

## Contextualizing Local Dance Festival on the Lifestyle of Negrense Sugarcane Plantation Workers

Randyll V. Villones\*

Faculty Teacher Development-Philippine Normal University Visayas, Cadiz City Negros Occidental, Philippines

*\*Corresponding Author:* Randyll V. Villones, Faculty Teacher Development-Philippine Normal University Visayas, Cadiz City Negros Occidental, Philippines. Email: villones.rv@pnu.edu.ph

### ABSTRACT

The proliferation of several local dance festivals in Negros Island is very obvious and such existence is not spontaneous with time and event. This bandwagon has prompted other nearby cities and municipalities to create their version of a local dance festival. This study aims to develop a contextualized local dance festival patterned after the traditional and interesting lifestyle of the Negrense sugarcane plantation workers locally known as Mamumugon. A descriptive – narrative approach was employed by the researcher to gather information on the Mamumugons way of life in a vast sugarcane plantation from 30 participants using the open-ended questionnaire, a focus group discussion and direct observation. Thematic analysis was used by the researcher to determine themes from the participants. Findings show that most choreographers and dance teachers simply create the movement patterns including attire/costumes, accessories, and music/rhythm and dance implements based on what they see without an in-depth understanding of what they had observed. Whereas, if these interpretations are closely compared to what the typical Mamumugon is, there was indeed a big gap or difference. Moreover, most of these festivals were meager duplication of other popular dance festivals celebrated for several decades now. Such alarming scenario has caught the attention among dance professionals. Festival dances are community dances which are reflective of one's cultural identity and tradition. Thus, this study concludes that festival dances should be contextually framed and grounded. This paper therefore critically analyzes the lifestyle of Negrense sugarcane plantation workers which serve as bases for a contextualized local dance festival.

**Keywords:** Negrense Lifestyle, Sugarcane Plantation Workers, Contextualization, Dance Festivals

### INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is the ninth-largest sugar producer in the world and the second-largest sugar producer among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, after Thailand (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2013). At least seventeen provinces of the Philippines have grown sugarcane, of which the two on Negros Island Region account for half of the nation's total production. Majority of the sugar mills are located in Negros, where six of which is in Luzon, and another four mills on Panay and three mills in Eastern Visayas and also three in Mindanao (Sugar Regulatory Administration, 2013).

Negros is the fourth island of the Philippines, with a land area of 13,309.60 km. Negros is one of the many islands that comprise the Visayas, which forms the central division of the nation. The predominant inhabitants of the island region

are mainly called *Negrenses*. As of 2015, Negros' total population is 4,414,131 inhabitants. From May 29, 2015 to August 9, 2018, the whole Negros was governed as an administrative region, which was officially named the Negros Island Region that comprised the highly urbanized city of Bacolod and the provinces of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental, along with their corresponding outlying islands and islets within a total regional area of 13,350.74 kilometers (Negros Island 2017). Negros is the Philippines' major sugar producer, contributing over half of the country's total production. Some fifty-four percent of its agricultural land is sugarcane-based, and raw is its leading traditional export product (Negros First! Economic Development, 2018). The endless sprawl of sugarcane blanketing the Island of Negros has marked a niche for the country's sweetest crop of the land. Known for many Filipinos as *tubo*, sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) is not far different from the wild

*talahib* (*Saccharum spontaneum*) lining many fields. This is just grass for some, but it has changed the world economy (Yan 2018).

Sugar is central to the evolution of the Negrense culture. The affluence and the prosperity that the industry brought to the province nourished a charming, genteel, sometimes lavish spirit that sets the Negrense apart from his Ilonggo kinsman. They are also regarded as affectionate, generous, fun-loving people who enjoy the finer things in life. As a labor force, however, Negrenses are highly motivated, educated, skilled, trainable and entrepreneurial individuals (About Negros Occidental, 2017).

Negros Island is also tagged as the "Sugar Capital of the Philippines" has indeed played an important role in the dynamic culture of the Negrense lifestyle. The province is also known for well-preserved ancestral homes to serve as reminders of the sugar barons and hacenderos who employed people for manual labour or the sugarcane plantation workers locally known as *mamumugon*.

*Mamumugons'* means of living are mostly dependent on the vast lands of these wealthy owners whom we refer as the hacenderos. Moreover, *mamumugons* used to dwell on these lands for free in exchange for their loyalty and lifetime services to the hacenderos. Such a situation would leave them no choice but forced to work in the sugarcane plantation as *mamumugon* to the rest of their lives. To the *mamumugons*, working on the soil of their "amo" (male boss) or "ama" (female boss) or superiors is the only available work for them. Thus, such a situation framed the idea that their only way to survive against the harsh and great daily demands of life is to be *amamumugonsakampo*.

Among the younger folks, *mamumugon* are fondly called *kartaps*; a corrupted action word for *karga* (loading) and *tapas* (harvesting). *Mamumugon* means a worker in the vast haciendas of sugarcane plantation whose life is extremely difficult. A hard-working *mamumugon* has to tilt the land, plant and fertilize the field, cuts the sugarcane and load onto the truck to be transported to the sugar mill. Despite the hardships of the *mamumugon*, they have managed to recreate themselves through singing, dancing and playing as a way of releasing their feelings of tiredness, pain, and difficulty of living. The life of *mamumugon* can be compared to that of sugarcane; if *mamumugon* could standstill to the test of times,

the sugarcane can also be grown to all types of soil, it could manage to survive and grow, from sandy to clay loams and from acidic volcanic soils to calcareous sedimentary deposits. Indeed, the *mamumugons* have made an impact on the history of plantation life and the culture of the Negrenses.

