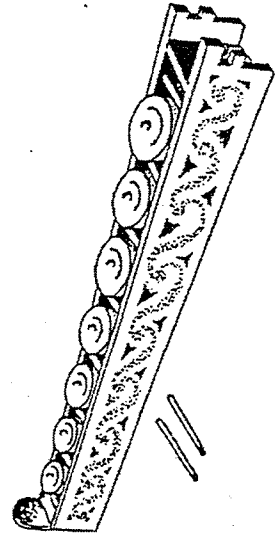
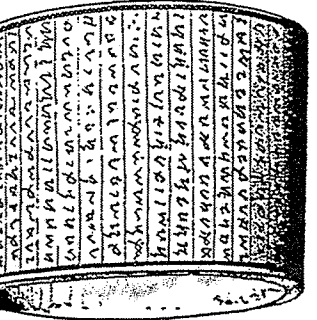


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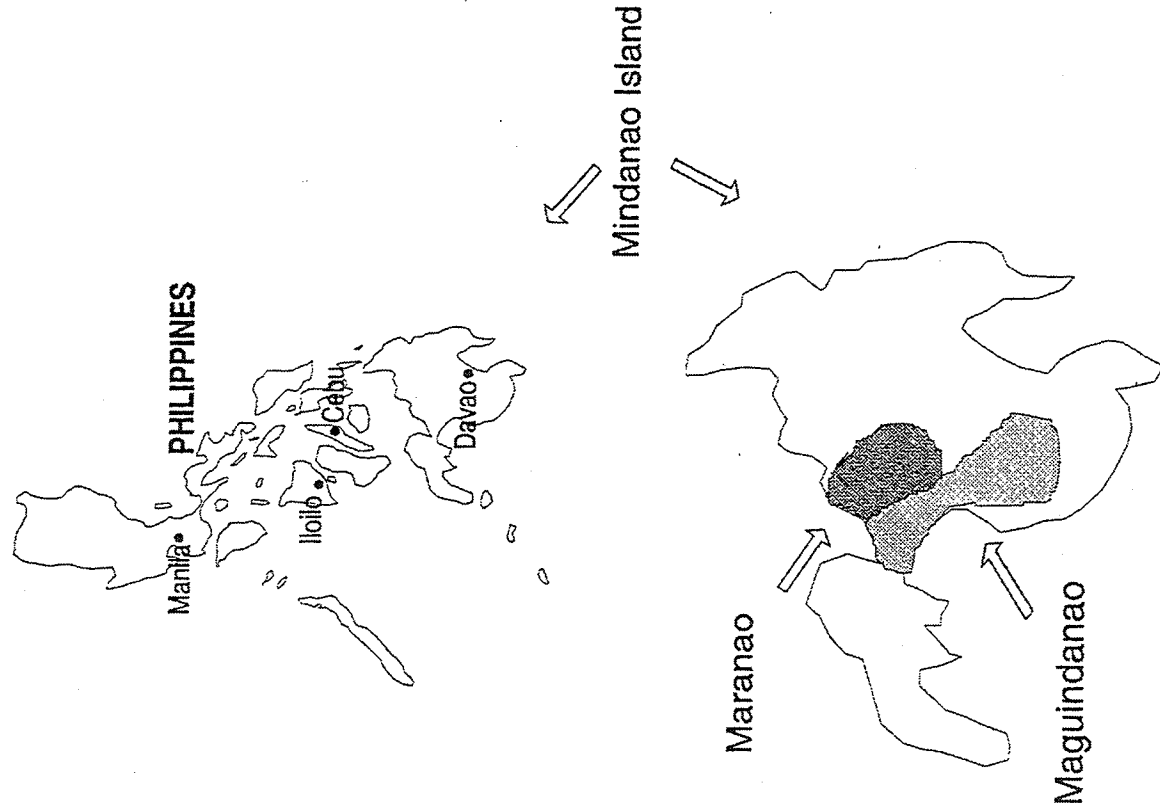
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Maps of the Philippines, showing the location of Mindanao Island, and the regions of Maranao and Maguindanao.



## THE ROLE OF KOLINTANG MUSIC IN MARANAO SOCIETY

by  
Usopay H. Cadar\*

*Kolintang* is a term loosely used to refer to a variety of musical ensembles found not only in the Muslim Philippines but also in northern Borneo. These ensembles are characterized by the use of a row of small gongs, which functions melodically; supported by drum(s) and various large gongs. Instrumental groups of the *kolintang* type can be found in the Moluccas of Indonesia; the *gong sembilan* of Banda and the *gong duablas* of Ambon, for example. Indeed, the musical phenomena emanating from and associated with these widely distributed ensembles represent a large unit or stratum of the so-called "gong-chime culture."

At present, little is known about this body of music. The study of José Maceda (1963) on the Magindanaon *kulintang* in the Philippines represents the first attempt to investigate one aspect of this musical stratum in depth. There are a few available recordings of the music but all (save one) lack the social and ethnographic descriptions that the ethnomusicologist wishes to know. Consequently, to draw meaningful statements concerning the nature, relationship, and implications of this body of music on the basis of the presently available materials, is highly presumptuous and speculative.

It is known, however, that until about the early 1900s when the Americans came to the area, the Muslims, as the recipients and bearers of cultural traits from Southeast and Eastern Asia, were the major cultural influence in the southern Philippines. Since the Maranao represent the second largest Muslim Filipino group, the study of Maranao *kolintang* is perhaps very relevant to the investigation of nature and origins of what is known as Malay musical tradition.

In line with the principle that the social context of music bears equal consideration to its sound properties in the analytical process, this paper will be focused on the role that *kolintang* plays in Maranao society. The manner in which the music functions will be discussed:

1. As a channel for bringing about solidarity.
2. As a method for learning and practicing ethical principles.
3. As an arena for recitation, singing, and dancing.
4. As a method for disciplining one's inner self.
5. As a channel for various forms of expression.
6. As a medium of entertainment and hospitality.
7. As a vehicle for social interaction.

These facets of the music are complex enough to merit separate investigation, and in this light, I will not dwell on purely musical analysis.<sup>1</sup>

### The Muslim Filipinos: A Panoramic Glimpse

Shortly after their triumph over the Moors in the late 15th century, the Spaniards found themselves at war, halfway around the world, against the Muslims in the Philippines whom they called Moros. The present-day Muslims in the Philippines constitute the largest cultural minority in the country. As of the 1960 Philippine census, 4.8% of the more than 27 million Filipinos are Muslims. This religious-political unit, however, embraces several minimally ethnic but primarily linguistic groups:

- 1) the Bajao of the southern Sulu Archipelago
- 2) the Jama Mapun of Cagayan de Sulu
- 3) the Magindanaon of Cotabato Province in Mindanao
- 4) the Maranao of Lanao and Cotabato Provinces in Mindanao
- 5) the Melebugananon of Balabac Island
- 6) the Palawani of southern Palawan
- 7) the Samal of Sibutu and the Sulu Archipelago
- 8) the Sangil of Cotabato and Davao Provinces of Mindanao
- 9) the Tausog of Jolo, Siasi, and Tawi-Tawi
- 10) the Yakan of Basilan and Zamboanga
- [11] the Kalibugan of Zamboanga
- 12) the Iranun of Lanao and Cotabato
- 13) the Kalagan of Davao
- 14) the Muslim mixed groups occupying the entire southern seacoast of Zamboanga.<sup>2</sup>

Actually, there is no agreement on the exact population of each, but a general consensus remains that the Maranao, Magindanaon, and Tausog represent the three largest groups. Of these, the Maranao and the Magindanaon are the closest.

