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Traditional Musical Instruments of the Philippines



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Philippine Music Instruments
Philippine Music Samples



Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts, other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts, the culture of the Philippines and other related subjects.

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Music instruments, mechanisms that produce sounds, have been used for various purposes. In earlier times they were also used as an adjunct to dance or to labor. In later civilizations, instrumental music was used for entertainment. Present day musicological studies, following the Horn-bostel-Sachs classification, divide instruments into the following categories: idiophones, aero-phones, chordophones, and membranophones.

The traditional music of other countries, reflects the life of common folk, mainly living in rural areas rather than urban ones. Like its counterparts in Asia, a lot of traditional songs from the Philippines have a strong connection with nature.

However, much of it employs the diatonic scale rather than the more famous pentatonic scale.

Ms. Corazon Canave-Dioquino shared with the FMA Digest and now with the FMA Informative some of the traditional musical instruments of the Philippines.

Traditional Musical Instruments of the Philippines

Northern styles

Among the indigenous peoples of the Central Cordilleras of the northern island of Luzon, music is also played with gongs, but unlike those of southern repertoires, these gongs, called Gangsa, are unbossered and have their origins in mainland Asia. Music is usually played to accompany dance, and because of this is mostly percussion based. Gong ensembles are normally accompanied by drums. The music is polyphonic, and uses highly interlocking repeated patterns.

Southern styles

Among the various groups of the island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, a highly sophisticated musical repertoire called kulintang exists in which the main instruments used are bossed gongs not dissimilar to gongs used in Indonesia.

Generally, kulintang ensembles among the Maguindanao, Maranao, the Tausug and other lesser known groups, are composed of five pieces of instrumentation. Among the Maguindanao, this includes: the kulintang (strung stand, serving as the main melody instrument of the ensemble), the agung (the largest gongs of the ensemble providing much of the lower beats, either coming in a pair of two or just one alone), the gandingan (four large vertical gongs aligned front to back, used as a secondary melodic instrument), the dabakan (an hour-glass shaped drum covered in goat/lizard skin) and the babendil (a singular

gong used as the timekeeper of the entire ensemble). The Maranao have similar instrumentation with the exception of the gandingan which they do not have an equiva-



A Philippine kulintang of the Maguindanaon people with 8 gongs stacked horizontally by pitch atop a wooden antangan.

lent of.

Among the Maguindanao/Maranao, kulintang music serves as their means of entertainment and hospitality, being used in weddings, festivals, coronations, to entertain visiting dignitaries and to send off those heading and coming back from pilgrimages. Kulintang music is also used to accompany healing ceremonies and particularly among the Maguindanao, can serve as a form of communication. Because the Maguindanao can convert the music into their language and vice versa, the Maguindanao can send messages long distances using their instruments. The gandingan usually is their instrument of choice to send messages, known among the Maguindanao as apad. Apad has been used to warn others of impending danger or to send a message to a lover. In fact, people have been known to



Kulintang a Kayo, a Philippine xylophone

elope with the use of such songs.

Among the Tausug of the Sulu Archipelago, The Sindil (sung verbal jousts) is a musical lighthearted style that is sung by a duo of both sexes sung in front of an audience. Teasing, jokes, and innuendos flow into the verses, the better ones being applauded by the audience. The gabbang xylophone and biyula traditional violin are the instruments mainly used. Although Sindil is a particular genre of music, the verbal jousting musical type is also found in many other parts of the country, especially among the Visayan peoples, who are ethnically related to the Tausug. Sindil are normally used at weddings and other festive events.

Other musical traditions of this region are those of the serenade form Kapanirong and the outdoor "loud" music repertoire called Tagonggo.

Other styles

Other indigenous instruments include a bamboo zither, log drums, the Kudyapi two stringed boat lute and various flutes, including some nose flutes used by northern tribes.

Philippine Music Instruments

By Corazon Canave-Dioquino

Music instruments, mechanisms that produce sounds, have been used for various purposes. In earlier times they were also used as an adjunct to dance or to labor. In later civilizations, instrumental music was used for entertainment. Present day musicological studies, following the Hornbostel-Sachs classification, divide instruments into the following categories: idiophones, aerophones, chordophones, and membranophones.

Idiophones

Instruments that produce sound from the substance of the instrument itself (wood or metal) are classified as idiophones. They are further subdivided into those that are struck, scraped, plucked, shaken, or rubbed. In the Philippines there are metal and wooden (principally bamboo) idiophones.

Metal idiophones are of two categories: flat gongs and bossed gongs. Flat gongs made of bronze, brass, or iron, are found principally in the north among the Isneg, Tingguian, Kalinga, Bontok, Ibaloi, Kankanai, Gaddang, Ifugao, and Ilonggot. They are most commonly referred to as gangsa. The gongs vary in size, the average are struck with wooden sticks, padded wooden sticks, or slapped with the palm of the hand. Gong playing among the Cordillera highlanders is an integral part of peace pact gatherings, marriages, prestige ceremonies, feasts, or rituals.

