

The Philippines had many suites, or eras based on location, of folk dances in its past such as the Rural suite, Cordillera suite, and the Muslim suite. One very well-known is the Maria Clara suite that had dances that represented different emotions and events, but the most common theme was love and romance. The Alcamfor and Aray Folk dances would tell stories of flirtation and women seducing men. One of the most popular Filipino folk dances is the Cariñosa, which imitated the early romances between a man and a woman, and is still danced today among many Filipino at parades, birthday parties, and contests. It has created a sense of Philippine nationalism in those who perform and or experience the dance because of how often it is done at major events such as fiestas and festivals in the Philippines, as well as Pilipino Cultural Nights at community centers and colleges all over the United States. Filipino culture can be found everyone one goes, whether they know it or not. It may have changed form and got modernized to appeal to different audiences or it merely has inspiration from the traditional style, but the folk dances are still alive and well. With more people who are not thoughtful of sharing the history or traditional way of doing the dance, origins of it become misconstrued or changed, thus causing the dance to change forever and be taught differently from then on. Therefore, we might never know how people danced the Cariñosa when in first arrived in the Philippines in the 1500s, but through analyzation of works done throughout the years that focus on Filipino dance, wardrobe, femininity, and the Filipino diasporas outside of the Philippines, it shows that as times change and become more modern, culture and dance take their turns as well.

Men and women have distinct outfits for when dancing the carinosa. Women wear the famous Maria Clara dresses also known as mestiza dresses because of its Spanish origin (“Maria”). From Tagalog, the most widely spoken dialect in the Philippines, to the traditional clothes worn during the dance, Spanish influence has played a large role in what the Philippines

is today. Maria Clara is not a single person but exemplifies an idea or symbol of Filipino women, making Maria Clara dresses a common representation of femininity in the Philippines. It is also widely known around the world as *Filipiniana* dress because of its beautiful sleeves also known as butterfly sleeves or *terno* that stand tall above the shoulders. Aside from the sleeves, the women would also wear a *panuelo* or shawl around their shoulders, originally made with pineapple leaf fibres, and had intricate lace-like designs around its borders. One woman that would often wear these types of dresses is Imelda Marcos, wife of past president of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, especially when visiting other countries for foreign affairs and events. It was also during the Marcos regime that the carinosa was considered the national dance of the Philippines; though currently, the dance known as Tinikling is the national dance. Imelda Marcos was not only the First Lady but an icon to many women during her time that exemplified beauty with the Maria Clara dresses. As for the men, they would wear long sleeve shirts called the Barong Tagalog, or *barong* for short, that was also originally made with the pineapple leaf fibres (“Maria”). Men wearing the barong tagalog and women wearing the mestiza dresses were a symbol of Filipino and Spanish cultures coming together, which also happened literally in terms of more Filipinos nowadays having Spanish blood and Spanish last names despite considering themselves “full Filipino”. The Maria Clara dance, the Cariñosa, would show the tale of a woman in a Spanish-influenced dress being courted by a Filipino man.

As seen in the 24th Panaad sa Negros Philippines Folk Dance Competition, the women are dressed in white Spanish-inspired dress and the men are the barong tagalog shirts (“Carinosa”). The word *panaad* actually means “vow” or “promise”, so the competition serves as a way to promise the Filipino people that their dances and music will live on and continue to be practiced so that it is not lost. The festival showcased many dances, but the carinosa would tell a

story of courtship and intimacy. The performance begins with Filipino folk music, also an influence of Spanish traditional music, played by a bandurria. Bandurrias are similar to guitars but usually in a higher key. The men wander towards the women standing idly at the back of the stage. As the women raise their fans to the sky, the men turn and lower themselves onto their knees. The women approach the men and they basically check each other out, circling one another. The beginning starts as though they are merely looking at each other from afar, not necessarily making a move but eyeing one another to get a sense of the women's beauty or the men's handsome features. The carinosa is commonly known as a dance between a man and a woman but there are in groups of pairs. As they pair up with one another, the dance gets more exciting and only facing their pair, as if they are glad to be introducing themselves. It continues with the men getting closer but the women taking out their fans to cover their faces and stepping away. Props used during the carinosa are commonly a fan, handkerchief and sometimes even both, like in the case for the performance at Panaad sa Negros. They move away and towards each other repeatedly, as if they are assessing one another to see where they stand in the courtship process. The same dance moves are repeated in the upright and leaning positions with instead the handkerchief used to cover the women's faces. More towards the end of the story, the men are back on one knee and fanning the woman while they wave the handkerchief, possibly symbolizing how women should never kneel to men nor be of service to them, while the role of the guy is to treat the woman with the utmost respect by staying below her. The carinosa ends with each pair holding the handkerchief together, representing a union built between the woman and man.