The Maranao (people of the lake) and the Magindanaon (people of the flood plain) live respectively in the adjacent provinces of Lanao and Cotabato on the island of Mindanao. Their languages are close enough to be mutually intelligible, yet they are different enough for each group to feel that their language is being abused by the other. Both groups share many cultural traits. In their genealogy, they both claim to have come from the same lineage as expressed by the saying, "*Rp'da sa posd*," meaning, "people who share one umbilical cord."

While the Maranao and the Magindanaon consider themselves brothers, it is interesting to note that Edward M. Kuder (1945:123)

subjectively presumes that the Maranao concede mild superiority to the Magindanaon because Islam was introduced to them by the Magindanaon. While it is perhaps true that Islam was introduced to the Maranao by the Magindanaon, there is no evidence to support the notion that the Maranao regard the Magindanaon as their social superiors. It is even more shocking to note that recently José M. Maceda (1963:16-17) not only relies on Kuder's faulty assumption that the Maranao grant social superiority to the Magindanaon, but he equates that social superiority with cultural superiority when he states, "...the Maranao sometimes point to the Magindanao as their musical *superior*." The fact is that Maranao music and Magindanao music are two different traditions in spite of their striking similarities. A comparable case is the relationship between Balinese and Javanese musical traditions, or that of South India and North India, none of whom will point to the other as their musical elite.

### The Maranao

With an estimated population of 412,260 in 1960, the Maranao represent the second largest Muslim group in the Philippines. They are highly concentrated in the coastal towns of Lake Lanao in the island of Mindanao. The lake is elevated 2,300 feet above sea level, approximately thirty-one miles from its Northern seacoast and twenty-three miles from its Southern seacoast, making the Maranao geographically isolated from the seacoastal groups of Mindanao.

The past inaccessibility of the traditional land of the Maranao has played an important role in molding a distinct Maranao tradition as Peter G. Gowing (1964:3) explains:

In these pleasant climes the Maranao have lived in comparative isolation for centuries. Of all the Philippine Muslim groups they were the last to be Islamized....last to submit to American authority in the early years of this century....and today, of the major groups, they appear the least affected by external influences.

Their geographic isolation enables them to avoid the unfortunate fate of the Magindanaon who live in a vulnerable seacoastal area. The recent observation is that Magindanaon traditional arts are dying out, old culture falling into disuse, and "on the whole the outlook is sad for the Magindanao" (*ibid.*:5). Similarly, the Tausog, being at the crossroads of trade routes, must have been continually hit by waves of cultural invasion which supplanted the continuous development of their arts and musical traditions. David B. Baradas (1968:133) suggests that the Tausog may have had a vital art tradition of their own, but that this tradition "suffered

cultural bombardment leaving very little sign of its former existence." In line with this trend, Thomas M. Kiefer (1970:1) has noted that the *kolintang* music in the Tausog tradition is falling into extinction. While Magindanaon and Tausog arts and musical traditions are exposed to outside influences, the Maranao, being free from direct cultural assaults, have continuously emerged and flourished.

While Maranao tradition has been kept intact, it is also dynamic. There exists a kind of a filter system that explains the emergence and flourishing of Maranao arts and music. First, Maranao social structure is tightly kinship-centered as opposed, for instance, to the institutionalized friendship of the Tausog. Outside people, being bonded by different systems, could not live in or infiltrate the land of the Maranao because of the absence of relatives in the area with whom they could identify. Until today, there is no indication that any other Muslim group has ever settled in the heart of the Maranao traditional home. Second, in Maranao society men are allowed to marry women from outside groups, but generally there is no sanction for women to be exogamous. This practice differs radically from that of the Magindanaon and Tausog. Third, although the Maranao are reluctant to live away from home, an individual or a family who seriously offends another party will always abandon their homeland in order to avoid retaliation. This is one reason why there are many Maranao communities in several provinces of Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and even in the British North Borneo districts of Tempassuk, Kota Balod, Pendasan, and the foothills of Mt. Kinabalu (Evans 1922:53, 197-229, 257; Baradas 1968:143). Because of strong kinship attachments these people always manage to find opportunities to occasionally visit their relatives and original homes. Some resettle in their homeland after the conflict has been resolved. Fourth, the Maranao are quite adventurous people: comparing them with other groups, Baradas (1968:143) has observed that "the Maranao...go into inland settlements and mix with all ethnic groups without great apprehension." Similarly, it is often mentioned that there are only a few large-business towns in any part of the Philippines without Maranao itinerant merchants. Fifth, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the existence of several Islamic schools in Lanao, and the recent establishment of the Mindanao State University at Marawi City, link the Maranao with the outside world. This can be seen in the fact that many Maranao speak several languages besides their mother tongue. These emigrant families, along with annual pilgrims and transient merchants, bring home new pre-screened elements into Maranao culture. Along with geographic isolation, social structure shields the Maranao from drastic intruders, yet, population movements have provided the Maranao with purveyors of selected cultural elements and have maintained constant access to other groups.

Figure 1: A semi-formal *Kolintang* performance on the porch of a house in the Maranao village of Romayas: the *kolintang* player is twirling the beaters; to her left the two *Agong* are hung, and set to the right are the *Dbakan* (drum) and the *Babndir*. (Note the *Babndir* player, sitting on the floor.) Photo by Usopay Cadar, 1972.

