

Preserving Heritage: Sinu-og Estokada Beat of Jagna, Bohol

Chrystel Mariz R. Gementiza, LPT

College of Education, Holy Name University, Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to document and preserve the traditional *Sinu-og Estokada* beat of Jagna, Bohol through rhythmic notation and cultural analysis. Commonly associated with ritual re-enactments of the Moro-Moro swordplay tradition, the beat features a syncopated 4/4 rhythm and is performed exclusively using the Gong. A descriptive-qualitative approach—utilizing audio-visual documentation and rhythmic transcription—was employed, with insights gathered from local cultural bearers. Findings reveal a distinct rhythmic pattern beginning with an incomplete measure, counted as: “4 ah and | 1 ah and, 2 ah and, 3 and, 4 ah and | 1 ah and, 2 ah and, 3 and.” The beat is composed primarily of sixteenth notes and eighth notes, producing a sharp, martial character. The study contributes to Philippine ethnomusicology and cultural heritage documentation. It is recommended that the preserved rhythmic material be integrated into local cultural education programs and performance practices to promote awareness and ensure intergenerational transmission.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Rhythmic Notation, Sinu-og Estokada, Ethnomusicology, and Traditional Music

INTRODUCTION

Music serves as a powerful vessel of cultural identity, especially in communities where traditions are orally transmitted across generations. In the town of Jagna, Bohol, the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat plays a central role in ritual and performance. It accompanies choreographed swordplay that dramatizes historical Moro-Christian conflicts, imbuing the performance with both theatrical intensity and sacred meaning. Despite its cultural significance, the rhythmic and musical structure of the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat remains largely undocumented in academic literature.

While ethnomusicological research in the Philippines has explored prominent musical forms, indigenous traditions like the *Sinu-og Estokada* are often overlooked. This study addresses that gap by formally transcribing the beat through rhythmic notation and analyzing its cultural context. In doing so, it contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and enhances scholarly understanding of traditional Philippine music practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnomusicology and Cultural Identity

Music is not merely a form of artistic expression—it is a carrier of cultural identity, particularly in traditional societies where rituals, values, and histories are transmitted orally (Rehfeldt et al., 2021b). Ethnomusicology, the study of music in its cultural context, plays a vital role in understanding how traditional sounds like the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat contribute to cultural continuity and community identity. Scholars such as Yust (2024) emphasize that examining traditional music within its social context allows for a deeper appreciation of its function and meaning.

In the Philippines, music has long served as a bridge between the indigenous and colonial pasts. Ritual performances such as the Moro-moro—a theatrical representation of historical Moro-Christian conflicts—integrate music as both dramatic support and cultural narrative (Blum, 2023). The *Sinu-og Estokada* beat, traditionally used in this context, thus reflects a confluence of musical function and cultural memory.

Beat Structure, Rhythm, and Musical Elements

One of the primary objectives of this study is to describe the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat in terms of its structure and rhythmic content. According to Geringer and Madsen (2015), beat structure refers to how temporal units are organized within a musical piece, which includes meter, time signature, and accentuation patterns. Rhythmic patterns, on the other hand, dictate how durations are sequenced—often reflecting cultural idioms and performance practices (Clayton et al., 2013).

Syncopation and repetition, two common elements in traditional Southeast Asian percussive music, are particularly noteworthy in martial or ritual beats (Kartomi, 2001). These elements have been found to create a sense of urgency and tension, as seen in Indonesian gamelan and Philippine kulintang traditions, and are also evident in the *Sinu-og Estokada*'s syncopated phrases using sixteenth and eighth notes.

In a similar study, Gementiza (2023) documented the Gurung-gong beat of Panglao, Bohol, identifying rhythmic patterns that include consistent time signatures, dynamic changes, and instrumentation that guide both the dancers and the ritual's emotional arc. This work provides a methodological foundation for examining the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat, particularly in determining how musical elements define its ritual function.

Rhythmic Notation and Documentation

Rhythmic notation is essential in preserving intangible cultural heritage, especially those rooted in oral tradition. Francisca Reyes Aquino was among the first Filipino scholars to propose the standardization of rhythmic notation for indigenous dances and musical practices through her book *Fundamental Dance Steps and Music*, emphasizing the need for accuracy and cultural sensitivity (National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2019). Today, tools like MuseScore and other digital notation software make it possible to preserve traditional rhythms in formal notation systems, aiding in both academic analysis and community education (Sinaga, 2019).

Doi (2018b) highlights the role of local music collections and their documentation processes in cultural heritage institutions, arguing that systematic notation not only supports research but also empowers local communities to reclaim and preserve their heritage. This underscores the importance of documenting the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat based on field recordings, which this study aims to accomplish.

Indigenous Instruments: The Gimbaw and the Gong

The instrumentation of the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat, particularly the use of the Gong and Gimbaw (native drum), plays a significant role in shaping the beat's overall character. Ethnomusicologists argue that indigenous instruments serve as cultural markers—both sonic and symbolic (Nettl, 2005). In Boholano music traditions, the Gong produces a sharp, metallic resonance that often leads or punctuates the rhythm, while the Gimbaw, typically made from wood and animal skin, provides a grounding pulse (Gementiza, 2023).

The interplay between these instruments creates a layered texture that is both rhythmically complex and culturally expressive. According to S and R (2025), studying indigenous instruments during live rituals or community performances—offers valuable insights into their function, symbolism, and evolution over time.

