

## ***Learning Philippine Jotas as a Reflection of a Social Engagement***

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***Abstract:*** *Dance remains as the focal point in any social engagement. And the school has a big influence in learning or re-learning our own dances. Dance form may evolve but the enjoyment one gets from either watching or joining in the performance has its own value sustaining the dance. The Philippine Jota dance has always been a reflection of the Spanish influences on our culture that need to be reexamined and be popularized again as part of our intangible heritage. Culture is never constant and with the coming of other influences it is necessary to learn the basic framework which helps in understanding the changes along the way. The focus of analysis in this study are the twenty eight (28) Philippine jotas found in Northern Luzon, Southern Luzon, Bicol and the Visayas. Dance notations, in situ observations and literature reviews revealed interesting data and unique stylistic variations of the jota movements. Cluster analysis indicated seven (7) jota groups largely formed by geographic cultural influences. Indeed, the local government, aided with the schools and universities can greatly help in the success of this social engagement.*

***Keywords:*** *cultural heritage, school dances, Spanish influenced dances, Philippine dances*

## **1. Introduction**

We are always social beings who love group events from religious celebration to civic parades and to dance festivals (Duffy et al., 2011; Leonard, 1996). According to Hanna (2010) dance has played a role in many facets of social interaction, including courtship attraction and has been an element in rituals to express unity and action. Dance has always been a part of the social and religious life of the Filipinos (Buot, 2008). It has its kinetic power attracting almost everyone collaborating with Leonard's result (1996). Our country is very fortunate to be blessed with hundreds of beautiful dances from the north to the south of the archipelago. In 1964, the Philippine folkdances became the instrument to project nationalism. This move from our policymakers has led to professionalizing dance groups too and concretize their goal to learn, relearn and teach our own dances in order to popularize our own dance movements.

To teach dance as our cultural heritage became a priority since then. Without the effort from President Bocobo, the UP President at that period, perhaps Aquino's work of recording the dances and teaching them in the formal setting of the schools might not come to reality.

In the past, our knowledge of European dances were learned during social occasions of the elite Filipino families. *Jota* was one of those introduced dances (Buot 2002). It became the most popular social dance among the people during the Spanish regime (Villaruz 1994). Although in the early years of our independence, *Jota* was not anymore exclusive to the rich social events but was more and more introduced to events especially in schools thereby making it more popular to the masses. Recently, other local government units have spearheaded their local events too with dance competitions using the *Jota* dances. Although we have multiple sources of music due to technology but we cannot be sure of dance movements' evolving due to other factor. Olivar (1972) noticed that several dances of the Christian and lowlanders were very much influenced by the foreigners who came to the Philippines

There are very few studies that have been concerned with the social factors of dance that can help enlighten the artistic appeal of dance movements to the mass (Buot et al., 2009; Fink et al., 2012; Hagendoorn, 2004). This present study would like to determine the different *Jota* dances in the country in order to describe its uniqueness from each locality and for dance teachers to relearn the depth of these dances for the young people to correctly appreciate of what we have.

## **2. Methodology**

Published notation of different *jota* dances were used for analysis. Dance movement notation was analyzed by looking at the similarities and differences among the *jota* dances. Cluster analysis was done to the different identified movements.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Enumeration of Jotas.

Twenty-eight (28) versions of Philippine *jotas* were distributed in the various geographic regions of Luzon and Visayas islands (Table 1) were thoroughly analyzed and compared based on dance movements and choreographic patterns.