Francisca Reyes-Tolentino and Petrona Ramos wrote a book that analyzed each step in traditional dances like the Cariñosa in their book, "Philippine Folk Dances and Games" written

in 1927. In the book, the authors state that there are five main positions that the arms and legs should be in at all times to agree with the law of opposition. This law states that there is beauty in opposites since it creates a balance in the body; for example, if the left leg is up then the right arm is also elevated (Tolentino). The five positions with the opposing arms and legs mimics a polished stature with swaying motions. There are features to notice in the video that are explained in "Philippine Folk Dances and Games" such as the introductory positions where the men and women opposite from each other on the stage, the use of the the fan and handkerchief for the Hide and Seek moves, as well as the back-to-back, kneeling, and fanning positions ("Cariñosa"). Slight differences include the Step Hop move being used in the video but not explained as a move in the book, and the specific number of steps when transitioning from one position to another. However, this is not something to worry about since there is creative variation among choreographers and dancers. Something that has caused me concern and would suggest to Reyes-Tolentino and Ramos was to provide more background on the dances so readers have a better understanding of why the dancers move the way they do rather than stating that it is "very popular through the Philippines" and that "the theme is a love story" (Tolentino). I think Gonzalves provides a similar example to this situation in his book, "The Day the Dancers Stayed" where he stated that when planning the Pilipino Cultural Nights at San Francisco State University, the planning committee was not learning about their culture but instead learning about the labor behind creating the culture (Gonzalves). In Gonzalves' case, though they were presenting the language, wardrobe, and music, not a lot of people knew why because at some point it stopped being about culture, and more about having something to show. I believe this relates to the case for the book, "Philippine Folk Dances and Games" because although the steps of the Cariñosa are provided, there is no information in the book about its past. It should make

one wonder about a famous quote by George Santayana, “To know your future you must know your past.” Therefore, if we do not talk about our pasts and why we do it, how does anyone expect us to move forward without any issues regarding our identities? These steps, that are considered the defining moves of the Cariñosa by Reyes-Tolentino and Ramos, are present in today’s practices of the dance but it makes one wonder if the book explanation was just one version of the story, or if there could have been some information that the authors felt were not necessary and decided to leave out, such as its history.

During the Carinosa performance at the Panaad sa Negros competition, the women were never lower than the men in terms of stance and were chased after more. It has been a stereotypical tale as old as time for women to be the feeble gender so that men can show off their skills and prove themselves to her, which is unfair because that sets low and high standards for both genders. It suggests that women are to wait around while men must do all the hard work. Another Filipino tradition that is not practiced as often anymore if at all that is similar to this form of courtship is the *harana*. A man who had an interest in a woman would show up to her family home and serenade her, usually with an accompanying guitar or playing it himself. There would also be cases for more musically-inclined men to create their own songs that were specific to the woman. Whether he was successful in courting her was determined by how well he sang, whether the girl liked it or not, and whether the family, specifically the father, would give his blessing to give away his daughter. For generations, there has always been a standard for men to take the initiative if he wanted to court, date, or marry a woman.

These norms where men were the ones courting the women and fighting for them had me believe that the women were the ones in control of the dance, but that changes when you learn about the history of women at this time. In Vina Lanzona’s critique of Mina Roces’ “Women’s

movements and the Filipina” published in 1986, she emphasizes points made by Roces about how there is a dominant ideology on how women in the Philippines should act. The Virgin Mary and Maria Clara are two examples of important figures in the Filipino culture but are not the only type of woman. The Maria Clara dancing women set standards on how women should be, waiting for the courtship of a man, hiding their faces to seem reserved and shy. In truth though, women were constantly oppressed throughout history, causing the rise in the Philippine Women’s movements that advocated for those who were “objectified, trafficked and exploited” (Lanzona 471). As stated before, the Maria Clara dances today are still popular because of its rich history during the Spanish era, but today there are more representations of women that show true feminist struggles in civil society. Therefore with respect towards the history of Maria Clara suite should also come with consideration towards all types of Filipino women.

