



Minahasa Kulintang Music (Musicological and ethnomusicological Studies on Birth History)

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Abstract

This article describes the birth history of the Kulintang music genre or the Minahasa Wooden Kulintang Music Ensemble. Through the qualitative research method, using a multidisciplinary approach with musicology and ethnomusicology as an umbrella approach, it was found that the Wooden Kulintang Music Ensemble was born in Tumantangtang village of Tomohon Minahasa, made by Lodewijk Supit Kaligis in 1947. The entertainment needs of refugees drove the birth of this music genre during turbulent times in Japan. Kulintang Minahasa was a new music genre due to the transmutation of the Portuguese Keroncong music genre.

Keywords

Minahasa Kulintang Music, Transmutation

Introduction

The meaning of Minahasa *Kulintang* music is a type (genre) of music in the form of an ensemble. Minahasa *Kulintang* Music Ensemble consists of a set of

instruments made of wooden slats (*Xylophone*). The sound's source comes from the wood expressed by being hit (*Idiophone*). This musical ensemble consists of 7 to 10 instruments. The instruments in this ensemble include Melodies, which consist of 2 to three pieces, or some are just one: Ukulele, Banjo, Guitar, Cello, and Bass. The musical scale of Minahasa Wooden *Kulintang* is diatonic, while the general *Kulintang* in the Southeast Asian region does not use a diatonic scale. This is the difference between the Minahasa *Kulintang* and *the Kulintang instruments* in Southeast Asia as a metal percussive instrument similar to the *Gamelan*.

Currently, in all districts and cities in North Sulawesi and almost all provinces in Indonesia, even in several countries, the music of Minahasa *Kulintang* has become popular music closely known by the public. This can be seen and proven through the existence of *Kulintang* instruments in government and private institutions, educational institutions, and public institutions, including the availability of data showing that several artisans have exported *Kulintang* instruments to many countries. The existence of Minahasa *Kulintang* Music can also be seen through festival events, competitions, performances, or concerts, both at home and abroad. In the domestic competition event, it can be seen that many *Kulintang* groups participated. For example, when ASIK (Kulintang Insan Association) held a meeting, several regions from various provinces attended and performed in the festival. In 2011, the North Sulawesi Cultural Arts Institute held a festival in Malang, and almost all regions in Indonesia sent the *Kulintang* group and participated in the festival and competition. Likewise, in January 2013, when PINKAN (Persatuan Insan *Kulintang* Nasional) held its first congress, almost all Provinces in Indonesia sent the *Kulintang* group to participate in the competition and festival. Participants who took part in the competition were not only Minahasa people or people from North Sulawesi but also many people from outside Minahasa, ranging from groups of children, adolescents, youth, the general public, as well as school levels such as elementary, junior high, high school, and university High. At the congress, several wives of the Minister and several wives of other high-ranking state officials such as the Attorney General's Office, the Indonesian Air Force, the Navy, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Transportation, the Director General of Culture from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy were present and directly involved. In fact, in the framework of the Congress, there was also a competition in which the trophy still came from the first lady. Many more events in Indonesia show that *Kulintang* was very popular in the community and has become Indonesia's national music.

All Indonesian people have acknowledged that *Kulintang* music is a music genre originating from the Minahasa province of North Sulawesi. *Kulintang* music is identical with Minahasa people. As evidence, in all festivals, competitions, and concert events, both within the province of North Sulawesi, other provinces in Indonesia outside North Sulawesi, and even abroad, it is very clear that *Kulintang* players are Minahasa people. If there are several *Kulintang* groups whose players seem like something other than Minahasa people, at least the

coaches behind the group are people from Minahasa.