In southern Philippines, gongs have a central profusion or knot, hence the term bossed gongs. They are three of types: (1) sets of graduated gongs laid in a row called the kulintang; (2) larger, deep-rimmed gongs with sides that are turned in called agung, and (3)



Gangsa



Agung

gongs with narrower rims and less prominent bosses called gandingan. These gongs may be played alone but are often combined with other instruments to form various types of ensembles.

Bamboo idiophones abound in the Philippines-xylophones, drums, quill-shaped tubes, stamping tubes, scrapers, buzzers, and clappers.

The bamboo xylophone, gabbang, is found in southern Philippines among the Yakan, Sama, Tausug, and Palawan. It consists of bamboo keys of graduated lengths mounted on a trapezoidal box. The number of keys varies among the different tribes, ranging from 3 to 22. In northern Luzon, among the Kalinga, individual xylophone-like blades called patatag are struck with bamboo sticks.

The bamboo slit drum, such as the Bukidnon bantula is fashioned out of a bamboo tube closed at both ends with anode with a slit cut out of the tube. Found among different groups of people, its main use is to announce important events.

The struck quill-shaped bamboo tubes with notches etched on the tube, are found only in southern Philippines such as the Maranao tagutok and the Maguindanao kagul. The player scrapes the notches with a bamboo stick.

Among the Cordillera highlanders, bamboo buzzers are widespread. They are made from a length of bamboo closed with a node at the bottom, with its top half shaped so that two tongues face each other. The top half is struck against the palm of the hand. They are known by different names such as balingbing, pew-pew, pak-kung, bilbil, bungkaka by the various groups.

The Ifugao have a bamboo clapper, hanger, fashioned from a tubular section of bamboo, split from one end to approximately half of the tube. Each half of the split portion is shaped to make it narrower in the middle, thus making it more flexible when the halves are made to flap against each other.

Wooden idiophones include sticks, suspended



Kagul

logs, and log drums. The Hanunuo kalutang consists of pair of sticks cut from forest trees. These are struck against each other and played while hiking through forest and mountain trails.

The Ifugao pattung is a percussion yoke bar made from a tapered piece of wood and struck with a stick. It is used in a ceremonies for the sick, at rites which entail the offering of sacrificial pigs, or at death rituals.

Suspended logs are widespread in southern Philippines where they are known by different tribes. The Maguindanao luntang consists of several logs of varying lengths hung in order from longest to shortest. The pointed playing ends of each log is struck by one performer creating a melody against which another performer beats drone rhythm on one of the logs.

The Tagakaolo edel is a sounding board with resonator played during wedding celebrations together with a drum or gong to accompany dancers. The Bagobo and Bilaan have similar drums.

Jews harps are bound all over the Philippines. They are principally made from bamboo although in Philippines some are made of metal. It is a type of mouth resonated instrument consisting of a flexible tongue fixed at one end to a surrounding frame. The player places the free end of the instrument with the hand, or in some other types by pulling a string attached to the blade. The instruments have different manes among the various tribes. In the south the most common term is kubing, in



Aerophones

The lip valley notch flute, so called because of



Kubing

the north ulibaw. Philippine bamboo aerophones include various types of flutes, pan-pipes, and reed pipes. The most widespread and numerous are the flutes which are mostly end-blown with the air stream directed into the open end of the tube.

its mouthpiece which is obliquely cut and curved at a slant to follow the contour of the player's lips, is found in northern and southern Philippines. They are known by different names among the different linguistic groups, such as the paldong in the south and the palendag in the north. They are instruments of leisure, used for serenading, courting, or merely to pass the time away.

The nose flute, another type of end-blown flute, is found mostly in northern Philippines where the Kalinga call it tongali, the Bontok kaleleng, and the Ifugao ungiung. It is found sporadically in some areas of the south among the Hanunuo (lantuy), the Batak (lantoy), and the Bukidnon (bulaktob). The Cuyunin of Palawan have gigantic nose flutes with tubes much larger in diameter than those found in Luzon.



Nose Flute

Less common flutes are the ring type called suling in southern Philippines; the whistle type called thumpong (Subanun); and the reed called saunay (Tausug).

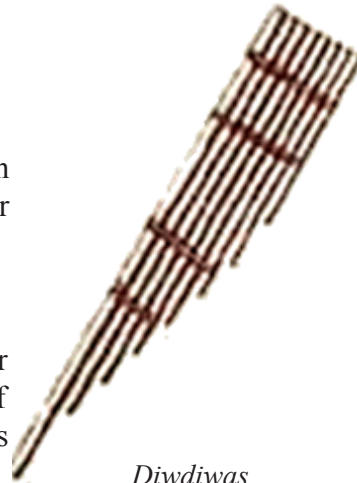
Stopped pipes found in northern Philippines are the saggeypo (Kalinga) and the sagay-op (Bontok). The bamboo pipe is closed on one end by a node with the open end

held against the lower lip of the player as he blows directly across the top. The pipe can be played individually by one person or in ensembles of three or more.

Rarely used today is the bamboo panpipes called diwas, diwdiwas, or dew-dew. These consist of a number of bamboo pipes (5-8) strung together.