**Table 1. The 28 Jota versions in the country.**

<b>Regional Locations</b>	<b>Jota names</b>
Northern Luzon	(1) <i>La Jota Yogad</i> (2) <i>Jota Isabela</i> (3) <i>La Jota Filipina</i> (4) <i>La Jota Lailoqueña</i> (5) <i>La Jota Cagayana</i> (6) <i>La Jota Cagayan</i> (7) <i>Jota Aragoneza</i> (8) <i>La Jota</i> (9) <i>La Jota Vintariña</i> (10) <i>La Jota Paoay</i> (11) <i>Jota Zapatilla</i> (12) <i>Jota de Olongapo</i> (13) <i>Jota Cabangan</i> (14) <i>Jota Moncadeña</i> (15) <i>Jota Echagueña</i>
Southern Luzon	(1) <i>Jota Rizal</i> (2) <i>A La Jota</i> (3) <i>Jota Sevillana</i> (4) <i>Jota Italiana</i> (5) <i>Jota Gumaqueña</i> (6) <i>Jotabal</i>
Bicol region	(1) <i>Jota Camarines</i> (2) <i>Jota Rojana</i> (3) <i>Jota Bicolana</i>
Eastern Visayas	(1) <i>Jota na Kalipay</i> (2) <i>La Jota Samareña</i>
Western Visayas	(1) <i>La Jota Sevillana</i> (2) <i>La Jota Concordia</i>

Mindanao island has no found Jota in its locality based on the published materials. The Spanish conquistadores were not able to penetrate its influence in the Southern Philippines as shown by our history. It was also noted that Northern Luzon had the most number of the jota dances from Pangasinan to Cagayan Valley areas.

### Comparative Analysis of Dance Movements.

With respect to the arm/hand movements, fourteen (14) variations were observed (Buot & Aguilar, 2009). These are: 1) arms in reverse t position, 2) arm swing, 3) clapping of hands, 4) closed ballroom position, 5) crossed arm/forearm, 6) forearm turn, 7) slightly touching, 8) *hayon-hayon*, 9) joined hands, 10) *kumintang*, 11) lateral arm position, 12) *salok*, 13) *sarok* and 14) snapping of castanets.

Of the 14 variations, there were four distinct hand movements most common to all (Fig. 1). The arms in lateral position, i.e., placing both arms at one side, either sideward right or left, maybe at shoulder, chest or waist level, was the most dominant arm/hand movement among the twenty eight jotas. It was found in the 19 *jotas* (68%). Ten of the 15 *jotas* in the northern Luzon (67%) used the same arm position. Four of the 6 *jotas* (67%) of the Southern Luzon, 2 of the Bicol *jotas* (67%), 2 *jotas* of Samar (100%) and 1 of the *jotas* in Western Visayas (50%) also had it.

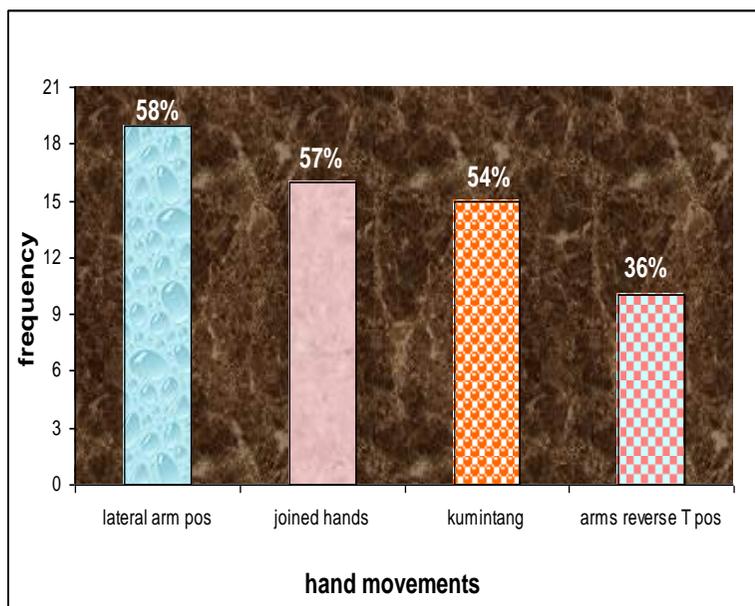


Figure 1. Most dominant hand movements in Jota dances.

Joined hands was the second most dominant among the arm/hand movements (Fig. 2). Partners are connected with each other by holding either one or both hands. Sixteen of the total 28 *jotas* (57%) had incorporated holding their partners during the dance. Seven (7) *jotas* from Northern Luzon, 5 of Southern Luzon, 2 from Bicol, 1 from Eastern Visayas and another 1 from the Western Visayas had joined hands.