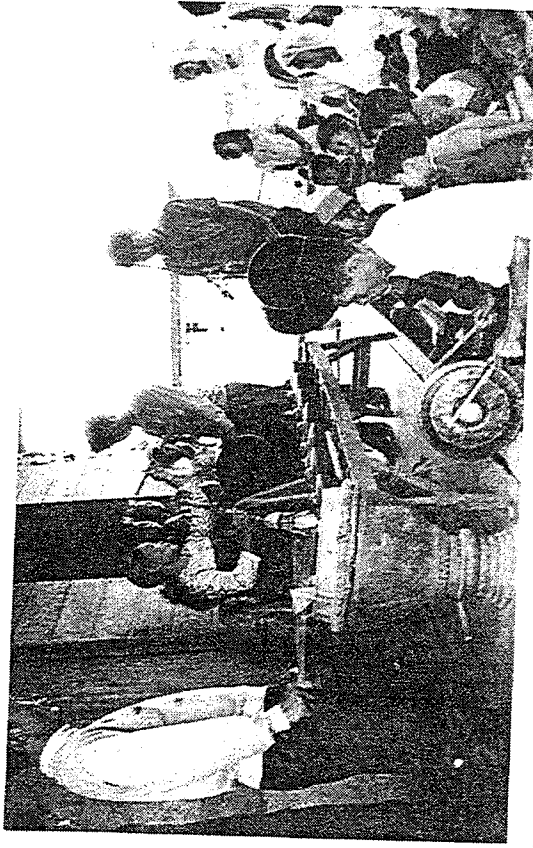
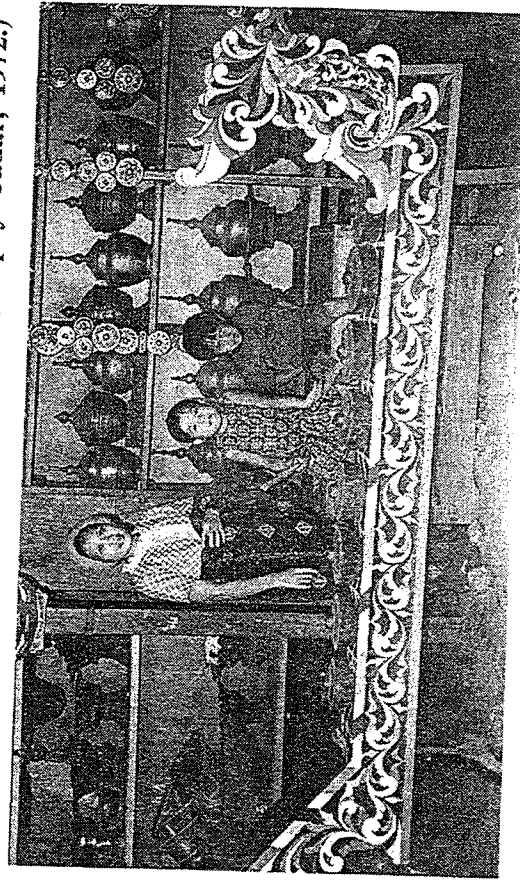
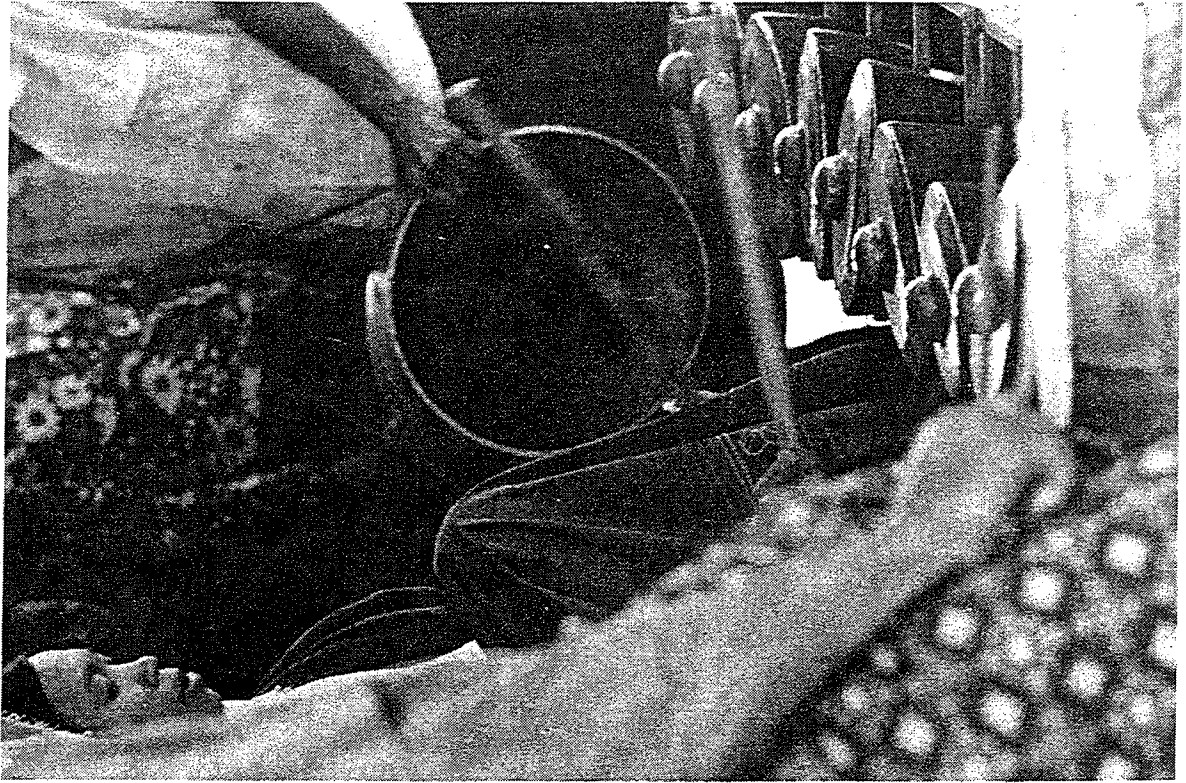


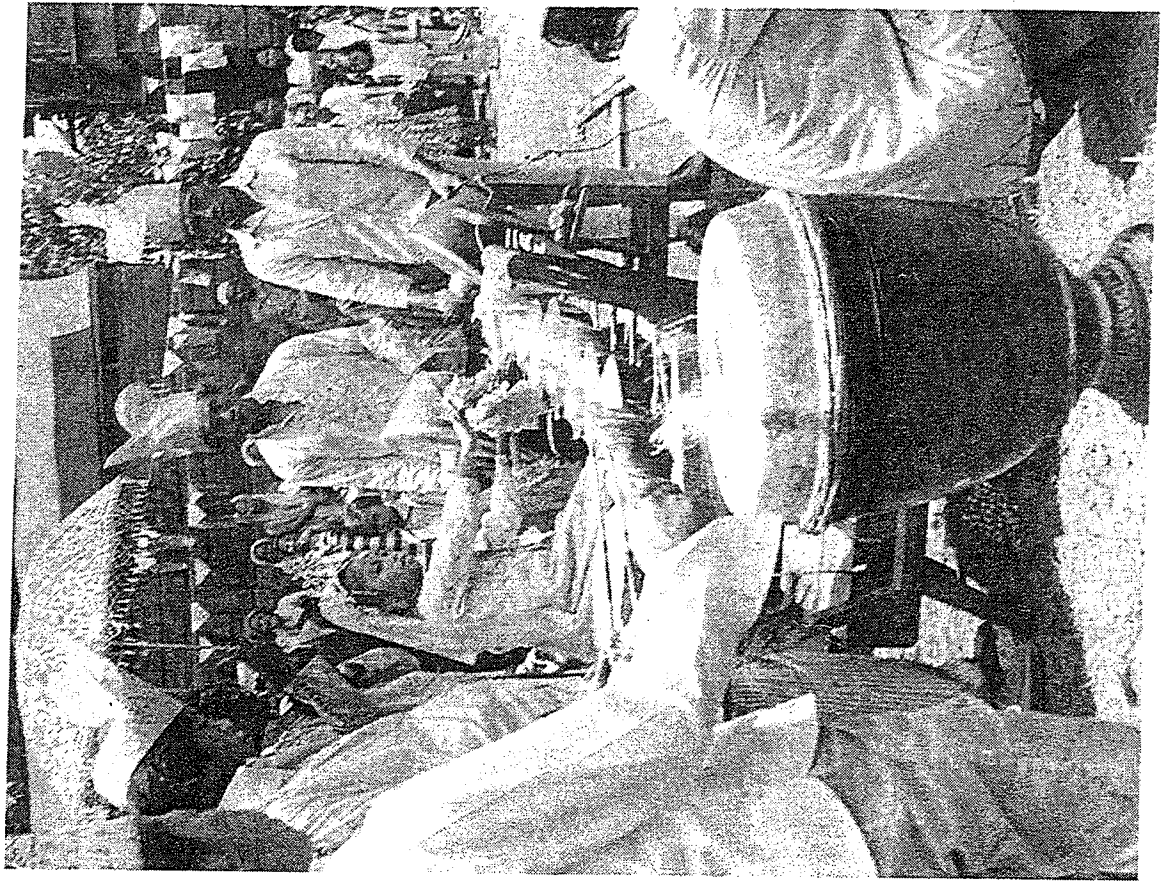
Figure 5: A young Maranao girl plays coyly on the *Kolintang* whose frame (*Langkonggan*) is highly decorated with the traditional motif (*Okir*). The setting is a commercial outlet for traditional artifacts in Marawi City. (Usopay Cadar, 1972.)



