

“Temple of Dance?”: Interrogating the *Sanskritization of Pangalay*

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the idea that pangalay, a Southern Philippine dance tradition of the Tausug (a.k.a. Suluk) people, means “temple of dance” in Sanskrit, arguing on the contrary that it is mainly Austronesian in origin. In the works of Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa, pangalay is presented as a pre-Christian and pre-Islamic dance tradition, and that the dance label means “temple of dance” in Sanskrit. This process of Sanskritization of what I argue is an Austronesian cultural artifact warrants a close review. To deconstruct this discourse on pangalay, I situate it within the scholarship on the Indianization of Southeast Asia, and on India-Philippine cultural relations. I also conduct a linguistic analysis of the phrase, “Temple of Dance” to show the pangalay does not carry that meaning. Part 1 gives a brief introduction to pangalay and related traditions in the southern Philippines. Part 2 discusses the frameworks of “Indianization.” Part 3 features the linguistic analysis of the phrase, “temple of dance.” The paper concludes by discussing alternative views culture and dance in the Philippines.

Keywords: Pangalay dance tradition, Sanskritization, Indianization, Invention of Tradition, Philippine Dance Studies, Amilbangsa