Today, most towns and cities local festivals in the province or Negros Island in general, never forget to unfold this very interesting part of Negrenses' local history by highlighting the *mamumugons'* way of life as a local motif or theme of their dance presentations even on the streets. But it is also sad to note that manner how these dance festivals presented the *mamumugons'* way of life, it did not reflect much nor capture some important and interesting details of typical sugarcane workers should be. Thus, correct costumes, dance implements and movement patterns were not truthfully encapsulated in a presentation but rather it was overly done artistically and at some point, it is too good to be true which become misleading to the audience.

Mindful of the past that sooner or later we could no longer see the huge sugarcane plantations in the Island, for now, is a different scenario, as more lands, as the time goes by, are converted into industrial and commercial uses, as big players suddenly change businesses and leave behind those who work and depend on the sugar industry (Bayog 2017). The once monocrop economy of the Negrenses, it has evolved and has started to introduce to its people other crops which could alleviate the dying economic life of its people and its land. Such, rapid changes in the landscape of Negros Occidental which is geared towards diversification, the *mamumugons'* great contribution to the economic life of a Negrense may also be forgotten. Thus, as a Negrense, the author finds obligated to do something, such as documenting this beautiful and fascinating Negrense culture may be considered as of the best way of preserving and protecting the Negrense culture intact. This written document may serve as proof and a testament of this long decade of *mamumugons'* life struggles which captivated every inquisitive mind to deepen one's understanding about every facet of *mamumugons'* way of life. Additionally, Negros Occidental vastness of lands coupled with the richness of history has provided impetus to this academic endeavor to record and analyze further a very colorful and interesting Negrense Culture for the furtherance of its propagation through dance.

Since the festival is a vital event of any tourism industry nowadays which provides attraction to a multitude of visitors from near and far from the province and the country in general? Thus, fiesta should mirror and reflect the Filipinos' and Negrense' in particular diverse cultural heritage and character. Some festival names may sound good and very correct since it is usually explaining why the festival name was named as such, but the problem lies in how these movement patterns were constructed or if these movements are contextually framed.

To contextualize means to put into context of a situation and it, therefore, does not mean changing the original meaning of a statement. In the case of contextualizing the indigenous dance movement, it simply means presenting the communicating an interpretative potency of the dance moves to mirror the society, send up the society or to encourage the ruling and the ruled in the society. Contextualization helps in bringing to bear the in-depth analysis of any given performance beyond its superficial level, it is at this point one can understand what gave rise to the dance and what it is made of the base on its communicative and interpretation potency (Akas 2014).

Besides, Akas (2014) also stressed that in the contextualization of any given performance especially in dance, the results of its analysis and interpretation may vary in form, style, pattern, and aesthetics, but will always maintain the required meaning according to the community or society that owns it. Contextualization helps to communicate the innermost intending message, opinion, and view of a choreographer before, during and after choreographing a dance movement.

Most of the dance movements present in the street dancing nowadays particularly in the Negros Islands are perfectly combined with various body movements, nice ingenuity in its creative expression and aesthetically attractive use of varied costumes, huge sets, props, and backdrops. All of these magical and spectacular elements and qualities found in the festival dances have reduced its context to just mere entertainment.

These myopic understanding and interpretation of festival dances have been a great concern among dance professionals, thereby motivating neophytes' dance trainers to redress their perceptions in seeing festival dances as a communicative, educative, informative yet entertaining tool by giving it a contextualize

interpretation – base on its theme, form, pattern, and style.

Moreover, it was also observed that most festival dances if closely analyzed its themes would vary from religious practices, belief systems, economic way of life, legend based, old-aged practices which showcase to celebrate the struggles and triumphs of its people, these themes would require deeper understanding among choreographers and other dance enthusiasts and should be rooted in its context, more so with the themes that are indigenous in nature. Philips (2009) maintains that the indigenous dance passed down each clan's beliefs and history long before they are written down.

It is an element of the oral history of each tribal country. Henry (2008) added indigenous dance movement has both historic and social traditions that reflect more significance than those of many other cultures. Some of the dance movements when interpreted portray praises to the gods for helping them during planting season, a victory in war or for successful child delivery.

With these premises, it necessitates among choreographers to unearth and dig deeper on their analyses rather than superficial, the emotional, sociological, and physical, psychological and environmental dimensions of creating the dance movements. At this point, the theory of art for art sake or mere base-less creation of beautiful movement combinations would become secondary while communicative interpretation in dance movement takes the upper edge. This paper, therefore, introduces the idea of contextualizing popular Negrense street dancing festivals on the island.

### Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to develop a contextualized local dance festival pattern from the traditional and interesting lifestyle of Negrenses' Plantation Workers locally known as mamumugon. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

- Identify and describe *Mamumugons* way of life as to:
  - Process/pattern of work at the sugarcane plantation and other related activities
  - Attire and dance implements used during their actual work.
  - Music/ rhythm may be used while working in the field.