**Figure 2:** Another *Kolintang* player of the same Maranao ensemble as in Figure 1. (Usopay Cadar, 1972.)



**Figure 3:** The goblet-shaped drum, *Dbakan* or *Dadabuan*, is in the foreground of an ensemble played outdoors as part of a wedding in a Maranao village. (Usopay Cadar, 1972.)



### The Maranao *Kolintang* Ensemble

The Maranao *kolintang* ensemble is played mostly in private homes (see Fig. 1; this and all other photos are by Usopay Cadar). The world *kolintang* actually refers to the horizontally laid gong kettles in the ensemble (Fig. 2), but in everyday parlance, it is used to mean the whole ensemble, and for that reason, it will be used interchangeably throughout the rest of the paper. According to Maranao standards, this melody instrument is accompanied by four other instruments: the *dbakan* or *dadabuan*, a goblet-shaped drum (Fig. 3), which gives a rhythmic emphasis to the melody; a pair of *agong* (Fig. 4), consisting of the *p' nanggisa-an* (a big gong which plays the basic beat), and the *p' malsan* (another big gong which ornaments the part of the *p' nanggisa-an*); and the *babndir*, a medium-sized gong which functions either as a cross between the drum and *agong* parts, or as a simplified emphasis of the smallest phrase unit of the melody.

There is a definite placement for the ensemble. The *kolintang* player always sits on a chair. In front of her is the set of eight graduated gongs laid on a stand which is about as high as the chair. To her left the *agong* are hung high enough so that the players can stand comfortably. To the right of the *kolintang* player, near the end of the stand, stands the drummer; and the *babndir* player sits on the floor besides the drummer (see Figure 1). All of these accompanists are positioned at right angles to both the *kolintang* player and the spectators.

Not only is the orchestration standardized among the Maranao, but also the different instruments in the ensemble are assigned to particular sexes. The *kolintang* is traditionally played by women, and by all indications, it is essentially a woman's instrument among the Magindanaon, Yakan, Tausog, Simal and even among the Bajao and Illanun of North Borneo (Evans 1922:245). The *dbakan* and *agong* are men's instruments, whereas the *babndir* is played by either sex. With some exceptions, *kolintang* music played by men will exhibit those characteristic features inherent in men. Similarly, womanly elements will be felt in the music when all the instruments are played by women.

One emphasis of Maranao *kolintang* playing is a kind of grace and frailty which is normally associated with women. Men are considered too masculine, too expressive, and too stiff to be able to play the melody part. Nevertheless, there are a few men who play the *kolintang*, but they are either of feminine inclination or regarded as people endowed with extra-musicality. In the eyes of the Maranao, the *agong* and drum demand some masculinity, endurance and strength in order to be beautifully played, and as such, these instruments are not befitting women. The *babndir* represents a kind of 'neutral' instrument in the group. The part requires neither the

masculine dexterity of the drummer or *agong* players, nor the gracefulness of the *kolintang* player. The stick used for beating the *babndir* is slightly larger than a pencil, as opposed to the padded mallets for the *agong* or the longer and heavier sticks for the *kolintang*.

There are three traditional ways of learning how to play these instruments. First, the teacher can play some pattern which the student repeats afterwards. Second, the student may memorize a pattern of mnemonics called *kamlala* which he then articulates on the instrument while he sings the pattern. Third, the teacher may hold and guide the hands of the student and thereby impart the correct physical coordination.

Learning to Islamic tradition of modesty, Maranao women will usually refuse to teach men to play the *kolintang*. Even when they are the closest of relatives, there is every possibility that some difficulty will be encountered as exemplified by the experience of the writer when learning to play the *kolintang* from his mother and sisters. His mentors would seemingly approve of his inadequate attempts, or they would over-simplify the pieces so that lessons could be completed quickly. Perhaps they felt uncomfortable holding a man's hands or even sitting close to a man; or perhaps they just felt the *kolintang* was not befitting a male member of their family. This makes it extremely difficult for a man, especially a foreigner, to find a woman teacher. Of course the alternative for him is to find a man who is able to play the instrument; he takes, however, the risk of internalizing a false impression of the involved emotionalism, aesthetics, and in particular, the temporal aspect of the music, as men tend to play faster than women.

There are so many *kolintang* ensemble sets in Lanao that it would take a long time to count them. Faubion Bowers (1956:257) is not too far from the truth when he imagines that the *kolintang* is to the Maranao what the ukelele is to the Hawaiian. These instruments connote socio-economic status and artistic taste. A set of *kolintang* can be a valuable part of a bride-price, or may be used for mortgage, or to settle a financial account. A social or political leader who does not own a set is considered to be poor. There are a few elaborate *kolintang* stands which are constructed in the manner of a revolving podium: as the music goes on, the stand slowly turns around showing the players to the spectators. Other *kolintang* stands are moderate in structure, but rich in artistic designs (Fig. 5). Still others may be simply made of bamboo or wooden poles. Elaborate drums are decorated with silver coins while others may be lavish with carvings. Some *kolintang* and *babndir* have silver inlays. The lending of these instruments, although it is practised among close relatives, is distasteful, and in fact, may be impossible for those who treasure excellent sets.

Figure 4: The largest gong in Maranao Kolintang ensemble is the *P'nanggsaan* (foreground), on which the basic part is played; the second largest is the *P'malsan* (left, far background), which plays the off-beat. The pair constitutes the *Agong* part of the ensemble -- thus, the term *agong* means "large gong." (Usopay Cadar, 1971.)