Currently, the Indonesian government is steadfastly struggling to propose to PBB, in this case, UNESCO, to make *Kulintang* music a world intangible cultural heritage originating from Indonesia, specifically from the Minahasa area. Various attempts have been made, ranging from collecting scientific data, including through seminars, workshops, and various discussions. Thus, data regarding the existence of the *Kulintang*, both as a musical instrument and as a national identity, continues to be sought, studied, and explored. The problem that becomes the main concern now is that submission to UNESCO requires an academic study to prove that *Kulintang* music was born and originated in Minahasa, North Sulawesi province of Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Indonesia *Kulintang* directory book published by PINGKAN Congress in January 2013, all about *Kulintang* players, the makers, the coaches, the institutions in Indonesia that have *Kulintang*, as well as *Kulintang* groups in Indonesia, are almost completely described. Furthermore, the Governor of North Sulawesi at the opening of the Congress said that he (Governor of North Sulawesi, S.H. Sarundayang) had given contributions to many embassies from overseas countries, both from his contributions and from the embassy's requests. Likewise at the congress, *Kulintang* producers in Indonesia were present and presented their products, where on average these producers have produced around 300 units, up to over 1000 units, such as Kaligis family in North Sulawesi. Petrus Kaseke in Salatiga, and Frans Ratag in Bogor. According to the manufacturers' information, their production has been ordered in a number of countries such as Australia, Europe, Asia and America.

In PINKAN Congress January 2013's guidebook, a brief overview of the history and birth of *Kulintang* music is discussed. In that book, Perry Rumengan, a researcher of *Kulintang* music clearly stated, that the first *Kulintang* instrument that became the prototype of melodic *Kulintang* music was made by William Punuh and this instrument used a diatonic scale, and it was even further said, that Punuh's instrument was made replacement for Hawaian instruments. It was known that the instrument made by William Punuh was an instrument of one and a half octave wide planks of wood and for the first time acted as an instrument for a performance. The status of *Kulintang* instrument as part of a musical instrument in a performance needs to be understood because, from the research results also obtained data, that such an instrument had been made by Christian priests and priests around the Tontemboan area long before William Punuh's creation (in 1800s), however, its existence was still an instrument of tuning in singing practice at church. This data was obtained from a man named Celcius Buyung in Kanonang village, who was 91 years old in 1992 when being met.

In a paper delivered by Perry Rumengan, as a result of research presented at PINKAN Congress in January 2013, it was revealed that Lodewijk Supit Kaligis

was the first one that composed a *Kulintang* composition in the form of an ensemble with six instruments as a result of the transmutation of a Keroncong orchestra instrument from Portuguese musical heritage, in the form of wooden slats' arrangement placed on top of the resonance box. The transmutation made by Lodewijk Supit Kaligis was driven by conditions, where generally the instruments owned by his orchestra group were damaged during the turbulent period around the 1940s, while replacement tools for damaged instruments could not be found, therefore he replaced the instrument with instruments that made of wood. As evidence, the names of instruments in Melulu *Kulintang* made by Lodewijk used the names of instruments in Portuguese Keroncong orchestra such as Guitar, Juk, Banjo, Celo, (Mandolin), and Bass. From this information it is very clear, that either directly or indirectly, there are external (Western) musical influences, which have influenced the aesthetics of *Kulintang* music, including the use of Western diatonic scales, and their forms that imitate the klavier or tone board on piano with white tones black tones.

T. F. Viersen in his book *Residenan Manado* (Viersen: 1903) said that the land of Minahasa had been visited, and inhabited by nations who came from outside such as China. This data is strengthened by the findings of Weliam Boseke, in his book entitled *Penguasa Dinasti Han Leluhur Minahasa* (Boseke: 2018). Apart from being presented at a number of universities in Indonesia, this book has also been presented in front of professors from a number of universities in China and has received recognition from Chinese language experts, at least from the similarity of the phoneme and its meaning. Weliam Boseke found that the word *Kulintang* which been used and understood by Minahasa people was actually the Han language which came from the word 枯 聆 鐘 *K'ū Líng Tāng* which means dry wood that is hit and produces a clanging sound. In fact, since the past in villages in Minahasa, especially in gardens, the tradition of sounding dry wood was a common practice for farmers in gardens, as in the Tombulu area it was known apart from the term *Kulintang* as well as Kakantungen.