- Extract, analyze and develop a contextualized mimetic dance movement pattern which could serve as the basic movements in any local dance festival highlighting the *mamumugons* way of life in the sugarcane plantation.

### METHODOLOGY

This descriptive- narrative approach which made use of documentary analysis and fieldwork as tools of research in recording and determining the pattern of *mamumugons* way of life in the vast sugarcane plantation in terms of background/cultural context, movements' description, clothing/costumes, dance implements, and music/rhythm. The aforementioned dance properties were found useful in establishing the context of the dance festivals anchored on the sugarcane plantation workers locally called *mamumugon* to wit : studying the background of the subject where the festival dance should be grounded , could provide us a broader spectrum in knowing and understanding further its origin which could possibly provide concrete ideas about its nature and the characteristics. Even in their ways of dressing up themselves most especially with their working clothes, their choice of colors speaks for the kind or nature of work they used to have in the field. Clothing is indeed reflective of one's culture and indicative of our social classes. It sets the true character of the people involved. Their music also manifests their true feelings and emotions; at times it displays their moods as they travail each day of their work under the heat of the sunlight. The use of various implements by workers would rationalize the intricacies and hardships of their work as a farmer.

Akas (2014) added two of the many ways of developing a contextualization perceptive on indigenous dance movement is to explore and use dance elements, vocabularies, technologies of various dance, forms, style, and genres, another is to always investigate, appreciate and learn about dance in relation to its social and cultural contexts. He also mentioned that the core aims of interpretation on indigenous dance movements in education are to learn in, through and about dance an aesthetic and artistic form symbolic representation and expressive communication.

Furthermore, the researcher agrees with the above-mentioned arguments made by Akas, thus to get the accurate data or information of the subject in this academic discourse an interview with the workers were conducted using a semi-

structured interview guide. The collection of data started as early as June until May or approximately ten months before the sugarcane is due for harvest. The process or pattern of the *mamumugons*' fieldwork was closely tracked by the researcher thru the help of his contact person who is in-charged to supervise their work, he is popularly known to them as the "*inkargado*" (trusted person of the landowner who is tasked to supervise and monitor the work of the *mamumugon* in the field). The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 15 farm workers and another 15 choreographers who previously utilized sugarcane plantation workers as their festival theme, gathering a total of 30 respondents. Data gathered from these interviews, contributed much to support the gathered data. Still, pictures and video camera were also used to record the *Mamumugons* work in the sugarcane plantation. The recorded video was played several times to vividly record or notates every single step pattern being done by the *mamumugon* and both video and the captured pictures helped a lot in the descriptions of the costumes and the dance implements used.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Mamumugons Way of Life

All information that was gathered from the aforementioned sources were analyzed and filtered. Common movement patterns were also extracted and described. Below are the different dance properties and elements which were considered as materials in contextualizing the local dance festival in the life of Negrense sugarcane plantation workers. This includes the different patterns of work and other related activities, clothing and the used of dance implements during their actual work, music or rhythm used. All of these data served as baseline for the creation of the contextualized movement pattern for the local dance festival.

#### Process/Pattern of Work at the Sugarcane Plantation and Other Related Activities

The work in the sugarcane field usually follows the same work sequence. There are some instances that other workers would deviate from the usual routine, but in most cases, they stick to the traditional way of doing it. In one of my interviews with a certain group of farmers they commonly shared below the different processes/ patterns of their works in the field: Pag-Arado (Tilling the land with a plow) -Traditionally, a plow is attached to a carabao used in tilling the land.

A carabao or water buffalo is a large animal like a cow with long horns that lives in Asia and is often used to pull plows. A plow is a piece of farm implement that is used to dig into and turn over the soil especially to prepare the soil for planting.

*"Sasubongkalabanangamangunganag agamitna sang traktora para madasig ang obra, pero kami yanagamantinir man gihapons a ka rbaw"* ("Today, most of the farmers are using some heavy equipment to expedite their work, but to us, we still use our carabao")

Panatum (Planting) - -An act of planting using "patdan" (a sugarcane stalk which was cut short and sharpen at the end being used for planting).

Pag- Abono (Applying fertilizers) - -Putting fertilizer on the soil. Fertilizer is a substance (such as manure or a chemical) that is added to soil to help the growth of the plants. There are two different traditional ways of fertilizing the soil, these are: Was-ag which means scattering the fertilizer on the soil and Pang-tagad which is done by making a hole in a soil near the sugarcane roots with the use of tagad (a one meter-long iron with a pointed end used for digging hole) where a small amount of fertilizer is dropped and covered with soil.

*"Kabalosa ang ibannagagamit nag ani ka spray, pero para saamon mas epekitibo ang kinaraanngapamaagi"* ("you know what, some are using now the spray, but in our case, we still prefer the traditional way effective.")

Panghilamon (Weeding off the field) -This is done to free the field from different grasses that could hinder the growth of the sugarcane stalks.

*"kinanglanmoguidsundon ka panghilamon kay makibotkalang mas mataas pa ang hilaionsaimotanom, tipigawtubo sg imotanum"* (" you need to regularly weed-off the ground, you will be shocked that the grass is taller than your sugarcane, your plants might not grow well")

Pangkahig (Raking the soil) --Process of cultivating the land by elevating the soil at the root ends.