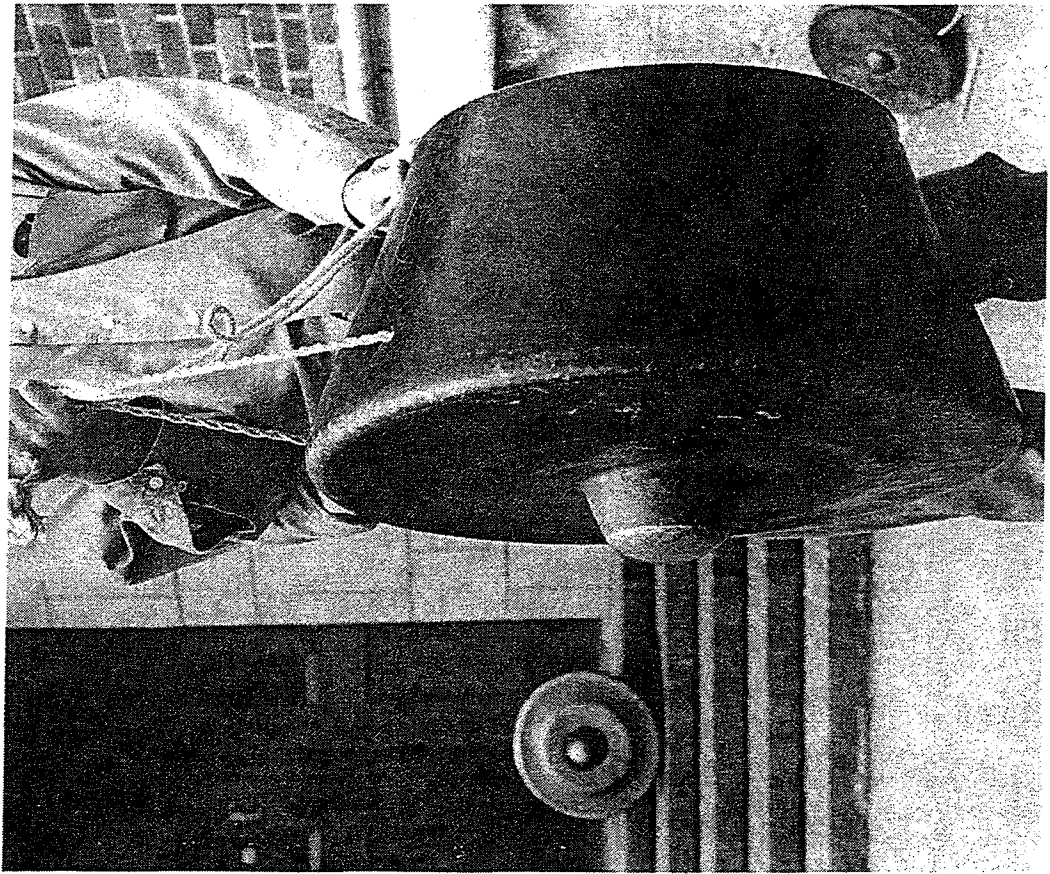


Figure 6: *Torogan* is a traditional Maranao "clan house," wherein important affairs of the clan are held. The size of the posts, which are cut out of timbers near the stumps, is directly proportional to social status. (Usopay Cadar, 1972.)

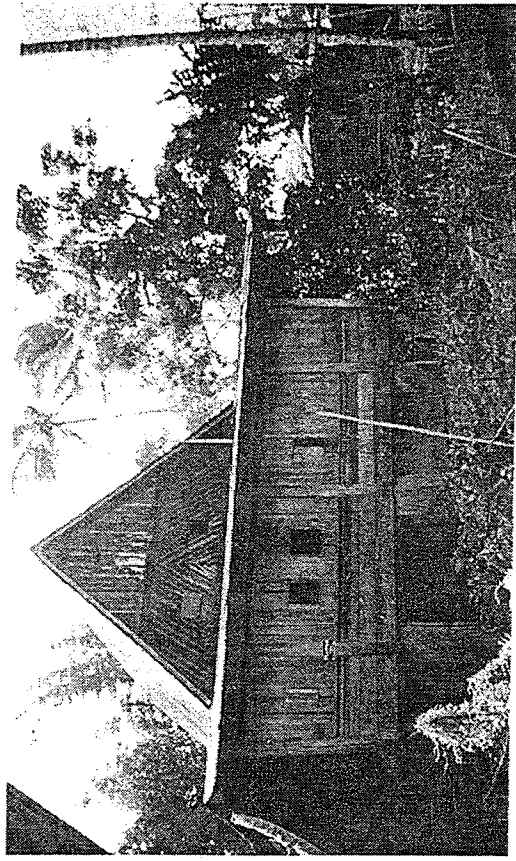
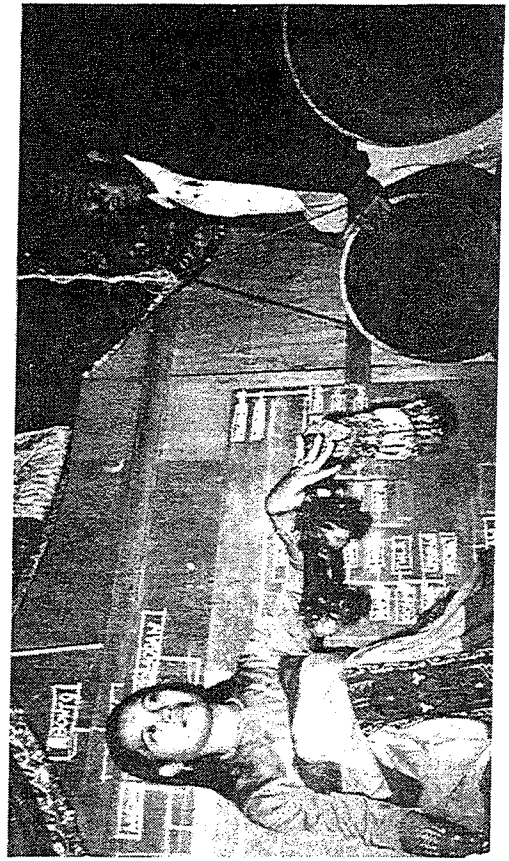


Figure 7: A graceful and virtuosos Maranao Kolintang player. (Usopay Cadar, 1973.)



The *kolintang* player is judged for her sitting stance. She always poises herself on a chair, her right leg drawn up with the knee close to the bosom and the foot resting on the front edge of the chair's top. The left foot rests on the floor. Her *malong* (loose tubular skirt) covers her from the feet to just above the navel. The head and torso are in a position that should pass the old test of letting a water-filled glass stand on top of the head. A poised *kolintang* player can perform gracefully without spilling the water.

When the *babndir* player is a woman, she assumes the same stance as that of the *kolintang* player except that she sits on the floor and the left leg is drawn in between the right leg and the buttock. When the *babndir* is a man, he assumes the man's usual cross-leg sitting position.

The *agung* and drum players are all judged on the basis of how they stand. The Maranao distinguish two ways of standing: the orthodox and the new compositions. In the orthodox way, the feet are more or less in the same formation: the player stands somewhat arrogantly, the body is straight, similar with what it should be in the 'attention position' in military parlance. The player executes his part without stooping and without sagging his shoulders. When an *agung* player swings his instrument away from where it freely hangs, he is compared ridiculously to a water-buffalo trying to break away from its rope.

