

**Case Study Report: Philippines  
SAFEGUARDING PANGALAY**

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**Background of the Project**

The Sulu Archipelago extends northeast-southwest from the southwestern tip of Mindanao Island. Populated by the Tau Sug, Samal, Badjaw, Jama Mapun, and the Yakan, and concededly the southernmost part of the Republic of the Philippines, the archipelago separates the Sulu Sea from the Celebes Sea. Across the difficult-to-navigate Sulu coastline is the Indonesian Archipelago, forming an arc from southeast to southwest toward the Malay Peninsula.

Some coastal trade centers in this vast and complex maritime region developed into Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms after A. D. 100, largely influenced by Indian traders and traveling religious scholars who simultaneously promoted international trading activities. After A. D. 1300 many such kingdoms with access to sea trade converted to Islam --- a consequence of the growing importance of the Muslim- controlled trade networks.

Recurrent foreign contacts enriched local artistic practices. In the performance arts, dance and music, together with the martial forms, bear closest affinity to the classical traditions of Southeast Asia. The most outstanding dance tradition is the *pangalay* style, an endangered living artifact whose antiquity is beyond doubt.

**Introduction of Target ICH**

What is PANGALAY? Pangalay is the Sanskrit term for “temple of dance”. It is a pre-Islamic dance tradition in the Sulu Archipelago among the Samal, Badjaw, Jama Mapun, and Tau Sug of the provinces of Sulu and Tawitawi. Among the Yakan of Basilan Province, the tradition is called *paunjalay*.

The *pangalay* has the richest movement vocabulary of all ethnic dances in the Philippines. Although pangalay requires strong technique and sensitivity for gaining mastery, it can be danced by anyone at any age.

The research and documentation of *pangalay* was initiated by this fascinated proponent/advocate after witnessing a virtuoso performance in Jolo in 1969. Her findings affirm that *pangalay* is a living link to the classical dance cultures in Asia identified with ancient Indian forms. The artistry and sophistication of intricate postures and gestures, and the similarity of musical

instruments, costumes, ornaments, and properties infer a profound continuity of choreographic tradition in the Asian region.

### **Objectives of the Project**

Consistent with the principles -- that tradition is continuity essential to the soul of a nation; that tradition is change linked to the past and relevant to the present; that conservation is acceptance that tradition secures the identity of a people in an ever-changing era of borderless societies – the **objectives of the project are:**

1. To revive, stimulate, and sustain interest in the gradually disappearing *pangalay* dance tradition and related folk artistic expressions of the Sulu Archipelago;
2. To enhance cultural awareness and instill greater respect for tradition;
3. To nurture among various audiences the love and pride for cultural traditions, with emphasis on dance tradition.

### **Methods of Project Implementation**

Learning the basic movement vocabulary or fundamental postures and gestures of *pangalay* through participation-observation in the area of study, then writing and publishing the findings took 13 years. During that span of time, this proponent/ advocate organised a dance group composed of native students. This served as a testing ground for researched material adapted for performances in schools, institutions, and communities: local, national, and international.

*Pangalay* lectures-demonstrations and workshops for students, teachers, administrators, and aficionados in theatre, dance and music, as well as the visual arts, have boosted awareness of the *pangalay* tradition outside the Sulu Archipelago.

*Pangalay* performances in festivals, seminars, conventions, workshops, and conferences have attracted the attention of dancers, educators, and various advocates of dance.

*Pangalay* classes conducted by this proponent/advocate for dance and music majors in the College of Music, University of the Philippines used the **Amilbangsa Instruction Method** (AIM). Each semester culminated in a *pangalay* recital by the U. P. students, together with trainees from the home studio, and some veteran performers also trained in the AIM.

### **Outcome of the Project**

The compulsion to learn the intricacies of *pangalay* in 1969 eventually metamorphosed into diverse concerns. Most importantly, the full-blown research and documentation project initiated

this proponent to a life-long commitment to preserve and popularise *pangalay*, a seriously endangered tradition little-known outside the Sulu Archipelago.

Three distinct cultural groups emerged: the **Tambuli Cultural Troupe** (TCT, 1974) based in Tawitawi College of Technology and Oceanography, a unit of the Mindanao State University in Bongao, Tawitawi Province; the **Integrated Performing Arts Guild** (IPAG, 1978) in the Iligan Institute of Technology, a unit of the Mindanao State University in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte; and the **AlunAlun Dance Circle** (ADC, 1999) in Marikina City, Metro Manila.

With personal funds, the Pangalay Court was built in 2000 in Antipolo City. *Pangalay* dancers undergo training, mostly *gratis*, in this studio which also serves as the headquarters of the ADC. Everyone imbibes the beauty and versatility of the *pangalay* tradition through the **Amilbangsa Instruction Method** (AIM) which imparts equal emphasis on traditional *pangalay* choreography and choreographic explorations using the *pangalay* movement vocabulary.

Since 1975, *pangalay* performances, lectures-demonstrations, and workshops have been featured in local, national, and international seminars, conventions, conferences, exhibitions, and festivals in Asia, the United States, and Europe.

The coffee table book, *Pangalay: Traditional Dances and Related Folk Artistic Expressions*, published by the Filipinas Foundation in 1983, won the award for Best Art Book that year from the Manila Critics Circle. Its companion volume, **Ukkil: Visual Arts of the Sulu Archipelago**, published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press in 2005, was the runner-up in the art book category of the *Gintong Aklat Award* sponsored by the Book Development Association of the Philippines (BDAP) in 2006.

Most notable was the **International Conference on the Conservation and Popularisation of Pangalay and Related Asian Dance Cultures** organized by the AlunAlun Dance Circle in cooperation with the Japan Foundation and hosted by the City Government of Marikina, with the assistance of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCAA), 8 -10 February, 2007 at the Riverbanks Center, Marikina City, Philippines.

Aside from photo, and multimedia documentation of *pangalay* performances, there is also a website: [www.pangalaydance.com](http://www.pangalaydance.com)

### **Summary or Conclusion**

This project of a lifetime goes beyond conservation and popularisation: it assures the identity of Filipinos as a people and a nation with a profound cultural heritage shared with fellow Asians. The effort to trace back elements of folk culture related to dance should develop a deep sense of national consciousness.