

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON SOME ASPECTS OF VARIOUS MINDANAO MUSIC TRADITIONS

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From early 1965 to late 1974, I visited intermittently eleven Mindanao provinces¹ to study² some of the non-Muslim music traditions.

To my knowledge, there was no word for "music" among the non-Muslim groups I have visited though I tried my best to elicit such a word from each informant. However, all groups have words for "song" and "singing". They have terms for very special kinds of songs: lullabies, love songs, funeral songs, planting songs, special ritual songs, etc. Here are a few song designations:³ *Inengey* (birth songs), *Potot* (birth song for a first son), *Sangal sa mga bata* (children's song), *Paararay* (courtship song), *Tatadem/Indakulun/Ugsuyan/Bawed/Buwaya/Manulurun/Arandun/Iguigu* (general entertainment songs), *Langan* (farewell song), *Tangig tangig* (fishing song), *Panlalawag* (ritual song before hunting), *Manganinay* (bee hunting song), *Dalinday* (love song), *Lilang/Buwabuwa/Mangmang* (lullabies). They have also terms for specific kinds of music.

Of the samples collected, vocal music predominated. Unaccompanied vocal performances constitute about 85% of samples. It appears that these songs are vehicles for the texts. With rare exceptions, the song texts control the melodies. The exceptions are certain strophic melodies which demand textual conformity to a rigid melodic line for the duration of numerous stanzas.

The most common instruments were made of bamboo or wood. No community failed to produce a *kubing* (bamboo jaws harp) solo, and there was always at least one kind of bamboo flute in evidence, variously called *lantuy* (Manobo), *pulandang* (Manobo), *suling* (Ma-

nobo), *falandang* (Bilaan), *tampong* (Subanon), *toali* (Subanon), *slali* (Bilaan). The zither, made from a bamboo internode of about 5 inches diameter and 18 inches long, is known by many names – *salorey*, *saludoy*, *sloray* among the Manobo, (except those from Malita, Davao), *sloray* among the Bilaan, and *tugo* among the Tiruray. It is found in all ethnic communities throughout Mindanao. Published researches of other scholars indicate that the zither is used all over the Philippines and throughout Southeast Asia. Almost as ubiquitous is the plucked lute which has two strings – one a drone and the other for playing the melody. This instrument is known by such names as *kudyapi* (Muslim), *kotapi* (Subanon), *fegereng* (Tiruray), *kudlung* (Manobo), *hagalong* (Tiboli). It is a favorite solo instrument which is also played in combination with other instruments or as accompaniment for singing and dancing. The single-string bowed lute is found in many ethnic areas but is not frequently played.⁴

Gongs are used – although differently – by all the ethnic groups.⁶ Two Manobos areas – Tigwa River in southeast Bukidnon and Kulaman River in the extreme north central part of North Cotabato (northeast of Carmen) – revealed a unique type of gong instrument. This gong instrument is called *tanggungan*. It consists of eight gongs of graduated sizes and musical pitches hung in a vertical frame. In shape, the gongs are identical with – though smaller than – the Muslim bossed gongs. Whereas the Muslim gongs are brass – or bronze – cast, the Manobo gongs are made of iron. Since the gongs I saw were much eroded by rust, I judge that they were quite old but I was not able to ascertain from informants the approximate date when the gongs had come into the communities. The *tanggungan* required two players: one to tap out the melody, and the other to maintain an evenly paced *ostinato* or drone on the gong of lowest pitch. The sound of the instrument was most agreeable to my ears and I was intrigued with the rondo-like musical form of the pieces I have heard.