In the new style, which has been gaining acceptance since about two generations ago, standing position differs from the orthodox only in terms of foot formation. The feet can assume any of the following different formations, each of which has an implication: when the player advances his right foot, it implies that he knows well how to play his instrument; when he advances the left foot, it implies humbleness, but when both feet are more or less in the same formation he implies calmness and unpredictability. Obviously, each player in the *kolintang* music strives to attain poise that is defined by his or her sex, a phenomenon which gives some light to the question of why the instruments are assigned to particular sexes.

The music is played voluntarily and most people participate in the music making. It may be compared with the other form of Maranao music, the professional singing, where the singer refuses to perform for any formal audience without prior agreement upon his financial compensation. In the *kolintang* performance, the players receive no financial reward; they play out of their eagerness to participate. The performance is actively shared by the people. Passive participation is out of place, and deriving a livelihood from making this music is unthinkable. This practice might have in part explained why the Maranao neither can employ in *kolintang* music the idea of "commercial professionalism and concert," nor are they intrigued with the broadcasting of the music through radio stations.

There also exists a set of standards that determines the proper postures relative to the sex and the instrument of each player.

*Kolintang* performance can be classified as formal or informal. A performance is formal when the participants adhere to the traditional rules governing playing; usually this involves people besides the occupants of the home where the performance takes place. It is informal when the rules which are strictly observed in a formal performance are ignored; usually the participants are well acquainted with one another. A formal performance may be transformed into an informal one or vice versa.

The frequency of *kolintang* performance varies according to occasion and locality. The *kailiang* (also called *pakaradia-an*) is a Maranao gathering with *kolintang*. Generally, where there is a *kailiang*, there is a *kolintang* performance. A *kailiang* can be done in connection with occasions such as the annual welcoming of the pilgrims returning from Mecca, the different stages of a marriage ceremony, the entertaining of visiting friends or relatives who live in distant lands, court ceremonies, or just self-amusement. The music is neither performed in connection with Islamic rites or holidays, nor is it played inside a mosque. Although playing for the appeasement of spirits believed to be cursing a sick person is still extant, this practice is now on the brink of extinction due to its non-Islamic nature. One cannot expect to hear *kolintang* music in areas where planting or harvest season is at its peak, people abstain from playing the music during fasting month, and a strict prohibition is automatically imposed in the span of mourning period on the death of important people. In the highland areas (*Gilopa*), the continual planting and harvesting of rice, corn, coffee and abaca give little time for playing the music. In Marawi City, where the big traditional houses are being replaced by smaller ones and where people become time-conscious, the primarily indoor *kolintang* music is becoming an outdoor phenomenon, and the traditional rules governing its playing are breaking down, or at least becoming more flexible.

It appears that towns far from the capital of Lanao del Sur place a stronger emphasis on old Maranao traditions. Music and arts may be best observed in the rice-paddy oriented section of the province (*Basak*) because of the socio-economic pattern in the area which allows more opportunity for festivals and music. The municipality of Taraka, which was mentioned as early as 1775 to be the most populated Maranao community (more than ten thousand dwellers during that time) and until now considered to be one of the "river cultures" in this region where pagoda or Javanese (as opposed to the pan-Arabic domed) type mosques are still extant, is one of the suitable places to observe this tradition.



### The Performance of Kolintang Music

In Taraka, just as it can be generally observed in other municipalities, the *kolintang* ensemble remains one of the most frequently heard aspects of Maranao music. Most *kolintang* musical performances are made without any public announcement. The sound of the ensemble is, in itself, an invitation for people to come and participate. The music is meant to be loud and audible at a distance. It is usually the occupants of the home where the event occurs who start playing. If the event occurs in a *Torogan* (a Maranao ancestral house which is big enough to accommodate as many as two hundred people; see Fig. 6), there are usually enough people to start the playing. In case there are not the required number of players, the division of labor according to sex may be temporarily suspended in order to commence the music.

Upon hearing the music, players start coming to the house. The guests who come to the event are generally expected to participate in the performance since an extraordinary majority of the people can play at least one instrument in the ensemble. The guests take their turns at the instruments on a first-come first-served basis.

It is a rule that at least two pieces be played by the same performers. After the first piece by each group is played, the *agong* players usually switch places. It is insulting to the other players when one abandons his or her instrument without giving the *agong* players a chance to exchange places. Sometimes, however, it is acceptable for the *agong* players to remain in the same places if one of the two expresses an apology for his inability to handle the other part. After the first two pieces are played, the drummer and an *agong* player may further exchange their parts and play a few more times depending on the number of people waiting to play. Any of the players may further retain his place if there is no available player for his instrument. After one batch of performers has finished, another group will play. The main idea is to give the people a chance to group and regroup in different ways.

Actually, the participants at first play as a prearranged team, that is, friends choose their friends whom they know quite well. But when all friends have played as teams and their turn comes for the next time, people start asking players from different communities to pair off with them. If the *agong* players cannot integrate their parts easily, they can switch places amidst the performance. The drummer could run into problem of accompanying an unfamiliar piece, so he may also switch places with one of the *agong* players.

People come and go but as the participants grow in number, the playing becomes more formalized. Sometimes the formality reaches a stage

where oration is required of each of the five players. The oration is set in archaic and poetical language which is seldom used in ordinary discourse. At this time, the number of volunteers dwindles because those who do not have skill in classical oration will gladly forfeit their turns, while the virtuosos who are well versed in poetical and oratorical discourse will be given ample time to display and exhaust their talents. The *babndir* is sometimes omitted from the ensemble, but it is mandatory in this formal situation, as the standard format of the oration requires the participation of all five players.

In this very serious stage of the session, the *kolintang* player stands, leaves the section for women and walks towards the instrument. On her way, she may execute the Maranao traditional walk, using her left arm to hold the *malong* (loose tubular skirt) while her right arm freely and gracefully swings. She may also do the song-dance called *kaganat-sadarang n* (Cadar 1970:46), in which the dancer walks around and sings in a fast tempo, at the same time changing the position of her *malong* (showing the various ways this traditional skirt is worn) as she passes in front of the men's section, and finally sits down in front of her instrument. While seated, she delivers her oratory and poem exalting the occasion, the important people present, the ensemble, the individual parts and players, and stresses the hope that they will play "harmoniously," but rationalizes any failure of the group. This is because the success or failure of one will be shared by the group. Her co-players in turn follow with a similar kind of oration. Here is a typical verse recited by an *agong* player to complete his speech:

*Na kulintang ka d'n ba-i*  
*Ka magagong kami mambo*  
*A go si simbar a gadong.*  
*O maka-ayon kami,*  
*Na s'ka d'n so bolawan,*  
*Na paramata ko mambo;*  
*Na intan si pagaria*  
*Na komara si p'ndbak*  
*A go si p'man'ndiran.*

Play the *kolintang*, dear Lady,  
 My partner and I  
 Will play the *agong*.  
 If we accompany well,  
 You'd be the gold [setting],  
 I'd be a precious stone;  
 Diamond would be my partner,  
 Gemstones would be the drummer  
 And the *babndir* player.