Besides, Viersen's book also revealed that apart from China there were also other foreign nations who have come to Minahasa such as Arabic, Kling (Keling / Orisa), Malay, including Singapore, and from the West such as the Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch (Viersen: 1903, 8). The first Europeans who came to Minahasa were Portuguese, namely, in 1523, followed by Spain in 1606. The Dutch came to Minahasa around 1655, and England around 1801-1817. The last people that came to Minahasa were Japanese, who arrived in this area around the 1940s (Sondakh, 2003, 91; Watuseke: 1968, 33-35). From this data it is clearly stated that Portuguese really existed in Minahasa.

Furthermore, Perry Rumengan in his book *Musik Vokal Etnik Minahasa* (Rumengan: 2010) said that in the context of communication with Minahasa people, Portuguese used several approaches, and one of the approaches was through social approach, in which music became a quite powerful contact tool, even a main contact tool (main contact). Furthermore, through this writing, Perry

Rumengan also said that the Portuguese and Spanish had clearly seen how the traditional Minahasa people were very happy with music; they loved dhappy atmosphere, they loved to sing, they even loved to learn the art that was brought by Portuguese and Spanish. Traditional Minahasa people had a very high adaptability (especially regarding sounds), so they were very fast to master what they were learning. Through this approach, the relationship between Portuguese and Minahasa people became closer, even to the point of marriage. As evidence in Minahasa, until now there are many families with Portuguese surnames such as, Tarega, Fernandez, Diaz, etc.

F. S. Watuseke, a Minahasa anthropologist, in his book *Adat Istiadat Daerah Minahasa*, said that since the entry of foreign nations to Minahasa land, Minahasa people have experienced many changes. Various things are imitated starting from the way of language, art to the way of dress (Watuseke: 1980, 158).

Talking about *Kulintang* in Minahasa, cannot be separated from the existence of Keroncong music, especially Portuguese Keroncong (Rasqueado) as a contextual background. Suhardjo Parto in his writing, "Indonesia " in Ramon P. Santos, gen. ed., *The Music of Asean* published by the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, in Philippines 1995 said that after Pax Hispanica was launched in the 1500s from Spain and Portugal, its effects could be seen, including the spread of Catholicism throughout the world. especially to the Asian region (Parto in Ramon Santos: 1995, 72). Since their arrival in North Sulawesi, the Portuguese and Spanish have introduced Western musical culture, including its music system and theory to Minahasa people. The Portuguese and Spanish introduced their music (conventional Western music), either through songs in church services, or through platforms outside the church, such as in the people's entertainment with their musical instruments (Bramantyo: 2004, 66). Thus, the existence of Western diatonic music has existed and was introduced in Minahasa since the Portuguese era. It was said by Suhardjo Parto and also Abineno that.

Before the Spaniards were driven away by [the] Dutch from Menado [Minahasa] in North Sulawesi / Celebes, Some Jesuit must have introduced Guidonian solmization to the People there (Parto di Santos: 1995, 72; Abineno: 1978, 22-24).

Suhardjo Parto said that there was music in Indonesia, especially in Eastern Indonesia, which was influenced by Portuguese folk music such as *Saudades* and *Despedidas*, namely songs about love for hometown and farewell songs and dance music in *Corridinho*, *Fast Polka*, and *Charamba* or the pair dance of the century - 17. These songs used a diatonic scale. Thus, the type of music as in *Fast Polka* and *Charamba*, until now has been developing and called as *Karambangan* or *Makaaruyen* music by Minahasa people. This music can still be found, because it is still practiced in Minahasa villages, such as in the South Minahasa area, around the Motoling and Tompaso Baru districts and in Tonsea area around the villages of Tumaluntung, Lembean, and Karegesan (Minawerot). Some examples of folk songs influenced by Iberian music are *Sampaya Babayan* in Padang, *Ole Sioh* in Maluku,

Anging Mamiri in South Sulawesi, *Weane* or *O Ina ni Keke* in Minahasa, and *Bolelebo* in Nusa Tenggara Timur. Keroncong music in Minahasa is *Rasqueado* music introduced by the Portuguese. The composition of instruments in Keroncong orchestra at Minahasa consists of: Guitar, Ukulele, Banjo, Celo, plucked Bass Strings, and Violin (Parto: 1995, 6).

