPA: The motion made by flapping up and down, moving in a wavy pattern with a rising and falling motion.

Contextualized Basic Movements of the Lawig Festival

Legend:

- R-right
- L-left
- ct- count
- M-measure

**Bugsay**

a. The body facing L(R), arms forward palms facing front, pull R arm backward while raising R leg to the front (CT 1), arms forward palms facing front while R leg in place (CT 2) .....1M

b. Rotate R arm counter-clockwise while raising R leg to the front (CT 1), arms forward, palms front while R leg in place (CT2).....1M

c. Face front. Step R foot forward, point L foot backward, raise both arms overhead in a V position, pivot turn (CTS. 1, 2, 3, 2) raise R leg forward in high-knee position (CTS. 4,2, 5, 2).....2M

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/17\\_IR89LK2BhAB\\_4p-oXYEXO99ZjsxgKN/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17_IR89LK2BhAB_4p-oXYEXO99ZjsxgKN/view?usp=sharing)

**Balod**

a. Step R foot sideward right, raise L foot, swing both arms to the right (CT. 1) from the right swing both arms to the left, step L foot sideward, raise R foot (CT. 2) step turn, body facing back, swing both arms to the right (CT. 2) from the right swing both arms to the left, step L foot sideward, raise R foot (CT. 2) .....2M

b. Step L foot in place, body facing left, step R foot forward, bend the body a little forward, and position the R (or L) forearm over the L as you cross your hands in front of you.

(or R) (CT. 1), step R foot backward arms in the lateral position, palms up (CT. 2) and repeat.....1M

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/17PvTjqCw8hly7RyQqZS0egaUGiUUz\\_tM/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17PvTjqCw8hly7RyQqZS0egaUGiUUz_tM/view?usp=sharing)  
Kapa-Kapa

a. The body facing front, arms forward, palms facing front, point R foot forward (CT 1). Palms down, twist R foot (CT 2) .....1M

b. Repeat a, arms in T position.....1M

c. Arms in half T position, step R foot forward, body obliquely facing left (CT. 1), step R foot backward, obliquely facing right (ct. 2) and repeat.....4M

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/17QCLQtJSwZfOeoS8ZJprw7SVGvAZCqap/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17QCLQtJSwZfOeoS8ZJprw7SVGvAZCqap/view?usp=drive_link)

Festivals are one of the factors that help a municipality to preserve its culture and traditions, as well as benefit its economy and tourism. Furthermore, it gives them a sense of identity as what they truly are (Gonzales, 2017). The Lawig festival of Palompon, Leyte celebrates their town fiesta every December 2, to thank their patron, Saint Francis Xavier for the abundant fishing harvest and good weather. One of the ways of celebrating the festival is to hold a competition among schools and institutions. However, the researchers found out that the Lawig festival dance does not have distinct steps that would identify the culture and tradition of Palompon, Leyte. Moreover, there is no dance literature.

In the information gathered from the focused group discussion, disclosed that there were three basic dance steps of the Lawig festival. These basic dance steps were no longer included and practiced due to the fact that the choreographers were not originally from Palompon, Leyte. It is revealed that institutions that participated in the said festival would recruit known choreographers outside the municipality. And these choreographers would base their dance steps on the videos they have watched, and from other neighboring festivals that would fit the theme of that certain festival (Tolentino, *et al.* 2020)<sup>[8]</sup>. With that, the dance steps of the Lawig festival no longer have distinct steps that would identify the culture and tradition of Palompon, Leyte.

*“Some of the choreographers are from Cebu, which means what they taught at Cebu’s festivals is also what they taught here”-Participant L*

*“There were basic steps, however, since the choreographers were from other places, the choreograph steps were different”-Participant F*

The influence of globalization and modernization changed the traditional cultures all around the world (Relampagos, 2017). As a result, some steps have been modified in order to adapt to the festival's concept, as well as the major influence of previous events diluted the festival dance's authenticity into a different general performance.