**Figure 2. Second most dominant hand movement, joint hand position in Jota Sevillana.**

The third most dominant arm/hand movement was *kumintang*. It is moving the hand from the wrist either in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction. Seven local versions of *jotas* of the northern Luzon, 4 of the Southern Luzon, 1 of the Bicol Region, 2 of Eastern Visayas and only 1 of the Western Visayas used the hand movement, *kumintang*.

*Kumintang* hand movement is used together with arms in lateral position or with arms in reverse-t. *Kumintang* notation is illustrated as follows:

(in *A La Jota*, figure ii, fourth movement, Aquino 1953):

(a) Tap right close to left foot (count 1), stamp right obliquely forward right (counts 2, 3). Tap right again close to left foot (count 1). Pause (counts 2, 3). Arms in reverse-t position with a *kumintang* for every tap....2measures

(in *Jota Isabela*, figure ii, first movement, DEAP 2001)

(a) step right foot, tap left twice in front. Arms in lateral position right with half-closed fist, move hands up and down at the wrists.....2measures

In the reverse-t position (Fig. 3), arms are raised sideward, elbows slightly bent at right angles, forearms parallel to head, palms forward or facing inward, fists loosely closed. A 33% or nine of the entire population of the *jotas* studied used this arm position. Bicol, Eastern Visayas and Western Visayas did not incorporate the arms in reverse-t position in their

local versions instead favor the lateral arm position, *hayon-hayon* and the *salok*.



**figure 3. The reverse T position of Jota Sevillana.**

Eighty-four (84) variations of foot and trunk movements were present in the *jotas* analyzed in this study. As with the arm/hand movement, there were common and distinct steps as indicated by dance notations in the foot movement.

Figure 4 shows the most frequently used dance steps of the Philippine Jotas. The three-step turn (96.4%) was almost present in the twenty-eight *jotas* the movement comprises two measures of three counts each.

Stepping left or right foot in the second position,  
turn left (right) about and step right (left), turn left (right) about and step left (right) to second to face front.  
Then close right (left) to left (right) foot, and pause.

*Jota Moncadeña* does not incorporate any kind of turn in the local version. The waltz step is the next dominant dance movements. Twenty-four (86%) of the local versions have danced the Jotas using the waltz. Being a social dance, our Philippine *Jota* is characterized by the waltzes. Waltz steps are always present in any elegant social dance originally introduced by the Europeans

(Buot & Aguilar, 2009). It has three counts for every measure. It is done by stepping the left foot in fourth in front, step right close to left in first or third position in rear, step left in fourth in front. This is also done with the right foot doing the first step. Walking steps and the cross step turn (61%, 39%) were the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> dominant foot and trunk movement (Fig 4).

### Cluster Analysis of the 28 Philippine Jotas.

Seven groupings of Jotas came out after the combined foot, trunk and arm/hand movements of the 28 local versions of the dance were subjected to cluster analysis using the presence and absence of the dance movements.

