

# philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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**Maria Christine Muyco**

**Síbod: Ideology and Expressivity in Binanog Dance,  
Music, and Folkways of the Panay Bukidnon**

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repeatedly throughout the work. Assertions of the author, such as the detailed atrocities of the American military, the cooperative white-washing of such brutalities, how the majority of Filipinos failed to benefit from the colonial educational system, and the rather conflicted manner by which some interest groups pursued colonization, are quite informative even for those already familiar with Philippine history. Unfortunately, unlike what its title suggests, details regarding how these different groups use sport are too rare and seem drowned by other information.

What could also be bothersome are some of Gems's assertions, particularly in his last two chapters on sport and the legacy of the American occupation. There are typographical errors in his work that may reflect his unfamiliarity with Philippine society. Notable institutions such as the University of Santo Tomas (UST) and the religious group Iglesia ni Cristo are misspelled (i.e., Santo Thomas, Iglessia ng Kristo) (162, 173), while former Pres. Joseph Ejercito Estrada's election as mayor of Manila was advanced by a century to 1913 instead of 2013 (172).

There is no disputing the influence of the US on nearly all aspects of Filipino life. Yet Gems tends to exaggerate his claims when the context of his analysis goes beyond the American colonial era, the actual period of his study. At times, he may be guilty of hasty generalizations or not backing up his statements. Particularly controversial is his assertion that basketball has become a source of unity for a country "always in constant threat of disintegration" (162) and that the sport has become a "second religion" among Filipinos (164). Questionable, too, is his contention that the country's current physical education system reflects the strong legacy of the American occupation (177). Also difficult to understand is his explanation that a past decision of UST's leadership to scrap its football program reflected a culture of winning that Filipinos imbibed during the American occupation (162).

Even more simplistic are his assertions that the Filipino people have a conflicted and hybridized national identity that is part American and Filipino. To emphasize American influence in the Philippines, he added the rags-to-riches story of boxer-turned-politician Manny Pacquiao in his conclusion to strengthen the claim of the American Dream on the Filipino people and how sportsmen such as Pacquiao serve to temporarily unite the country.

Despite its limitations, *Bats, Balls, and Bayonets* offers a new way of understanding our American colonial past; how soft power, by way of sport,

was employed to fulfill colonial aims; and how Filipinos were, in a way, able to accept or reject such introductions by their colonizers. As such, students, academics, and others interested in Philippine history, Philippine studies, other social science disciplines (e.g., human geography), and individuals from the public administration and sports science disciplines will find the work informative, useful, and entertaining.

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MARIA CHRISTINE MUYCO

## ***Sibod: Ideology and Expressivity in Binanog Dance, Music, and Folkways of the Panay Bukidnon***

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2016. 243 pages.

Dr. Maria Christine Muyco, a faculty member in the College of Music at the University of the Philippines and highly accomplished composer, turns her scholarly attention to the Panay Bukidnon in *Sibod: Ideology and Expressivity in Binanog Dance, Music, and Folkways of the Panay Bukidnon*. Her commitment to the study of this group extends beyond this monograph to include, among other things, a CD recording, *Tayuyon Music of the Panay Bukidnon* (2009); a documentary film entitled "Ga-Sibud Dai a!": *Music, Dance, and Society in Highland Panay, Philippines*; and cultural advocacy through her nongovernment organization Balay Patawili.

Living in the highlands of Panay island, the Panay Bukidnon (also Suludnon) are commonly highlighted as the only indigenous people of that area, a result of geographical remoteness from centuries of Spanish and US colonization and a classification based on notions of culture rather than ancestry. Despite their seeming isolation, however, exposure to media, the regularity of movement to buy and sell goods with lowlanders, and migration for work have contributed to a continuing cultural vibrancy in which some traditions persist with salience and others fall into disuse. For

example, while outsiders have been fascinated with the practice of raising a *binukot*, in which families hid away a daughter from childhood to keep her skin protected from the sun and train her in embroidery, dance, and epic chanting, contemporary Panay Bukidnon have left this tradition behind. The people continue to participate in local music and dance genres, seek help from a *babaylan* (roughly translating as a healer and/or spirit medium), and engage with other traditions in their homes and through a cultural school.

Muyco's fieldwork took place over several years, including an intensive immersion during 2001 in various villages and with different practitioners. The central idea around which the text operates is the concept of *sibod*, which she introduces as "an experience of flow . . . a state of having achieved mastery in different levels of structural and creative interplays" (xii). As her descriptions of music, dance, textiles, and other activities of Panay Bukidnon life progress, we also understand *sibod* to encompass synchronicity, focus, and even appropriate collective sociality. Her outlining of the complexities of *sibod* and how it inflects various arenas of life experience while also connecting them all is an exercise in ethnotheory, giving readers a framework through which to better understand the local worldview. Simultaneously, Muyco references numerous Filipino, European, and US scholars (sometimes with such brevity and with enough frequency to distract from her narrative), situating this monograph well within contemporary ethnomusicology. In this work she is able to introduce *sibod* to the wider scholarly world, offer a lens through which to better understand the Panay Bukidnon worldview, and explain how an ideology manifests across realms of practice, not so much as an organizing principle but rather one that is both a guide and a goal of social expressions.

To better explain the concept of *sibod*, Muyco begins with the oral tradition of *sugid*, a type of storytelling accompanied by conversations among participants that clarify meanings embedded within the narrative. *Sugid* uses metaphors to instill positive social values associated with *sibod*, such as equal sharing and working together well. In turn, the graceful *banog* (hawk-eagle) of the *sugid* tale inspires movements recreated by dancers of the *binanog*, a music-dance performance in which the synchronicity of sound and movement is paramount. To flow musically and bodily in sync is also to produce emotional and interpersonal harmony, other hallmarks of *sibod*.

The body of the book provides ample context for understanding general aspects of Panay Bukidnon daily life and social dynamics as well as how *sibod*

plays a role across arenas of experience. While some passages in the first part of the book read much like traditional anthropological reportage, Muyco finds her rhetorical rhythm when she turns to individuals, ethnographic descriptions of performances, and musical analysis. I was especially drawn in when she explained the fascinating relationships between texts and musical patterns, ideas about gender (though not taking for granted the "natural physical and sexual distinctions" of men and women would have been welcome), appropriate performer affect, and the dance phases of the *binanog* that correspond to courtship.

Because of the research involved and the strength of Muyco's mediation, this monograph is immediately valuable in the fields of ethnomusicology and Philippine studies and for scholars who focus on indigeneity. The particularity given to her experiences among the Panay Bukidnon allows the reader to relish *sibod* not as an externally imposed theory but one pieced together from intensive fieldwork in numerous settings. Muyco could have profitably connected her mediation of flow to any of the numerous incarnations of heightened sensations in performance that also involve synchronicity, mastery, affect, and social collaboration in music (and dance) throughout the world, a gesture that would serve to de-exoticize the Panay Bukidnon as anthropological subjects. Although her book does not suffer without this commentary, making explicit connections with similar concepts in expressive performance from other parts of the world would have lent some balance to a longstanding issue within ethnomusicology—the ontological realization of Otherness often produced by ethnographies of the indigenous. Rather than trying to encompass *sibod* under a universalizing, modernist theoretical paradigm, a strategy of finding connections with similar ideologies and human experiences would be relevant as an ethnomusicological endeavor that denies simple self/other binaries.

Muyco's text reveals her as a most sensitive and careful researcher whose attention to detail is first rate, and *Sibod* provides a model for ethnography whose goals are both academic and practical.

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