Panapas/Pangtapas (Cutting the sugarcane) - This is an act done to harvest the sugarcane. There are varied strokes of cutting the sugarcane. The harvest period is from October to December and ends in May. Harvest season is the most awaited part of the *mamumugons'* work in the field. *"Malipayonguid ang tanan,*

*matilawannaguidnamonsadilimadugay angamonkinabudlayan. Madako-dako man ang amobatononkag may padya man kami saamon Amo, daw mayo ang amonpatubas"* ( " Everyone is filled with happiness, few days from now we will taste the fruit of our labor, We might be receiving huge amount of money and incentives from the landowner, it seems like we have a good harvest")..

Pamatdan (Cutting the sugarcane ends) - This is the process of separating or cutting the other end of the sugar cane ends which will be used for planting new sugarcanes. *Pamatdan* is also done during harvest time, as the *Mamumugon* harvest or cut the long stem of *tubo*, they immediately cut the lower portion of the stalk which will serve as *patdan*, ready for the planting season.

*" Gina prepararninamon sir ang patdan, basis sasunodngasemanamanamunnaman kami ". We have to prepare this sugarcane ends sir, maybe next week we will start planting again").*

Pangkarga/Pang-ngarga (Carrying/loading the sugarcane) - This process is done when the harvested sugarcane is transferred or loaded to the Trucks from the field. Loading of the sugarcane was then transported through a *bagon* or *bagonita*(a huge trolley made of steel that could carry a huge volume of sugarcane).

Each trolley or cart is attached that would look like a train of trolleys that are being pulled by locomotive also known as "the iron dinosaur" passing thru a railroad leading to the sugar mill site.

*"Makapoyguid mag pangkarga, mabug -at guid, pero kaya ah, naanadnasa pila na ka tuig".* ("It is tiring and hard to carry and load the sugarcane, but we can still sustain it, besides we have been doing this for several years now.")

### Other Related Activities

Aside from planting, cutting, loading and harvesting the sugarcane which is all considered as the usual routine that *Mamumugon* does in the field, these plantation workers could still find a time and manage to lighten their workloads by engaging other activities below most especially during their break time.

*Orit* (Break time) -this means a rest from work. As expressed by one participant "*orit*" is equivalent to "alright" in English. This means that it is the right time where a farm worker would take a break and eat for a snack or lunch brought and prepared for them by their loved ones or wives.

" *makapoy man ang obrasakampo, makakaon man kagmakapahuway man kami konoritna para may pwera*" ( " *it is really hard to work in the farm, we can only eat and rest during our break time for us to regain our strength.*" ).

*Dugsing* (Teasing/ courting) -despite the hardships of their work, farm workers find solace from the company of their wives where the latter would at times teas and court each other in a more fun and loving ways.

" *Maayoguid Sir kon, upod ko simisis, wala ko batyagkapoy, maistoryahon kapa.*" (" *It's nice if you work with your wife sir, you will not feel tired besides you have someone to talk with.*" ).

### Attire/Clothing and Dance Implements Used During their Actual Work

*Attire* or clothing is also referred to as a dance costume that is worn by a dancer when performing before a big crowd. The dance costume is patterned after the traditional and typical attire used by the natives while working in the field. Moreover, a costume may portray or relate to some characteristic, mood, or theme of the dance.

Additionally, A folk costume (also regional costume, national costume, or traditional garment) expresses an identity through costume, which is usually associated with a geographic area or a period in history. It can also indicate social, marital or religious status. If the costume is used to represent the culture or identity of a specific ethnic group, it is usually known as ethnic costume (also ethnic dress, ethnic wear, ethnic clothing, traditional ethnic wear or traditional ethnic garment). Such costumes often come in two forms: one for everyday occasions, the other for traditional festivals and formal wear (Estonica Encyclopedia n.d.).

*Boys:* Camisa de chino, collarless short or long-sleeved (cotton material). Checkered, stripes or plain long-sleeved polo shirt fully opened at the front used as over-shirt, this is matched with any dark-colored pants. The head is covered with *purông* and *kalo*. *Purông*. A round neck t-shirt used to cover the head as protection against the sunlight. The head slips through the hem of a short-sleeved t-shirt which allows only the eyes, nose, mouth and a portion of the face to be exposed on the neck-hole. The sleeves are tied-up at the back of the head. This is worn by the boys and occasionally by the girls.

*Girls:* The same with boys, however, a checkered or plain knee-length overskirt is

added. The head is covered with *turban* and *kalò*. Dancers are wearing rubber sleepers but most of them are time barefooted.

*Turban*. A piece of cloth usually made of cotton folded in triangular shape used as *takorong* or headcover to protect the girl head against the heat of the sun. It can be noted that the garments or the attire of both girl and boy *mamumugons*, fully wrapped their entire body and only the face, hands and the feet are exposed. According to them, one reason is to protect themselves under the heat of the sun and likewise avoid some skin itchiness or irritation due to sugarcane leaves and other insects present in the field.