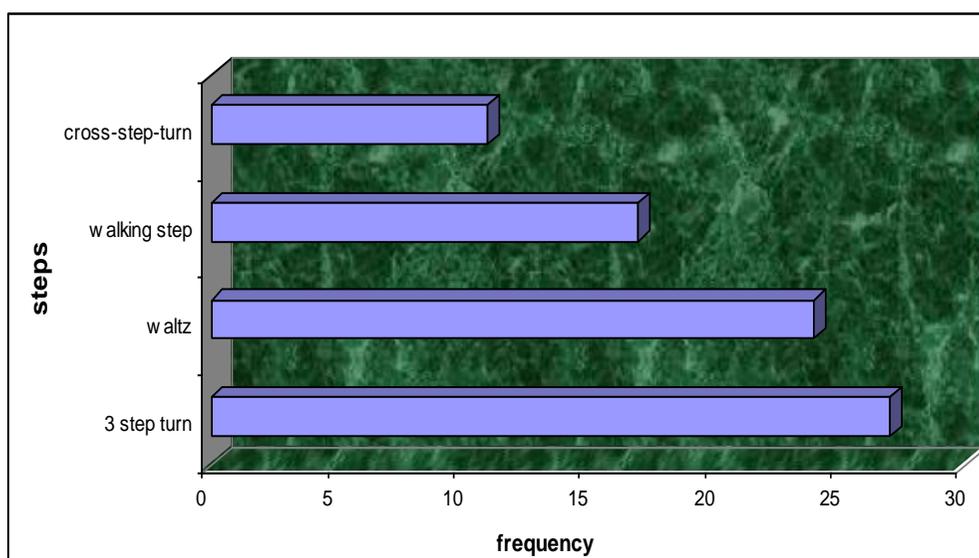


Figure 4. Most frequently used foot and trunk movement.

The twenty-eight (28) *jota* variations formed seven (7) clusters of distinct groups.

**Cluster One.** These are jotas from Albay, Cagayan, Ilocos Norte and Tarlac respectively (Fig. 5-a). Doing the *kumintang* hand movement is common to cluster one *jotas*. Mostly these are the variations of the Ilocano people with one exemption of the *jota* from Albay.

**Cluster Two.** These are coming from the north, specifically from Ilocos and Isabela (Fig. 5-b). Arms in lateral position is common in the three *jotas*.



Figure 5-a. Cluster one of the Philippine Jotas.

**Cluster Three** included *La Jota Isabela*, *Jota de Olongapo*, *Jota Italiana*, *La Jota Cagayan* and *a La Jota*. These jotas are from Isabela, Zambales, Laguna and the Ibanags of Cagayan respectively (Fig. 5-c). Stamping and waltz steps characterize this cluster.

**Cluster Four.** These *jotas* represent Iloilo, Cagayan, Zambales, Camarines Sur and Camarines Norte (Fig. 5-d). Surprisingly the Iloilo *jota*, *Jota Concordiana*, is closely related to the Luzon Island *jotas* in this cluster. Clapping of hands is dominant in most of the *jotas* in this cluster.

**Cluster Five** comprised *Jota Rizal* and *La Jota Sevillana*. These *jotas* are from Batangas and Iloilo (Fig. 5-e). These two *jotas* have steps which are distinct to themselves alone such as the *ekis* step, the hook forearm and *do-si-do*.

**Cluster Six** included *La Jota Samareña* of Samar and *Jota na Kalipay* of Western Samar (Fig. 5-f). Common to both are the brush steps, stamping and the *salok/sarok* arm movement.

**Cluster Seven.** These *jotas* represent Quezon, Laguna and Zambales (Fig. 5-g). Quezon and Laguna are adjacent provinces thus perhaps the similarities. Zambales although not a neighboring province but is related to some of the

dance movements especially the *step brush swing*, *step brush hop* and the presence of the *stamping*.

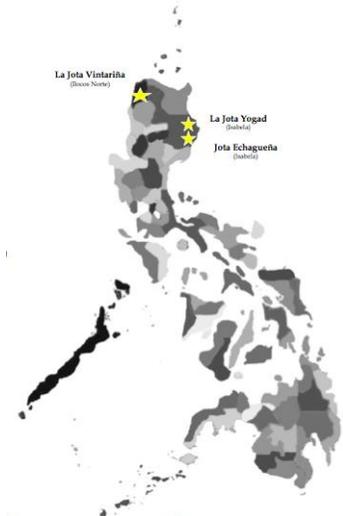


Figure 5-b. Cluster two of the Philippine Jotas.

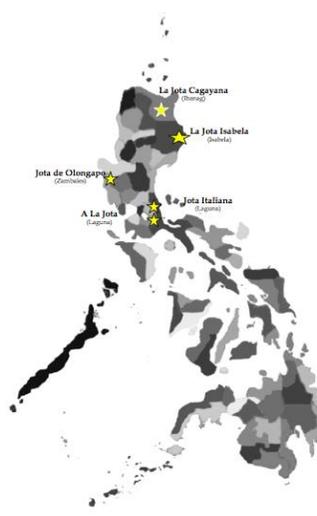


Figure 5-c. Cluster three of the Philippine Jotas.