Theoretical Basis

In order to find a comprehensive answer for problems regarding the history of the birth of *Kulintang* Minahasa music, it is necessary to use an umbrella approach, namely musicology and ethnomusicology. Cristine Ammer in *Harper's Dictionary Of Music* (1979) expressed Hood's opinion which said that musicology is directed to understand music that is learned in terms of music structure and to understand music in the context of its society. It is clear that musicology is a study of musical matters, including theories concerning musical elements and shape or form, as well as things related to the sound production techniques (Ammer: 1973, 211,212). Jhon Blacking argued that Ethnomusicology is a new term that is often used to describe the study of various music systems in the world. He also stated that this discipline generally studies ethnic music or folk music, so it tends to be the study of certain regional music. The methods used in general are anthropological and sociological or musicological methods (Blacking in Merriam: 1992, 74). Hesler also argued that ethnomusicology is hermeneutical knowledge about human musical behavior (Hesler in Merriam: 1992, 74). Suhardjo Parto in his dissertation, "*Folk Tradition as a key to the Understanding of Music Cultures of Java and Bali*" (1990) quoted Tanimura's opinion as saying, "*Ethnomusicology is the scientific study for finding principles of human life from the point of view of music*". Meanwhile, ethnomusicologist Alan P. Merriam said that ethnomusicology is the study of music in a cultural context.

Perry Rumengan, a musicologist, ethnomusicologist, and Professor in the field of Music Analysis at the State University of Manado (UNIMA), in his paper that was presented on development and preservation of traditional music in North Sulawesi Seminar (Rumengan: 2020) said that to find out the history of the birth of a genre music, several things that need to be tracked such as: who are the agents involved, either directly or indirectly; how the structure and aesthetics of the music, even the theory used in the music; influencing contextual background; when; where; the background and social conditions that affect it; whether the genre is something completely new, or a development of a pre-existing music or music system, as a contrast to preexisting music or something that completely new born, because of one needs and urges as a challenge from one situation and condition.; new music as a result of cultural processes (assimilation, acculturation, cultural domination, internalization, diffusion, evolution, innovation, etc. (Daeng: 1989, 21). Perry Rumengan's opinion can be a theory as a surgical knife to get the answer, is it true that *Kulintang* was born in Minahasa.

Thus, it is clear that in order to answer the problems proposed in problem

formulation above, it is correct to use the qualitative approach. It is because in dissecting the topic of this research, theories from various disciplines are used, it can also be said that this study uses the multidisciplinary approach.

Method

The research method used in this article uses a qualitative method with an ethnomusicology approach. The ethnomusicology method is an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of musicology and cultural anthropology to understand music in the context of culture and society.

First, the author will conduct a field study to gain in-depth knowledge about Minahasa Kulintang music. This field research will involve active participation in the Minahasa music community, attending musical performances, and interacting with local musicians and musicologists. Through these first-hand experiences, the author will be able to understand the social, cultural and historical context behind this music.

Then, the author will conduct interviews with musicians, music experts, and community leaders associated with Minahasa Kulintang music. These interviews will provide deeper insights into the history of the birth of this music, the role of music in the lives of Minahasa people, and the changes that have occurred in this music over time.

In addition, the author will also musically analyze the composition and structure of Minahasa Kulintang music. The musicological analysis will involve understanding the scales, rhythm patterns, harmonies, and instruments used in this ensemble. By analyzing these musical elements, the author will be able to identify the distinctive characteristics of Minahasa Kulintang music.

During the research, the author will also collect data from various reference sources, both books, journal articles, and digital sources related to Minahasa Kulintang music. These references will provide a strong theoretical foundation for this research and enrich the understanding of this music.

By using the ethnomusicology method, the author will be able to present a comprehensive research on Minahasa Kulintang music. This method will allow the author to explore the cultural, historical and musical aspects of this music, as well as understand the role of this music in Minahasa cultural identity.

