



History of the Sakuting Philippine Folk Dance

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Sakuting is a Philippine folk dance that interprets a fight between Ilocano Christians and non-Christians. This mock fight between rival folks is traditionally performed during Christmas at the town plaza or performed house-to-house as a form of traditional carolling show. Dancers perform the Sakuting to receive presents or the local money called Aguinaldo.

Philippines Folk Dances as Fight Dances

Most Filipino dances tell a story. In the Sakuting, it is a story of Ilocano Christians and non-Christians fighting during the Spanish colonial rule in the country. (Ilocanos are the people living in the Ilocos region in Northern Philippines.) This regional ethnic dance celebrates cultural heritage and national artistic pride by portraying Philippine fighting art as a ritual dance.

Regional History

Sakuting came from the Abra province in the northern part of the island of Luzon. The Ilocos Region officially includes Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan. Abra, Mountain Province and Benguet were also parts of the region before separating as the Cordillera Administrative Region. All these provinces are home to the Ilocanos who are natives of the lowlands and the Tingguian tribes who are natives of the mountain areas.

Origin

During the Spanish colonisation (1520 to 1898), the garrison established to protect the Ilocanos who converted to Christianity became a site for raids by the mountain tribes. And the Sakuting dance interprets this struggle between the lowland natives who became Christians and the non-Christian natives from the mountain region. Sakuting incorporates the traditional Filipino martial arts called Arnis by using two sticks as extension of the arms to fight the opponent. Before the Spanish era in the Philippines, Filipinos commonly used Arnis for self-protection. The Spanish banned its practice, forcing Filipinos to utilise it in other forms. They openly retained the practice by using Arnis movements as part of folk dances like the Sakuting. While showing the story between the Christians and non-Christian natives, the stylised fight sequence revived the use of Arnis as this dance is actually a two-stick Arnis exercise set to an upbeat music.

Music

Music used for the Sakuting has Chinese and Spanish backgrounds. The traditional music styles have staccato inflections and rhythmic tapping. The musical instrument used for the dance is called the rondalla, a native string instrument similar to a guitar. There are usually moments of a capella where no musical instruments are utilised and only the tapping of wooden sticks are heard as accompaniment to the singing. The wooden stick sounds coincide with the choreography of the mock fights in the Sakuting performance. With upbeat and happy music, the audience cheers as performers tap their sticks and jump around in groups and in circles.

Performers

Sakuting was originally performed by boys only, but it has evolved as a folk dance which both boys and girls now perform. This dance uses two striped bamboo sticks about one and a half feet long and tapered at the end, like a candle. Wearing traditional Ilocano costumes, performers of the Sakuting participate in a playful folk dance where the two rival teams circle and clash the sticks in gentle imitation of martial arts sparring. They tap the floor and each others' sticks while using combat dance steps in a theatrical fashion called the comedia. The dances combine marching and small forward or sideways shuffle steps. The dancers circle around and interchange positions while other interpretations utilise ballet-like movements.

Ref.: http://www.ehow.co.uk/about_6561278_history-sakuting-philippine-folk-dance.html

Look more here www.Dances.PhilippineCulture.ph and Sakuting video here www.DanceVideo.PhilippineCulture.ph