### Dance Implements

Many forms of dance do require special equipment and/or apparel. In some cases, dance equipment and apparel only help create the mood, like the spiky high heels worn for Latin and ballroom dancing. In other cases, a special pair of shoes is a necessity; to dance a full-length ballet *en pointe* truly requires that one wear a pair of pointe shoes (Dance Equipment 2018). On the contrary, in the case of folk dancing the dance implement/s is not just apparel but a very important tool that is of vital importance for a particular role or character that a dancer must relate. In most cases, a dance implement recreates a theme or scenario of bringing the dance closer to a real-life situation. Below are different farm implements which are commonly used by the *mamumugon* in their work at the sugarcane field.

*Binugkos nga Tubô*( Bundle of Sugarcane stem) -A bundle of sugarcane stem approximately cut of the same length. The number of stems depends on the capacity of the person to carry with the use of *saklit*.

*Ispading* (Cane Knife) - A tool used for cutting sugarcane palm also known as cane knife.

*Kalò* (Native Hat)- A native hat usually made of Buri ( Buri is the largest and most common palm in the Philippines ) worn on top of *turban/purong* (a piece of cloth used to wrap the head to protect it from the heat of the sun). Attached to it is a garter that holds the *kalò* from being blown by a strong wind. *Pinutos nga Balon* (Food wrapped with cloth) - Food wrapped with banana leaf and white recycled cloth called *katsa*. This is usually attached or hung to one end of sugarcane stem when carrying the *balon*. *Sabakan* (Improvised empty sack bag)- An empty sack used as improvised

bag hung in front of the waist filled with *abono* to be scattered over the soil.

*Saklit* (Rubber tire binder) - A rubber taken from tire interior approximately one meter or longer, six inches in width with a ring at one or both ends. This is used to bind or wrap around the sugarcane stems to make it easy for the boys to carry or load the *tubó* in going up the *andamyo/damyo* (ladder). The rubber also protects sakadas shoulders from chaffing. The actual size of *saklit* may not be used instead, the smaller size of rubber to tie-up all the stems together for dancing purposes.

*Sanggot* (Scythe) - A farming tool with a curved blade and long handle that is used during *pamatdan*. This is placed inside the *tagub*.

*Tagâd* (Digging tool) - A pointed tool used to dig the soil to create a hole where the fertilizer is placed and covered with soil again. (*May not be used in the actual dance*)

*Tagub* (Scythe Cover) - A customized scabbard usually made of wood used to protect the user from the scythe blade. This is usually hung around the waist with the use of abaca rope.

*Tabig/bakag* (Native Basket) - Small native basket with a sling made of abaca rope used as a container in distributing *patdan* in the field.

*Tubó*(Sugarcane) - Approximately one meter-long. Fresh or dried sugarcane may be used

### Music/ Rhythm may be used while working in the Field

Farm workers do not have a definite song or any music that they used to listen every time they work on the field. Others would love to hum their favorite songs and lullaby for those who have a vivid recollection of their childhood. Some would use familiar folk songs that match the movement patterns. For others, who do not have a good quality of voice to sing, they just prefer to clap their hands do some rhythmic combinations patterned after the movements. Today, most of them would just depend on whatever melody or songs being played in their portable transistor radio.

“*Censyaguid, walaguid KO may nahibaluanngakanta sir, libagonguid KO, mayo konupod ko dirisi Lola kay mayo guid to magkantakinaraan.*” (“*Sorry sir, I not familiar with any song, It would be better if grandma is here with us, she can sing better some old songs*”).

### Contextualized Mimetic Dance Movement Patterns

Movement patterns of the actual work of the *mamumugons* in the field which were videotaped and reviewed several times to accurately extract the step patterns for notation of movements which were considered part of contextualized dance movement. The analysis of the movement patterns was also backed-up with close observation during the actual work in the field for several occasions. Some actions which were found dubious, the details of which were supported with a one-on-one interview from the source.

On the other hand, the use of dance implement in the course of executing the work or action was also included in the notation. Actions imitating the actual usage of these dance implements were mimic or imitated making it more realistic. In terms of the attire; the description that was mentioned above was typically followed in contextualizing the dance. Any working clothes similar to the description of attire previously mentioned may be used in the dance for both boy and girl.

Below are the sample contextualized mimetic dance movement patterns which were the result of extracting movement patterns from *Mamumugon* way of life starting from plowing the field until harvest time. This dance material truly mirrors the travails and hardships, yet very interesting life of a *mamumugon*. Through this written material it is hoped that this very significant story of a *Mamumugon* can be preserved and can never be forgotten, likewise, may these pieces of literature serve as an aspiration to the future generation. This new instructional material in additional dance literature which can be utilized in the teaching of Philippine traditional dance that is contextually framed in the Negrense setting.

It is also very important to note that in using any part of this dance literature, the background context should be explained first to the learners, by so doing, the learners would have a deeper understanding as to the meaning of the dance movements. Moreover, the meaning behind each peculiar step found in the dance should also be explained for the learner to give appropriate internalization of the dance steps.

The following are the examples of contextualized mimetic dance movements:

- Pag -arado (Plowing the field). Hold one end of *tubó* with a right hand; place it over

the right shoulder. Girl's left-hand holds skirt, while Boy's left on waist. Take three-step turn right starting right, close left foot with the right.