After this kind of climactic introduction is finished, the playing of the *kolintang* begins. If she knows the rare art of twirling the beaters while playing, she may do this to further the performance.

Whether or not this dancing, singing, traditional kind of one-woman fashion show, and exhibition with the beaters will be integrated into the performance, depends on the ability of the *kolintang* player. In any case, oration and poetic recitation are always rendered as part of this formal performance.

The elaborate twirling of the beaters is a relatively recent art associated with the "new generation." It is done only with the few grace and virtuosity (Fig. 7). When this art is displayed, a particular kind of applause can be expected: *Ai' dao!* or *Si' si, si...* are words, often shouted amidst the performance to express approval; this applause should not be mistaken for rude behavior although it seems to be so for a Western audience.

A typical Maranao applause is, "*Mata-an aki ka miagayon-ayon siran!*" meaning, "There is no doubt that they were in 'harmony'!" The concept of unanimity of a group moving in one direction or towards the same aspiration is ideal behind *kolintang* playing. The whole group is taken as one unit. It is seldom that a member of the group will be applauded alone. The audience will applaud a good performance, but refrain from expressing disapproval. Applause may be gained through excellent performance or even by a nearly perfect rendition as long as the concerted effort of the group is evident. If a player feels that some people would not completely conceal their ridicule, he might jokingly confess his shortcomings beforehand. It is, however, not unusual for the players of the group to end up in a friendly and exciting competition.

The players converge into the temporal or structural phrase unit that dominates all parts of the music. On one level, the accompanying instruments are centered on the melodic part. Each piece has a kind of theme, or what might be described as a rhythmic and melodic skeleton which the *kolintang* player "dresses up," by variation, ornamentation, or improvisation. She may try to outplay her co-players by employing some befuddling passages -- without destroying the unifying elements -- leading them from a moment of expectation to a moment of surprise.

The drummer can lure the *kolintang* player into a variety of exchanges, the nature of which may be friendly, insinuating, challenging, or just elusive -- which may finally end up in courtship! He may shift his rhythmic accents every now and then or introduce a dramatic kind of staccato to alter the mood that has been built up. He may fragment the rhythm to produce an effect something like a sudden burst of machine-gun fire, bring it to a quick stop and let one melodic phrase pass by without the drum support, then follow it up with single *Tak! Tak!... Tak!* on every first beat, or follow the above thunderous surprises with an almost imperceptible, soft, but tightly interlocking drone. These passages could confuse an amateur *kolintang* player, and when the victim is well trained the drummer is said to be accomplished.

At the start of such development, a Maranao listener will always expect the *kolintang* player to improvise more and respond in retaliation.

She may divert to a melody suggesting a similar piece, creating some tension in the process, or introduce an ornamenting pattern that seems to be leading to the next melodic phrase or to the higher register, but unexpectedly curl it back to the starting or "home" pattern. She may work out an ornamented phrase that seems to be leading to the next formal section, only to make the drummer realize that his stereotyped passage does not quite fit the final direction of her phrase. Or breathtakingly, she may play around with the repetitions of each section, simulating an ending, but actually just repeat or vary the main section, or go back to the beginning. And finally, she may apply the above strategy to the closing section of the piece.

Should there be a "mismatch," unfavorable on the part of the drummer, she may slowly cast him a meaningful glance. One Maranao told Bowers that unmarried women are preferred as *kolintang* players, "otherwise everyone may fall in love and there would be divorces" (1956:257). No wonder the Maranao *kolintang* player is ideally a woman, for many couples in Lanao have started their romantic past with an exciting exchange of *kolintang* and drum passages!

On the level of the *agong* part, the *p'hanggisa* (player of the basic beat) may elaborate his rhythmic pattern so as to make it difficult for the *p'mals* (player of the "pronouncing" part) to ornament. If the former continually plays elusive patterns, thereby taking advantage of the shortcomings of his partner, the situation would be embarrassing for the latter. On the other hand, if the *p'mals* is over-arrogant, he may predominantly ornament the basic *agong* part to the extent of making his partner look incapable of executing a colorful performance; or he may engulf the basic part with lavish off-beats, leaving no trace of the *p'hanggisa* part to emphasize the contour of the melody.

However the two *agong* players try to compete with each other, both are constantly aware that together they represent a single entity closely accompanying the melody. As a team, they can play it out with the *kolintang* performer. The patterns played on the *agong* may be shortened or lengthened depending upon how these can keep up with the melodic improvisation. A short pattern, when played right, fits the smaller meaningful unit of the melody; this method is virtually foolproof as it can cope with any out-balancing technique that the *kolintang* player employs. A long pattern can be an aggregate of similar short patterns, or it may be a phrase matching certain predictable melodic phrases. The short and long patterns may be combined to produce contrasting effects. Further, the *agong* part can even stick to a repetitive pattern which is thought onomatopoeic to the saying, "*Katatan, katatan, katan' nado-katatan so r'kon o manga raga,*" meaning, "There it is the share for the ladies." In its context, this saying is comparable to the idea of a philanthropist who sends off flying kisses, although in this case the instruments emanate what is

supposed to be flying.

The woman's part versus the men's is another level of looking at what is going on in the music. Competition is quite evident when the performance drifts into a marathon. Such a situation could be triggered by one or more players trying to outwit the others.

The *babndir* player does not take a bold part in the competition. This is the only instrument in the ensemble for which the player sits on the floor. Although this instrument is not difficult to play, it is always assigned to somebody who understands the subtleties of the different aspects of the music. Its sound is so penetrating that the instrument is analogous to a Sultan who either gives sound judgement or will be dismissed by the group.

All these possible complications are weighed against opposing forces. The *kolintang* player is restricted by the limitation of the melody and the temporal unit shared by all the players. The drummer is responsible for following the melodic phrase. The *agong* players switch places (and roles: liberty versus responsibility) -- thus one can always retaliate when he takes the other part. The two of them, however, are listened to as a combined part representing one layer of the music. Yet above all, as mentioned earlier, the ensemble is always appraised by the audience as a whole, so to merit praise, the group must play "harmoniously."

Time and again people will ask the Maranao what they mean by saying that a performance is "harmonious." To this question, the Maranao will always speak of three criteria: 1) the accompaniment colors and projects the melody; 2) all players agree on the tempo; and 3) all players feel the spirit of liking one another. Besides these, an insight on a good performance can be gained by imagining a piece of fine jewelry of which the precious stone(s) and metal are equally valued components. This is the context of the *agong* player's saying:

Play the *kolintang*, dear Lady,  
My partner and I  
Will play the *agong*.  
If we accompany well,  
You'd be the gold [setting],  
I'd be a precious stone,  
Diamond would be my partner,  
Gemstones would be the drummer  
And the *babndir* player.