Preservation and Transmission of Musical Traditions

As intangible cultural heritage, traditional beats like *Sinu-og Estokada* are at risk of being forgotten if not properly documented, transmitted, and revitalized. Rehfeldt et al. (2021c) propose that cultural music systems should be understood as inheritance structures, passed from generation to generation through ritual, pedagogy, and community involvement. Integrating these traditions into formal education and cultural programming enhances their longevity.

In the context of Bohol, local government units and schools have begun to recognize the value of cultural performances in festivals and educational activities, yet documentation remains uneven. This study, by

transcribing and analyzing the *Sinu-og Estokada* beat, contributes to broader efforts to safeguard Boholano musical heritage.

Research Objectives

This study aims to document and analyze the rhythmic beat of Jagna, Bohol, known as “Sinu-og Estokada” for the purpose of rhythmic notation and cultural preservation.

Specifically, it aims to:

1. Describe the features of the beat in terms of:
 - 1.1. Beat structure;
 - 1.2. Notes and rhythmic patterns;
 - 1.3. Musical elements, such as time signature, tempo, and instrumentation.
2. Document the rhythmic notation of the beat based on traditional recordings and performances.
3. Determine how the use of native instruments, particularly the Gimbaw and Gong, shapes the overall rhythmic character of the beat.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative research design, allowing an in-depth exploration of the rhythmic elements and cultural context of the Sinu-og Estokada beat.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Jagna, Bohol, a municipality in the southeastern part of the province known for its traditional festivals and deep-rooted performance arts.

Research Participants

Participants included local musicians, cultural performers, and elders recognized as tradition bearers who have firsthand experience with the Sinu-og Estokada performance.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants who are actively involved in cultural preservation or performance of the Sinu-og Estokada ritual.

Statistical Design

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, no statistical analysis was employed. Data were treated through thematic and rhythmic analysis.

Geographical Area

The research focused on Barangay Can-upao in Jagna, where the Sinu-og ritual is typically performed during fiestas and town celebrations.

Research Instrument

The primary instruments used were audio and video recordings of live performances, an interview guide for key informants, and MuseScore software for rhythmic transcription.

Data Gathering Procedure

Fieldwork involved attending local rituals and documenting performances through recordings and interviews. Rhythmic transcription was developed from these recordings in consultation with local musicians.

Data Analysis

The musical transcription followed Western rhythmic notation principles, with focus on beat structure, syncopation, and repetition. The analysis drew upon Sinaga's (2019) Music Composition Process to determine rhythmic organization and flow.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Cultural sensitivity and respect for indigenous practices were observed throughout the research. Participants were given access to the findings for review and validation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

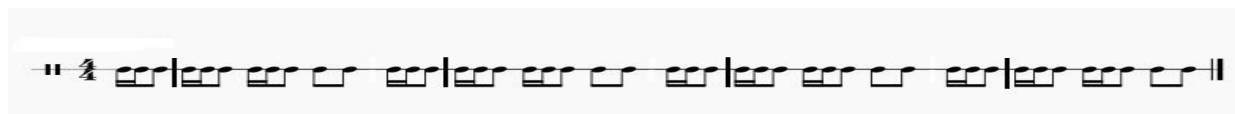


Figure 1. Transcribed Rhthym of Sinu-og Estokada Beat

Notation and Beat Structure

The transcribed rhythm (see Figure 1) shows that the Sinu-og Estokada beat follows a 4/4 time signature but starts on an anacrusis or pickup beat (“4 ah and”), which is uncommon and adds rhythmic tension.

Rhythmic Pattern and Syncopation

The rhythmic flow is as follows:

“4 ah and | 1 ah and, 2 ah and, 3 and, 4 ah and | 1 ah and, 2 ah and, 3 and”

This repeated structure exhibits syncopation—accenting weak beats or offbeats—creating a sensation of martial urgency appropriate for ritual swordplay.

Tempo and Instrumentation

The tempo is lively and fast-paced, likely marked as *Allegro* or *Vivace*, suited for dance and theatrical movement. The Gong is the sole instrument used, providing sharp, metallic sounds that cut through ambient noise and drive the beat forward.

Cultural Interpretation

The beat's function in the Sinu-og Estokada ritual reflects a fusion of pre-Hispanic rhythmic tradition and Western formal structure, especially in its use of time signature and phrase repetition. This mirrors the hybrid nature of the Moro-moro theatrical form from which the ritual is inspired.

CONCLUSION

The “Sinu-og Estokada” beat is a culturally rich, rhythmically complex percussive tradition that reflects Jagna’s local history and heritage. Through documentation and rhythmic analysis, the study was able to uncover the beat's structural components, its syncopated martial rhythm, and its cultural function as a narrative

support in community rituals. The beat's preservation is not only a matter of musical interest but also of cultural identity and continuity.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **For Cultural Education.** Integrate the Sinu-og Estokada beat into local curriculum and heritage programs.
2. **For Researchers.** Further studies may examine comparative rhythmic analyses with other Boholano traditions.
3. **For Local Government and Cultural Institutions.** Support archival and performance projects to sustain and promote the Sinu-og Estokada ritual.
4. **For Performers.** Encourage youth participation in traditional rituals to ensure intergenerational transmission.

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