- Execute walking steps forward. Knees are slightly turned-out and bent. Hold one end of *tubó* with the right hand, left hand as if holding the rope attached to the carabao. The other end of *tubo* is diagonally pointing towards the ground
- Pamatdan (Sharpening the ends of sugarcane). Step right diagonally forward, hold *tubó* with the left hand and *sang got* with the right hand. Bring right forearm across the body with right fist almost touching the left shoulder with the right backhand facing front, execute a chopping action with the right hand as if cutting the *patdanon* your left hand, step left close to right, extend the right arm diagonally forward-downward going towards the sideward right.
- Pananom (Planting the Sugarcane Points). Stand with feet apart, step right foot forward and presume to hold the *patdan* on the right hand, bend trunk forward and execute planting motion of the *patdan* with the right hand. Cover the planted *patdan* with soil using left hand and repeat the same movement with the right hand.
- Pag-abono (Putting Fertilizers in the Soil)
- *Was-ag* (Means of scattering the fertilizer over the soil). Step right forward, right hand presumes the action as if taking out the *abono* from *sabakan* in front of the waist while the left hand supports the right hand to avoid *abono* from spilling, slightly raise left foot forward, extend right hand diagonally forward as if spreading the *abono*. Knees and trunk are slightly bent forward.
- *Panagad* (Dropping the fertilizer on the hole with the use of tagâd). Step right diagonally forward and bend trunk, presume to dig with the right hand to produce a hole on the ground approximately one foot away from the right foot. Presume to drop *abono* from the hole with the left hand. Execute half-circle movement with your left foot going outward to inward as if covering *abono* with soil.
- Tapas (Cutting/harvesting the sugarcane). Step left foot diagonally forward, right arm high holding *is pading*, cross right foot in front of left, extend right arm diagonally forward-downward going towards left sideward with force, as if cutting the *tubó* in the left hand.
- Step left foot sideward, bring *is pading* over the left shoulder, step right foot forward, extend right arm diagonally forward as if cutting the *tubó* leaves on the left hand. Bend trunk slightly forward
- Karga (Carrying / Loading the Sugarcane). Step right foot sideward, lean trunk forward and lift *binugkos* with both hands, trunk erect and bring *binugkos* over the right shoulder. Take four skip steps forward starting right foot. Turn right about; take four walking steps starting right foot. Bend trunk slightly forward. With feet apart, place *binugkos* on the ground. Bend trunk backward with hands at the back, presume as if the back is aching.
- Orit (Breaktime)
- *Girl Part*: Starting with R foot, take eight skip-steps forward going to partner's place. Hold *tubó* at one end with both hands and place it over the right shoulder with *pinutosngabalon* attached to another end. Hang *Kalò* at the back of the neck. Starting with the right foot, take two change steps forward. Hold *pinutosngabalon* with both hands and swing it right and left alternately. Two-step turn right in place, hands hold *pinutosngabalon* in front of the chest. Raise heels, raise *pinutos* diagonally forward-upward, heels down, finish with feet apart and slightly bent knees.
- *Boy Part*: Take sixteen change steps, right and left alternately, closely following the Girl, running after the *balon* while rubbing the belly and sometimes catches the Girl's skirt. Finish behind the Girl facing the audience. Four small hops with right foot to the sideward right. Circle arm right and left alternately, while trying to reach the *pinutos* from the Girl.
- Both boy and girl imitate the movement of a person when eating and drinking water.
- Sunloganay/Dugsinganay (Teasing and Courting). Partners push and pull each other while trying to grab the *pinutosngabalon* in any direction. The Girl stumbles at times.
- Partners facing each other. Hold *tubó* horizontally with both hands; right hand against the left hand of the partner at one end and another right and left hands at the



other end with *pinutosngabalon*. Take running steps clockwise while pulling each other.

### DESCRIPTION

Dance is an emblem of cultural identity that helps us recognize ourselves and other nations since it expresses the sentiments and reveals the mores and ethos of the world. Congruently, Gabao (2007) also said, to comprehend dance is to open oneself to the culture from which it springs and from disentangling the web of such culture to relate to people. The propagation of several local dance festivals in Negros Island is very apparent and almost all facets of life are often celebrated with a community dance festival. Thus, this undertaking has encouraged other nearby cities and municipalities to create their version of a local dance festival. Examining closely, most of the dance movements found among local dance festivals in the island nowadays are perfectly combined with various body movements, nice ingenuity in its creative expression and aesthetically attractive use of varied costumes, huge sets, props, and backdrops. All of these magical and spectacular elements and qualities found in the festival dances have reduced its context to just mere entertainment.

These myopic understanding and interpretation of festival dances have been a great concern among dance professionals, teachers, and other enthusiasts, thereby motivating neophytes' dance trainers to redress their perceptions in seeing festival dances as a communicative, educative, informative yet entertaining tool by giving it a contextualize interpretation – base on its theme, form, pattern, and style.

Additionally, it was also observed that most festival dances if meticulously analyzed its themes would vary from religious practices, belief systems, economic way of life, legend based, old-aged practices which showcases to celebrate the struggles and triumphs of its people, these themes like these would require deeper understanding among choreographers and other dance enthusiasts and should be rooted in its context, more so with the themes that are indigenous in nature. Philips (2009) upholds that the indigenous dance which was passed down by each clan's beliefs and history long before they are written are a vital element of the oral history of each tribal community. Having all of these facts in mind, it necessitates among choreographers and dance teachers to unearth and dig deeper on their

analyses rather than superficial interpretations of the emotional, sociological, physical, psychological and environmental dimensions of creating the dance movements. At this point, the theory of art for art sake or mere base-less creation of beautiful movement combinations would become secondary while communicative interpretation in dance movement takes the upper edge. This paper, therefore, introduces the idea of contextualizing popular Negrenses street dancing festivals on the island of Negros Occidental.