The Tiruray, Bagobo, Tagakaolo and South Davao Bilaan groups used relatively large bronze gongs, like *agongs* of varying sizes. I have recorded them being played in ensembles of two, three, and as many as eight. The Bagobos, Tagakaolos and Bilaans of South Davao hung their gongs vertically, either from the inner roof structure of their

house, if played indoors, or from a pole suspended between two trees, if the performance were outdoor; but among them I never saw *kulintang*-type gongs hung in a permanent frame. Among the Tiruray of the Upi area, the gongs I heard were the shallow *babandil*⁵ type. On several occasions I have recorded Tiruray performers playing an ensemble of five gongs, each player beating his own gong in his own particular rhythm. The combined rhythms and gong tones created delightful music which often was the accompaniment to a traditional dance performed by a man and a woman.

Gongs and gong music appear to be highly esteemed by all the non-Muslim ethnic groups I have visited. It is my opinion that the extent of appreciation of gong music among them is determined by economic conditions rather than by musical taste. Gongs are expensive and are not easily found for purchase. At present all new gongs available in Mindanao are imports. None are now cast in the Philippines. I make this statement categorically, for I have searched for gong makers all over Mindanao after consulting informants but I have not found any in my field work in 1969. I will be grateful to have my statement proved incorrect. It seems to me that the Philippines would lose an important art if gong casting were neglected and abandoned by the nation's artisans.

Among non-Muslims groups, music is used freely, spontaneously, and almost constantly. Songs are classified, i.e. lullabies, love songs, etc., but not rigidly; they may be sung for occasions other than those specified categories. Some funeral songs, as well as special ritual or ceremonial songs, are rigidly categorized. But the taboo on singing them out of context can be removed by a shaman or some other authoritative person willing to act as the "protector" against any possible ill consequence.

I have observed that the Mindanao non-Muslim ethnic groups have no professional musicians. There are individual performers rated as *good* or *better* or *best*, but no one performs or teaches music exclusively for a living. Payment comes in terms of enthusiastic appreciation, invitations to the *best* social functions, and gifts of food and drink, and *buyo* (chew). The singing of epics are mainly the task of traditional leaders — the *sultans*, *datus*, *timuays* *halians*. In contrast, the

best instrumentalists have no particular rank. They may be very old, quite young, housewives, lowly laborers. In fact, I have found no direct relationship between musicians and any social group. Whenever special musical ability appears to follow family lines, it would seem to be for reasons of inherited aptitude and because the young learn from their elders.

Some very old songs, particularly the epics, are deeply embedded in the ethnic traditions and are sung in archaic language understood only by the *indoctrinated* adults. For the young and for the less knowledgeable adults, a summary is usually sung first in vernacular by a chanter who is not an *acknowledged* expert. Timuay Imbing, a doctor and leader among the Subanons of Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur, told me that the "old folks find the singing of the introduction to *Ging-oman*, an epic, quite boring because they are impatient for the real *Ging-oman* to begin." He said the old folks are always eager to hear the *main singer* chant the epic in true bardic style, with all the literary devices of exciting narration, poetic words and imaginative scenes.

The best singers always improvise easily, fluently, with verbal wizardry. A hard would usually begin by vocalizing a single vowel on a long-held tone, then proceed to chant rather lengthily, using only three or four pitches, one of which is the focal note for his monotonic style of singing. At certain points, the singer will burst into a highly decorative melodic passage, which, as several informants told me, was to emphasize a portion of a particularly descriptive text. This *coloratura* passage usually evokes from the listeners enthusiastic response after which the singer would oftentimes alter his mode or pace of performance, frequently moving on into a period of very rapid chanting, arousing again the enthusiasm of his audience. Then after a moment of hushed silence and another long-held tone, this folk artist will plunge into his musical formula once more and continue to embroider his verbal tapestry.