*“Like the festival in Bantayan which is the Palawod festival. It has the same meaning as the word ‘Lawig’, which means to sail. So, they link the word to it.”-Participant B*

The dance steps were inspired by neighboring festival dances, in which the original or the native dance steps were supposed to be taken as a basis and foundation for the development of the festival, but with the result of subjectivity for choreographers' viewpoint dominates the choreography leading to a loss of identity.

These dance steps do not have specific terms, unlike other festivals found in the Philippines. And that resulted in the researchers creating the dance terms based on the given dance steps. The terms created were: (1) Bugsay, the act of rowing or turning an oar parallel to the water between pulls; (2) Balod, a movement that involves a change in the position or location of something, the ripple movement of the surface of the open sea; (3) Kapa-kapa. the motion is made by flapping up and down, moving in a wavy pattern with a rising and falling motion. These terms were only created based on the similarities and the researchers think that would fit into what the festival is all about.

*“It doesn't have a term”-Participant D*

*“I don't know, but it's called the basic steps. I really don't know the specific name of this figure because when they taught us, they won't name it”-Participant F*

Aside from the dance and enormous props, facial expressions are one of the factors that would add fuel to the performance. It also contributes to what really the dance is all about (Jaffe, 1954). Opening their mouths wide while projecting happiness or fierceness were the most commonly used facial expressions in the Lawig festival. Not only this, the opening of the mouth is also used as a technique for performers to breathe properly while dancing as per the choreographers' instructions.

*“It must be serious”-Participant L*

*“The mouth should be wide open because it is part of most of the festivals to breathe properly. It is also a technique so that the judges can see the performers clearly. That is why if the lipstick is red, it must be super red, and if it's black, then it's darker. But it still depends on the choreographers. There were parts that you should project fiercely, and also smile.”-Participant A*

Dance is a vital activity for an individual since it provides social entertainment and happiness. (Balasingham & Palanivel, 2013) An individual empowered to express himself with power, and that's dancing unified dance steps and facial expressions are considered to be the common language without any limits in meaning. The meaning and repeated movements of the eyes, hands, feet, and shoulders, as Martin Heidegger points out in his theory of things, can be symbolic material for the creation of choreography that gives meaning to the culture of a society. To properly grasp what the act of executing a choreographed movement might entail in a culture - that is a person must have a fundamental comprehension of what performing any executed movement entails. There must be some appreciation of how physically

moving through a choreographic moment could impact a person and their cultural understanding. In the concrete, the Palompongonans do not only consider the dances performed during the festival to be foot dances hand dances, or facial expressions, but they consider them to be very sacred because of the cultural significance of their traditions.

### Conclusion

There are three basic dance steps of the Lawig festival, however, the movements lack official names or terms. The labels for the dance steps were proposed by the researchers based on their dance movements. These terms, "Bugsay," "Balod," and "Kapa-Kapa," were given to the dance steps in resemblance to the actions such as paddling, arm swinging, and swimming. These basic dance steps reflect the livelihood and the devotion to Saint Francis Xavier of the Palompongonans.

### Recommendations

For future researchers to conduct an interview with a lumad who has a background of being a choreographer of the festival to further the knowledge of the basic steps and dance terms of the Lawig festival. This is to further enhance the knowledge of the Lawig festival dance terms.

For the LGU of Palompon, Leyte especially the tourism office to disseminate the dance literature that was produced through this research to the school, and the new generation of choreographers of the festival in order to have a uniform execution of dance steps when performing the festival. It is suggested to have a technical group to study more about the festival and its dance terms. It is also necessary to conduct seminar workshops for the proper execution of basic dance steps for the school, choreographers, and community.

For the school to use the dance literature that was produced through this research. And use the dance literature as a teaching tool within the classroom for the students to appreciate the festival of their province.

For the new generation of choreographers to follow the dance literature provided by the tourism office recommended by the researchers when teaching the festival dance to the dancers. The implementation of the basic dance steps in the festival is highly encouraged as part of the choreography in order to have distinct steps for the purpose of achieving a sense of uniformity and identity among performers.

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