Figure 5-d. Cluster two of the Philippine Jotas.



Figure 5-e Cluster three of the Philippine Jotas.

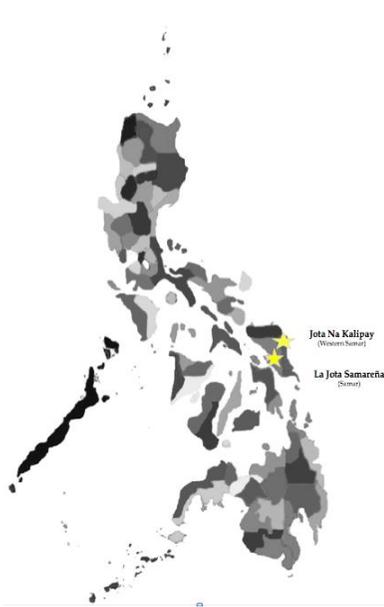


Figure 5-f. Cluster two of the Philippine Jotas.

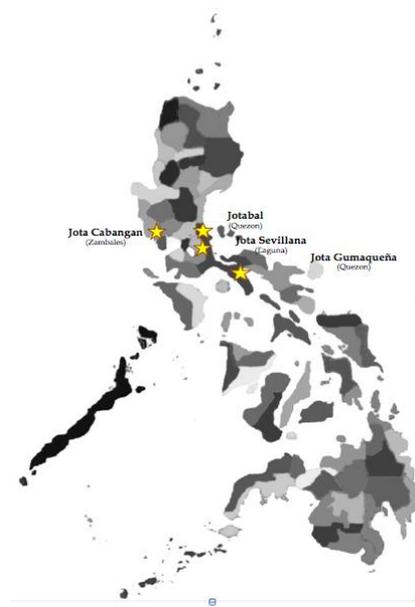


Figure 5-g Cluster three of the Philippine Jotas.

Having been introduced from one source, one may expect apparent similarities of the existing jotas in the Philippines in terms of dance movements. However, there are differences as discussed earlier. The jotas in various localities of the country could have evolved independently in accordance with the different influences, local or foreign, following the directions of the cultural advancement of said localities. Stylistic expression of each individual largely influenced by local practices and way of life has contributed to the distinct identity of the local *jotas*.

Learning and accepting diversities will make our youth be aware of the differences not only in dances but in culture as well. Accepting differences makes one person a better individual, open-minded and willing to accept the another person's point of view (Hagendoorn, 2004; Margate, 2015). Constant monitoring of the dances will help dance researchers understand the dynamic changes in this art form. The school grounds are very good source of learning or relearning these movements because we have always the teachers for correct guidance. With the characteristics of our young students nowadays as lovers of visuals, whose interests are in the fast moving

#### 4. Conclusion

To communicate is the ultimate aim of dance. In the case of the Philippine *Jotas*, there were reasons when the local people danced. Some of the *jotas* were solely the portrayal of courtship, others like *Jota Paoay* was done to

validate the people's faith. But for whatever purpose the *jota* dances were mainly done during social gatherings, as a reflection of social engagement.

The patterns of the movements were spontaneous depending on the music of the locality. Repetitions within the dance were constantly observed through out the 28 versions of jotas in the country. There were distinct arm/hand movements to certain jotas and some had similarities with the trunk/torso movement. The local versions in Iloilo had more similarity to jotas in the Luzon Island than its neighbor. The 28 Philippine Jotas were statistically grouped into 7 clusters showing evidence that although our dance source was coming from one group of people but changes can easily happen through time.

Revival of the jota dances in the school curriculum and local festivals should be done while there are still local people who know about the dance. However, this should not restrict occurrences of local stylistic interpretations and preferences leading to dance evolution as influenced by our fast changing society.

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