Singers performing without instrumental accompaniment exhibit great skill in maintaining excellent intonation throughout performances of great length. Their vocal characteristics include the universal tendencies in voice production which range from complete freedom from

muscular interference to extreme constriction and much muscular interference. Deserving special mention is an exotic falsetto voice used by some Ata and Tigwa male singers. On some songs, the men would sing in the normal baritone or tenor, but singing later in duet with a woman — who would sing very lightly and sweetly to the accompaniment of a *saluroy* (zither), they would use their falsetto voice. It seems that singing in a falsetto voice is an effort to match a woman's lyrical voice — which is accompanied by a *saluroy*. It can be hypothesized that the male falsetto singers are intentionally maintaining a musical tradition of their culture: that the *saluroy* is used to accompany female voices only. Therefore when the *saluroy* is used, the men vocally impersonate women.

Although this report is preliminary,⁷ a number of insights, which have emerged at this juncture of my study, are worth discussing. The physical artifacts of music (instruments) exhibit marked similarity among the various ethnic groups and would seem to suggest a common heritage. For instance, the names of musical instruments appear to be cognates:

Bamboo jaws harp	—	<i>kuving, kubing</i> (Manobo), <i>kombing</i> (Bilaan), <i>sombing</i> (Subanon)
Bamboo flute	—	<i>pulandag, pulandang</i> (Manobo), <i>felandang</i> (Bilaan)
Bamboo zither	—	<i>saluroy</i> (Manobo), <i>saludoy</i> (Manobo and Bilaan) <i>sloray</i> (Bilaan)
Two-string lute	—	<i>kudyapi</i> (Muslim ethnic groups), <i>kotapi</i> (Subanon), <i>kudlung, kuglung</i> (Manobo), <i>faglong</i> (Bilaan), <i>fegereng</i> (Tiruray)

As for music compositions and their categories, their taxonomic hierarchy is far from complete.

Based on observation, I predict that when more data are known and documented, the "common musical heritage" hypothesis will become an acceptable theory. The sound of music I have heard and

recorded on my field trips, their rhythms, modes, melodic 'shapes, stylistic elements – all these ring with too familiar a sound not to have welled from a common ancestor.

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NOTES

1. My field research included visits to the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Bukidnon, North and South Cotabato, North and South Agusan, North and South Zamboanga. Some ethnic groups encountered on these field visits include Ata, Bagobo, Bilaan, Kalagan, Magindanao (Muslim), Maranao (Muslim, Manobo, Subanon, Tagakaolo, Tiboli, Tigwa and Tiruray. About 400 examples of ethnic music performances were tape recorded in the study. Information in every case was obtained from local informants, mostly farmers, and the rest of whom were sultans, datos, timuays (these are traditional leaders), fishermen, religious leaders, truck drivers, housewives, schoolchildren, and at least one professional pababayok (chanter).

2. About 18 months were spent intermittently on the field in 1964-74. A rewarding six-month visit was jointly sponsored by East-West Center and Mindanao State University in 1969. My latest grant (1973-74) was given by Ford Foundation.

3. The terms and their respective ethnic origins are: Inengey, potot – Tigwa; Sangal sa mga bata – Manobo in Midsayap, Cotabato; Tatadem/Indakulun/Ugsayan/Bawed/Buwaya/Manulurun/Arandun/Iguigu, Dalinday, Langan – Illanon Manobo in Barungis, Agusan; Tangig tangig – Illanon Manobo in Kibudtungan, Agusan; Manganinay – Manobo in Carmen, Cotabato; Lilang/Buwa-buwa/Mangmang – Manobo.

4. My tape recordings include performances from Bilaans, Subanons, Agusan Manobos and Tirurays.

5. The babandil is a small gong, part of the kulintang ensemble in the Maranao music tradition in the provinces of Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and Maranaw.

6. The well-known traditions are the highly developed and complex gong styles of the Muslim groups – the Maranao, Magindanao and Tausug – which have been described by several eminent authorities. I mention them in passing only since the Muslim music traditions are not included in my research.

7. I am now subjecting my field recordings to a systematic analysis. This analysis involves the transcription into written text and music notation of a generous sampling of the available material – my collection and the collection of others who have generously agreed to share them with me. Analysis of this kind is required before definite conclusions can be made.