Modernization of how women are viewed has benefited society and changed its standards for fairer treatment of women, the up and coming idea of “modern” has taken a toll on tradition. When talking about traditional Filipino folk dances, Reyes-Tolentino is often praised for modernizing the ways of Filipino dance by integrating Russian ballet and American styles of dancing, but in reality, she was in a way colonizing the art form and changing it to be set to the standards of the western world. Perillo explains in his writing that Reyes-Tolentino would continue to state that the way of traditional dances were stiff and jerky, and that the form should be more light. The purpose of many dances and other artforms like music and theater is to bring people together, create a moment in time that the audience can share (Perillo 126-127). Reyes-Tolentino instead creates a divide between those who perform dances influenced by ballet and those who dance more indigenous styles that may not have as smooth of movements. Writers such as Reyes-Tolentino made an impact on Filipino traditional dances in a way that modernized

it; however, it also took away culture and pure meaning from the dance because the original dance movements were no longer there. It had been altered so much that it may not even be traced back to its original form. In reality, it took away their cultural rights because the presence of the colonizers caused the people of the Philippines to have to abide by the standards of their colonizer's world. The native people needed to start focusing on becoming another nationality that they could not be more involved in on their own. I notice that this is even more common and talked about nowadays among Filipino-Americans because of the concept of "white-washing" and that they are not taught their language because they need to prioritize learning English and fitting in with their classmates. These alterations of culture date back generations and have not seemed to stop even in today's day and age. In regards to the Maria Clara dances, it is apparent that the women and men are taught to dance upright the whole time, still looking stiff but in a sense that it refers to classical ballet rather than indigenous dances because apparently that aforementioned indigenous background is what made it "wrong" in the eyes of Reyes-Tolentino. It brings questions to mind whether it would be political resistance or disrespectful and appropriation if one were to go against the standards of how traditional dances like the Cariñosa are executed now.

Since the Cariñosa and many Maria Clara dances have changed so much as it was passed down from generation to generation, there is the question to consider whether it is considered post-traditional or possibly contemporary due to all its variations. Samuel Gilmore touches on this topic in his research analysis, "Doing Culture Work: Negotiating Tradition and Authenticity in Filipino Dance" and explains how "social reproduction" and "reenactment of cultural tradition" has skewed how Filipino culture is seen, whether it is a vice or a form of self-identification to associate oneself with the dances despite the fact that or even because they

do not know the history. With the current rise of movements that advocate for Asian-Americans like #StopAsianHate and organizations that fight for social justice in the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, nationalism and being proud of where you come from is not only encouraged, but has become a sort of “trend”. Therefore, there is a divide nowadays between the new generation of Filipino-Americans and their parents and grandparents who brought them to the United States because they are the ones that experience a different feeling of nationalism for the Philippines. They grew up surrounded by the Filipino culture and spoke the language, so the traditional dances played alongside music that they would listen to when they were young brought a sense of belonging and nostalgia (Gilmore, 27). With more universities and colleges in the United States holding Pilipino Cultural Nights where students would listen to music sung in Tagalog, Visayan, Ilokano, and other dialects and do folk dances from the Cordillera and Maria Clara suites, many first, second, and third generation Filipino-American students are joining in on nationalism as if it were a club they did not know they had a subscription to all along. The big question is whether culture is lost when the dances are taught academically rather than religiously or traditionally through family and the idea of courtship incorporated into it. To bring my thoughts together, I do believe that there is definitely loss in culture through growing Philippine nationalism in the United States; however, it may be one of the only ways that the Maria Clara dances and other forms of traditional Filipino art can be preserved. With fewer teachers of the history of the dance, people will go onto the internet and look up ‘Maria Clara dance Philippines’ in order to learn more about it because maybe they no longer speak the same language as their grandparents or their parents did not learn it themselves. No matter how much we want to preserve things, time and age will always be a factor we cannot always combat, so the best thing to do is share the knowledge we do have today without skewing the history too

much because you never know who will be the next carinosa dance teacher in your community that will pass on the torch to their students.

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