Majority of the people means of living in Negros Island is dominated with farming in the sugarcane field. Thus, it cannot be denied that most local dance festivals are inspired by this popular way of life among Negrenses. However, it is sad to note that most of these dances are superficially done which do not exactly mirror the true character of the Negrenses. It incompletely disintegrates the very heart of what is the way of life of these farm workers. It is on this premise that these Festival dances should be corrected and should undergo the process of contextualization, to rightfully retell the history of mamumugons (sugarcane plantation workers) to the current generation. Therefore, correct costumes, dance implements, music/rhythm, and movement patterns should encapsulate the true character of the story through a festival dance.

The pattern of work at the sugarcane plantation and other related activities were found to be potentially effective medium through which these movement patterns could be extracted from are: pag-arado (tilling the land), panam (planting), pag-abono (applying fertilizers), panapas (cutting/ harvesting), pamatdan (cutting sugarcane ends) pangkarga (loading the sugarcane), orit (break time) and dugsing (teasing). Moreover, the use of right and appropriate costuming and dance implements could also complement with a more informative and contextualized festival dance presentation. To contextualize means to put into context of a situation and it, therefore, does not mean changing the original meaning of a statement. In the case of contextualizing the indigenous dance movement, it simply means presenting the communicating an interpretative potency of the dance movement either to mirror the society, send up the society or to encourage the ruling and the ruled in the society. Contextualization helps in bringing to bear the in-depth analysis of any given performance beyond its superficial level, it is at this point one can understand what

gave rise to the dance and what is the bases of its communicative and interpretation potency (Akas 2014). Also, Akas (2014) also stressed that in the contextualization of any given performance especially in dance, the results of its analysis and interpretation may vary in form, style, pattern, and aesthetics, but will always maintain the required meaning according to the community or society that owns it. Contextualization helps to communicate the innermost intending message, opinion, and view of a choreographer before, during and after choreographing a dance movement. For instance, in choreographing indigenous dance movements, the choreographer does not choreograph in abstraction rather every detail of his/her choreographic movement will interpretatively zero-in into centers on the community myth, cosmology and religious belief system.

Some elements in the contextualization of indigenous dance movement stand requisite. They are highly essential because of its guidelines, people's perception, understanding, and interpretation while watching a dance performance. It is those required elements that state categorically the essence of indigenous dance beyond aesthetics, chanting and stylized movement into a serious communicative tool. The indigenes at this point not only appreciate the dance and its well choreographic styles as their source of cultural identification rather these 4Ws of what, why, where and when will be more clarified to them towards the existences of dance. Those elements are mythology, cultural sacredness, occupation, folklore:

**Mythology** - People's belief system always affects the indigenous dance movement, as their belief system differs both in thought and action so is their dance movements. Some of the mythological essence in indigenous movement is believed to be unchangeable. It is believed that it is such mythology both in their dance, costumes, feeding, and worship that makes them what they are today. And once such uttered, they automatically lose their identity and favors from their ancestral fathers.

**Cultural Sacredness**- Some indigenous dance movements are not meant for everybody, not of any aesthetics and strictly out of binding for non-indigenes. When such dance movements are been performed it is strictly to actualizes its ideal purpose. At this point, the dance movement becomes strictly for the initiates who are well trained in the choreographic movement and how to interpret the communicative potency

of the movement. The cultural sacredness in some indigenous dance movements differentiates the full initiates from non-initiates and makes them superior. Occupation- The people's occupation also affects their style, form, and pattern of dancing. It is from the various indigenous dance style or movement that people can differentiate where each indigenous dance performance emerge from. The occupation of a particular community clarifies what gave rise to its dance movement and also it automatically aids in exposing the sociological potency behind the creation of that particular dance movement. The non- indigenes are not thrilled with the energetic dance movements; they are also presented with the community occupational cultural identification. Folklore -Serves as an important tool in creating indigenes dance movements. Some of the indigenous dance movement when contextualizes are reenacting the popular folklore stories into dance movements. The reenacting of folklore into serious dance movements presents it as a didactic tool in the lives of the indigenes. This study of the contextualization of festival dances on the lifestyle of the Negrense plantation workers may fall under occupation and folklore elements for cultural identification. Sugarcane farming being referred as one of the Negrenses' occupations which exposes the society's way of life in the field and folklore in the sense that, since time immemorial Negrense had been known as the Philippines number one sugar producer in the country. Thus, the countless number of sugarcane fields that carpeted the island has instored a lot of stories to tell which could be used for contextualization for the future generation to see and experience. All of these had been a vital part of the peoples' customs and traditions.

Hriesik (2017) emphasized, that contextualization and embodiment are two opposite forces in dance practice. The first contextualization, puts the individual or given problem in the wider context, relates dancer and dance material within his generation, within time and space, relates him to his environment, social conditions, current themes and eventually the audience. It generalizes the second – the embodiment – is a process of selection, filling the concrete body with chosen impulses, tendencies, themes, techniques – internalizing them, personalizing. Based on the numerous ideas that were presented, as a researcher it could be surmised that, the conceptualization

and creation of new festivals in many parts of the province, regions and maybe in the national scene should need a careful understanding and should be viewed in its context, be embraced by the society though it has varied forms and styles, it should be grounded on one common context. Since festival dances are community dances therefore, these dances should be rooted from its people from different walks of life.

