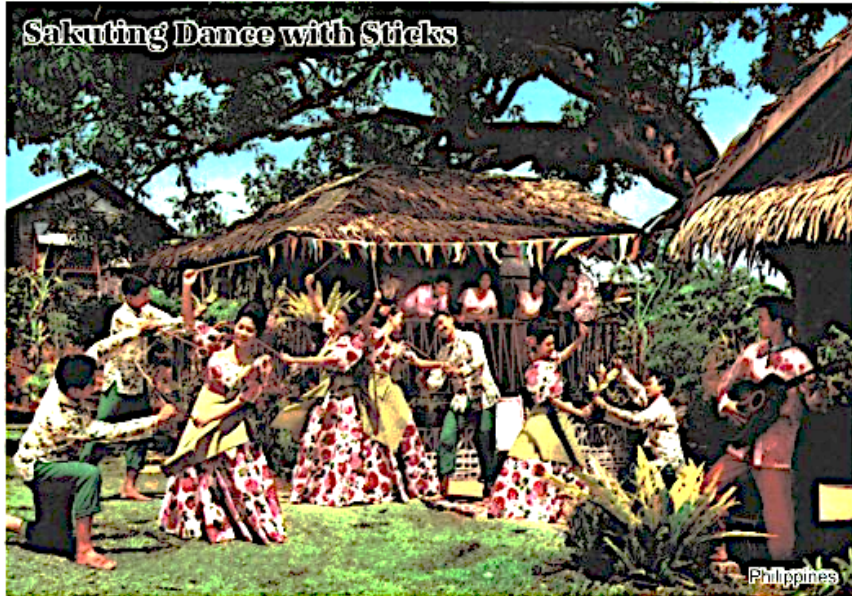


Sway with the Sticks: Sakuting (Philippine Folk Dance)



HISTORY

Sakuting (pronounced *sah-KOOH-tihng*), historically only performed by men, but later evolved into a dance open for everyone, is a Philippine folk dance that interprets a match between Ilocano Christians and non-Christians. This imitational bout between competing folks is traditionally performed during Christmas at the town plaza or performed house-to-house as a form of traditional caroling show.

PHILIPPINES FOLK DANCES

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

REGIONAL ACCOUNT

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 CAR or 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 colonization (1520 to 1898), the garrison established to protect the Ilocanos who converted to Christianity became a site for raids by the mountain tribes. 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 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 nonChristians natives, the stylized 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 (see photo), a native string instrument similar to a guitar. There are usually moments of acapella where no musical instruments are utilized 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.



PERFORMANCE

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 foot 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 other's sticks while using combat dance steps in a theatrical fashion called the *comedia* (a theatrical dance, also called *moro-moro*) and features a *battalla* (choreographed skirmish). The dances combine marching and small forward or sideways shuffle steps. The dancers circle around and interchange positions while other interpretations utilize ballet-like movements. The Ilocano people customarily perform the

Sakuting dance as part of Christmas celebrations. Performed at the town plaza or from house to house, the dance allows the opportunity for spectators to give the dancers *aguinaldos*—gifts of money, drinks, fruits and refreshments prepared especially for Christmas much like the English custom of caroling.

Sakuting

(modified version for 40/50 minutes classroom instruction)

Starting Position: Partners stand beside each other, facing front. Dancers may use small sticks/ their hands to imitate the sticks. Arm and feet movements are performed simultaneously.

Music: Rondalla version of Sakuting music

Count: *one, two* or *one, and, two* to a measure of 2/4 time, and *one, two, three* to a measure of 3/4 time.

Entrance: *one, two*

- A. Preparatory beat (four counts) 2M
- B. Marching movement. Start with the R foot. R arm stretched forward, 14M
L arm placed at the back of the waist.

Figure 1: *one, and two*

- A. Change step (step-close-step) starting with the R foot, alternately. 8M
Sticks/hands are hit with each other to produce a soft sound.
- B. Repeat C, facing partner. 8M
- C. Repeat traveling clockwise in a circular manner ending in partner's place. 8M
- D. Repeat E turning counterclockwise, ending in proper places, facing front. 8M

Figure 2: *one, two, three*

- A. Dancers bend downward and strike sticks on the floor/clap hands downward (ct 1), raise trunk up and strike sticks in front of waist twice (cts 2, 3). 4M
Repeat three more times going to the R. Do one close-step at a time.
The goal is to travel in an imaginary square.
- B. Repeat A facing R. 4M
- C. Repeat A, facing R (third side of the square). 4M
- D. Repeat A, fourth side. 4M
- E. Repeat A-E facing partner. 16M

Figure 3: *one, two, three*

- A. Raise R leg in front, tap sticks under R leg once. Hit sticks in front of 16M
the waist twice. Do it twice with the R leg, and then twice with the L leg.
- B. Repeat A, but this time, each dancer (in a pair) do it alternately in response. 16M

Figure 4: *one, and, two, and three, one, two, three*

- A. Hit the floor with sticks alternately, *one, and, two, and three, one, two, three* 2M
- B. Repeat A while doing the actions above the head. 2M
- C. Repeat A to the R side. 2M
- D. Repeat A to the L side. 2M
- E. Repeat A-D. 8M
- F. Repeat A-E facing partner: downward, front of waist, upward, and back. 16M

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Soriano, Rianne Hill. "History of the Sakuting Philippine Folk Dance," Accessed April 2, 2019, https://www.ehow.co.uk/about_6561278_history-sakuting-philippine-folk-dance.html

Audio Visual References

Sakuting Performance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbCHV7SwlcQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW332bDXKkY>

Sakuting Music

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Photos

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Map of Abra, Philippines, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abra_\(province\)#/media/File:Ph_locator_map_abra.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abra_(province)#/media/File:Ph_locator_map_abra.png)

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**For a scanned copy of the dance notation, please email the Gluck Fellow at jgarcl37@ucr.edu*