There are implications, meanings, and symbolism associated with *kolintang* music. Many compositions were inspired by moral thoughts, times of the day, or sounds of nature. *Kasulampid* is a piece that depicts

conflict among contenders who want to accompany a particular *kolintang* player; the melody of this piece is such that the *kolintang* sticks cross each other. *Kastrong* is a piece which originated from a satirical poem about a wealthy but selfish person. *Kapmagarib* is a piece inspired by an impression of a beautiful sunset. *Kambibitarai-a-kakowak* is a piece about the cawing of crows. *Kangginawa-gawi-i* is a piece about the sounds of the cricket. *Kataga-a-malib'g* is a piece about the roaring of waterfalls, and *Kandongko-dongko* is a piece inspired by the rolling and breaking of the waves. Other pieces, such as *Kapromayas* and *Kapagonor*, are purely abstract in nature.

### Conclusion

To recapitulate, the following conclusions regarding the role of *kolintang* music in Maranao society may be drawn:

1. As a Channel for Bringing About Solidarity. A *kolintang* musical performance brings people together; not only people from one community *per se* but also people from adjacent regions. The practice of grouping and regrouping the players, and "harmoniously" playing together, are important means of effecting community unification. The idea of applauding the players as a group, consciously or unconsciously, instills the value of unity into the minds of the people. The idea of making the public active participants in the music-making gives opportunity for people to socialize.

2. As a Method for Learning and Practicing Ethical Principles. Before people take up their positions at the instruments, they always ask around to be sure it is their turn, in spite of the obviousness of who was next in line. This is done in keeping with the politeness which prevails in Maranao society. The hosts always give their turns to the guests, and as a gesture of respect, betrothed are always given the privilege of playing together. Between a young and an older player who both came at the same time, the former always yields to the latter out of respect for his age and maturity. The presence of women and men performing together in front of an audience encompassing all ages represents a self-compelling stimulus for people to behave correctly. The *kolintang* player's reluctance to go right away to her instrument stems from the Maranao (probably Arabic) idea of maintaining some socializing gap between sexes. The formalization of the performance not only encourages interest in different Maranao traditions, but also points to the virtue of the amateur giving priority to the expert. These points, plus the fact that certain compositions encompass the theme of subduing conflicting interests, are all evidence of the role of *kolintang* in the preaching of Maranao ethical values.

3. As an Arena for Recitation, Singing, and Dancing. The formalization of a *kolintang* session makes it an arena for lyric and poetic discourse, an oratorical contest, dancing, and even a fashion show.

4. As a Method for Disciplining One's Inner Self. The *kolintang* player has a lot of freedom: she improvises and makes some passages by which she can fool the other players, yet she is bound to maintain the unifying theme and temporal factor of the piece. The ending of a piece is at her discretion and the number of times she can play after the initial two renditions is at her will, but she also has to think of the other players eagerly awaiting their turns. This situation involves the endowment of liberty and the exercise of consideration. On another level, the *agong* players -- having the freedom to play around, yet cognizant of the fact that they will later switch places and that the two of them represent one layer of the music -- must also exercise free will and consideration. The fact that one's refinement or personality is reflected by his manner of playing, and that players who are not familiar with each other can feel the other's compromise or abuse, is an indication of the existence of psychological interactions in the performance. Freedom and responsibility, when viewed with respect to the ultimate goal of group unanimity, bring about the need for self discipline.

5. As a Channel for Various Forms of Expression. The *kolintang* ensemble is a channel for various forms of expression just as it serves as a source of vicarious experience. The writer's mother gives three instructions for playing the *kolintang*: a) keep your mind relaxed while you work out the piece; b) keep your body, especially the arms, calm while you gracefully execute the hand movements; and c) think of the audience as mere inanimate objects scattered around so as to conquer shyness. These point to the fact that the music is not detached from the emotional, human individual, yet the emphasis on playing without jerking the torso, shaking the head, or undulating the hips, are in keeping with the Maranao idea of subdued expression. Although the audience's perception of satirical or insinuating compositions may not always coincide with that of the players, it is nevertheless important that what cannot openly be expressed, may be conveyed musically. Whereas pictorial representation would be discouraged in the graphic arts, impressions of natural forces and inanimate objects can be expressed through music. Individual creativity can flourish in music. For instance, a piece called *Kaitik pandai*, from which *Kapaginandang* (one of the major melodic types) originated, is an abstract composition. One night a husband and wife quarreled, and the wife wanted to wake up her neighbors so that they would come and help settle the dispute; the wife beat (*tinitik*) the *kolintang* creatively (*pandai*) in such a manner that nobody would be annoyed in the process.

6. As a Medium of Entertainment and Hospitality. One thing that a Maranao visitor will never forget is a *kolintang* performance in his honor. When he goes back home he usually takes pride in relating the event to his friends, especially the fact that he met many people. For a young man, the experience of having played the drum or *agong* while a beautiful girl was playing the *kolintang*, is a very satisfying memory. Hospitality among the Maranao is a pride and a virtue. This can be expressed by providing food, shelter, and possibly a ride, but when it is accentuated by the playing of the *kolintang*, the intent is well pronounced. Sessions do stop, but a group of late participants seeking self-amusement, among other things, can come, and the session is almost always resumed in the name of hospitality.

7. As a Vehicle for Social Interaction. The role of *kolintang* in promoting social interaction can be seen by looking back to an old Maranao practice. Traditionally, the unmarried daughter is kept in the Maranao special chamber), which is off-limit to visitors and suitors. The lady stays in this chamber during the suitor's initial visits, but she may be allowed to come out during the follow-up visits especially when the suitor has already won the preference of the lady's parents and other kin. Although her physical presence is now granted, she is not supposed to participate in the poetic-courtship discourse. However the suitor may try to catch a full view of the lady, he only gets a glimpse of her because she carries the sneaky stares by the use of her hairdo, a part of which is shaped to hang around one side of the face, or by the use of her hands as she propitiously alters the fold of her *malong*. The only opportunity for the suitor, and for everybody, to subject her to an eagle-eyed scrutiny is when she participates in the *kolintang* performance.

A sharp eye-opener is the word coined for this music. A Maranao equivalent for "kolintang music" is "*Kakulintang*," meaning, "to play the *kolintang*," and the proper names of musical pieces always take the prefix "*ka*," meaning "to do" or in this case "to play." This is because the performance of the music means numerous things to a Maranao. The Maranao find it irresistible to participate in a *kolintang* performance just as the Christian Filipinos find it hard to stay at home when a fiesta or a public dance is being held. For the Maranao, going to a *kolintang* session is a good opportunity to listen to, watch, and participate in the musical performance; see dances, hear singing, poetical recitation, and oratorical discourse; and to meet, act, and react with people according to the ethics and ideals of Maranao society.

## Notes

\* Winner, Jaap Kunst prize, 1971. [Slightly revised (e.g., the substitution of a Maranao spelling, *kulintang*, for the *kulintang* of the original) reprint, with some additions (e.g. see footnote 2, below) from *Ethnomusicology* 17/2 (1973):234-249. Figure 4 in this version has been substituted for Figure 2 in the original, and Figures 2, 3, and 5-7 have been added here.]

1. For a more musicological approach to *kulintang*, see Garfias and Cadar, 1969.

2. These last four entries are an update from the Ethnographic Map of the Philippines published by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines -- People's Action for Cultural Ties (NCCP-PACT), revised in February, 1988.

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