Suling



Diwdiwas

Most Philippine transverse flutes are adaptations or imitation of European versions evident in the borrowed names such as flauta (Ilonggo, Sebuano, Bicol); plawta (Manobo) and palawta (Hanunuo, Waray). The Cuyunin use a transverse flute called tipanu which is also found among the Batak of Palawan.

Other blown instruments are those made from shell or carabao horn. These are used for calling people or sending messages over wide distances. Shell trumpets include the budyong, lungga, taburi. Carabao horns are the tambuli (Tagalog) and kogao (Ifugao).



Chordophones

These are bamboo or wood stringed instruments that may be struck, plucked, or bowed. They included zithers, lutes, and bowed strings.

Philippine zithers have resonating bodies that are made from bamboo tubes or half tubes with strings that run parallel to the length of the tube. Tube zithers are found in northern Luzon, Mindanao, and Palawan. They are of two types: polychordal zithers with several strings that run around the tube, and parallel stringed zithers which have two strings on one side of the tube.

Polychordal tube zithers found in the Cordilleras, Mindanao and Palawan have strings that are etched out of the bamboo body, remaining attached at both ends. Small wooden frets are inserted beneath the string near the ends. The number of strings varies from 5 to 8 or 9 and occasionally even 11. Some names by which this zither is called are: kolitong, kollessing, kulibet, saluray, sigitan, takul, tangke, togo, and pagang.

In the parallel stringed tube zithers, two bamboo strands, about 5 cm. apart, are etched out to the tube to serve as strings. At mid-point of the tube,

below the strings, a small sound hole is bored and covered by a small bamboo plate clipped to the strings. When played, the strings are struck by a bamboo stick or plucked. The instrument, with slight variations, is found in northern Luzon, Mindoro, Mindanao, and Palawan where they are known by such names as tambi, bamban, tabengbeng, kudling, tabobo, thambabok, takumbo, and patigunggung.

Lutes are found only in the south, in Mindanao and Palawan. They are of the long neck variety, with two stings that run from the neck to the base of the resonating chamber. One sting plays a drone, the other a melody. Though all the lutes are fretted, the location and number of frets vary between groups. The frets of the Maranao and Maguindanao kudyapi are glued to the body of the resonating chamber, while the frets of the Bilaan fuglung, the Mansaka and Mandaya kudlong and the Palawan kusyapi are located on the neck of the instrument.



Kudyapi

One stringed bowed lutes (fiddles) of the long neck variety are found in Mindanao. They have a sounding box made from a coconut half shell covered with a leaf, or a piece of bark or animal skin. The string is made of abaca fibers, horse hair, and more recently, wire. It is called duwagey by the Manobo and Bilaan.

In the later period of the Spanish regime, a favorite string ensemble called cumparsa emerged. It was an adaptation of similar instrumental groups in Mexico (murza or murga) and Spain (estudiantina). During the early years of the American regime, the cumparsa was superseded by the rondalla.

The rondalla ensemble consists of plucked string instruments: the bandurria, the laud, the octavina, the six stringed gitara and the bajo de unas or bass guitar.

The bandurria is pear shaped, with a rounded back, a round



Duwagey



Bandurria

sound hole and a fretted neck. It serves as the melody instrument of the ensemble. The octavina and bandurria are tuned an octave below the laud. They furnish the inner harmonies and contrapuntal elaboration to the melody. The gitara's main function is to supply the arpeggiated or chordal underpinnings of the ensemble. The

bajo de unas is tuned like the contra-bass.

The subing is a bamboo jaw harp of the Cuyinin people of Palawan Island in western Philippines. Despite their length of approximately 20-25 cm. the actual functioning part of the subbing is quite small with a resultantly high pitch. Subing are often tuned by a small piece of pitch or insect wax on the tongue. Usually subing are decorated and come with a bamboo case.



Subing



Membranophones

Single and double headed drums are found throughout the Philippines. They are variously shaped--conical, cylindrical, goblet shaped, barrel shaped. Animal skins (snake, deer, or goat) is used as head/heads of the drum. They

may be beaten with sticks or by the palm portion of bare hands. Drums are seldom used alone except to announce tidings over long distances. Usually they are played with other instruments, particularly gongs, to form different kinds of ensembles.

The sulibao and kimbal of the Bontok and Ibaloi are longitudinal slightly barrel shaped hollowed out logs with deer skin heads on one end. The taller drum (ca. 80 cm) is called the kimbal; the shorter (ca. 75 cm) is called the sulibaw. The drum dead is small measuring about 6 cm. in diameter. They are played with palms of two hands. The drums are combined with gongs and other instruments to form different types of ensembles.



Sulibao

The Ifugao libbit, ludag is a conical drum with a deer or goat skin head. It is played with a gong during harvest time under the rice granary.

The dabakan is a large goblet shaped drum used by the Maranao and Maguindanao in their kulintang ensembles.



Dabakan

The forgoing listing of Philippine musical instruments has been based primarily on holding of the archives at the U.P. Center for Ethnomusicology. Drawings of the indigenous instruments are taken from a Poster Set of Instruments done by artists Cecile Dioquino-Hidalgo, Anna Arce, Jose Bienvenido Ignacio, and Leah Diaz.

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