It is also a must that there should be one common understanding of the dance in terms of its background context, terminologies, and movement vocabularies. Considering the case of the Negrense local dance festival which were contextualized based on its sugarcane workers' lifestyle, the people in the community could relate and interact if collaborative efforts were at first considered in crafting the dance festival, this, in turn, would develop that social responsiveness and accountability to every member of the community because they believed that they are part of the dance festivals. These festivals will speak for them, the stories of their past (hindsight), the kind of life they have at present (insights) and how they see themselves in the future (foresight). The dance festivals, therefore, should reflect the dynamics and complexity of their physical, emotional, philosophical, psychological, social, environmental and spiritual life.

### CONCLUSION

The above-identified contextualized dance movements can be repeated several times as desired based on the required duration of the presentation. The counting of steps and the manner execution can be adjusted based on the rhythmic pattern which will be used as an accompaniment for dance. Conclusively, differences in terms of how each choreographer analyze and understand this piece of dance literature are expected. While it is true and we highly acknowledged that our level of appreciations is at times not congruent from each other which resulted in an array of interpretations. Let us remain to be mindful that no matter how near or far we deviate from each other's concepts, we must not forget to stay grounded on one common context. Moreover, festival dances may be indigenous or not, it must go beyond the mere combination of aesthetic movements but rather should remain educative, informative and entertaining tool before a group of audience and the society at large across time and age.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank you very much to these two reputable and great institutions for making this academic journey possible; Philippine Normal University Systems and to the Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia. My gratitude also goes to Eliseo P. Marpa and Aina C. Radan who shared great contributions to the accomplishment of this noble endeavor.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Akas, N. C. (2014). The Contextualization of Indigenous Dance Movement: A Critical Appraisal on Tatasoso Dance Performance. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from Research on Humanities and Social Sciences: <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/view/15774>
- [2] Gabao, Larry. Dance with Me. Philippines Normal University Press. 2007
- [3] Henry, K. The Sociology of African Dancing South Africa. South African University Press.2008.
- [4] Hriesik, Maja. 2017. "Rooting the unrooted - contextualization and embodiment in dance dramaturgy." Academia. November 17. Accessed March 20, 2019. [https://www.academia.edu/37257234/Rooting\\_the\\_unrooted\\_-\\_contextualization\\_embodiment\\_dance\\_dramaturgy](https://www.academia.edu/37257234/Rooting_the_unrooted_-_contextualization_embodiment_dance_dramaturgy).
- [5] Philips, R.. The History of Dance and Music Indiana. Indiana University Press.2009.
- [6] About Negros Occidental. (2017),from Provincial Government of Negros Occidental, Philippines:[www.negros-occ.gov.ph](http://www.negros-occ.gov.ph) (Retrieved September 19, 2018)
- [7] Bayog, O. (2017, August 30). The Sugar Industry at a Glance., from Negros Daily Bulletin: <http://www.ndb-online.com/august3017/sugar-industry-glance>.(Retrieved September 27, 2018).
- [8] Dance Equipment. (2018, September 13),. from [https://dance.lovetoknow.com/Category: Dance\\_Equipment](https://dance.lovetoknow.com/Category:Dance_Equipment). (Retrieved March 25, 2019).
- [9] Estonica Encyclopedia. (n.d.),. from [www.estonica.org/en/culture/traditional\\_folk-culture/Folk\\_costume](http://www.estonica.org/en/culture/traditional_folk-culture/Folk_costume). (Retrieved September 13, 2018).
- [10] Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. (2013, May 31),. from <http://www.fao.org/es/ess/top/commodity.html?lang=en&item=156&year=2005>(Retrieved September 27, 2018).
- [11] Henry, K. The Sociology of African Dancing South Africa. South African University Press. 2008
- [12] Negros First! Economic Development. (2018, September 25). Retrieved from Provincial Government of Negros Occidental: <http://www.negros-occ.gov.ph/development-agenda/>

## Contextualizing Local Dance Festival on the Lifestyle of Negrense Sugarcane Plantation Workers

- negros-first-development-agenda/negros-first-economic-development
- [13] Negros Island. (2017). Retrieved March 20, 2019, from Wikipedia The Free encyclopedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negros\\_Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negros_Island)
- [14] Philips, R. *The History of Dance and Music Indiana*. Indiana University Press. 2009
- [15] Sugar Regulatory Administration. (2013, May 31)., from <http://www.sra.gov.ph/historical-statistics>(Retrieved September 27, 2018).
- [16] Yan, G. (2018, January 14). Sweet dreams are made of this., from *Philippine Daily Inquirer*: <https://business.inquirer.net/244063/sweet-dreams-made>.(Retrieved March 25, 2019).

**Citation:** *Randyll V. Villones, "Contextualizing Local Dance Festival on the Lifestyle of Negrense Sugarcane Plantation Workers". (2019). International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies, 6(10), pp.1-12*

**Copyright:** © 2019 Randyll V. Villones. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.