Results and Discussion

The birth of Kulintang Minahasa Music

On January 11, 1942, Japan came to Minawerot, a place in the North Minahasa region. Japan came through the Kema coast. At that time some of the Minawerot people fled to the North, which was in the villages such as Kaima, Treman, Kawiley and Kauditan. In the evacuation there was also a group of Keroncong artists and among them were Nelwan Katuuk, a skilled blind artist from

Kauditan village, together with William Punuh, an artist from Kaima village. During the evacuation they brought along their musical instruments, namely the Keroncong orchestra. The shelter for the artists was called *Tete Rakek*.

While setting up a shelter in the garden, William Punuh heard a sweet sound which came from the touching wood. After being noticed, the wood was Wanderan wood. It inspired Wiliam Punuh to make musical instruments. William Punuh made a musical instrument composed of 15 blades of Wanderan wood which was later called Kulintang. The manufacturing process also got advice from Nelwan Katuuk. This was the prototype of *Kulintang* Minahasa music. This new instrument was eventually combined in Keroncong orchestra which eventually became known as *Kolintang Campuran* orchestra (Rumengan: 2017, 239).

One time in 1943, a folk-art fair was held in Tomohon, where artists from all over the Minahasa came to celebrate. The event committee also brought a well-known mixed orchestra from the Tonsea region. This orchestra was known as the MAKIRENDEM orchestra. Unfortunately, at that time, the violin player suddenly became unavailable, thus in order to save the event the committee finally summoned a brilliant violin player who came from Tomohon itself, namely Loudewijk Supit Kaligis. Lodewijk Supit Kaligis finally joined and paired up with Nelwan Katuuk, who played William Punuh's *Kulintang* as melody player.

William Punuh's *Kulintang* was still simple, made of a small resonance box, which was the Kulintang length same with the number of the notes. The notes were placed on top of the box without a stop, so that when it was played, it moved oftenly. Seeing this condition, Loudewijk, who was still 20 years old, squatted in front of the *Kulintang* played by Katuuk. While crouching, Lodewijk arranged the shifting notes. Of course, Lodewijk's action really helped Nelwan Katuuk, because as it was known, Nelwan Katuuk was a blind artist. In the event this orchestra performed a number of songs from Spain, Holland and Japan.

Evidently, Lodewijk was very interested in this *Kulintang* instrument. After the art week ended, Loudewijk Supit Kaligis went to Tonsea to learn how to make one. This was where the Lodewijk youth began to get to know the *Wooden Kulintang's* instrument more deeply. After gaining experience through William Punuh with Nelwan Katuuk, the young Loudewijk returned to Tomohon and developed it in his village, which was Tumatangtang in his own Keroncong orchestra. Thus, the orchestra under his guidance in Tomohon also used the *Kulintang* instrument made by Lodewijk and eventually the orchestra became an *Orkes Campuran*. At that time, Lodewijk orchestra was called ORKES DAN KOLINTANG TUNAS MUDA, and later it became ORKES KERONCONG TUNAS MUDA.

In the days leading up to independence, at several places in Minahasa, there were still frequent upheavals. These were the reasons many people prefer to flee to the forest. Likewise, the youth of Loudewijk and his music friends also fled. However, even in the evacuation, *Orkes Kulintang* continued to exist, and instead became a very popular entertainment facility, including Japanese soldiers. At that time, ORKES KERONCONG TUNAS MUDA was often invited by Japanese soldiers to

play in the army barriers. The request from Japanese soldiers had to be obeyed, otherwise they would definitely be punished. On the other hand, the Japanese army actually helped Lodewijk especially in terms of making guitars, where the Japanese soldiers often gave the leftover bullets to be used as threads on guitars.

However, at one time there was a difficult time for Lodewijk and his friends, when many of the strings of their instruments were broken and it was difficult to find replacements, because at that time it was still a war period. This condition made the musical activities of Lodewijk and his friends stop for a while. However, it was this circumstance that prompted Lodewijk to come up with an extraordinary idea. Lodewijk eventually replaced all of his instruments by transmuting instruments in the Keroncong orchestra such as Melody, Ukulele, Banjo, Guitar, Cello and Bass into instruments arranged on wooden slats. This was the reason why at the first time, every instrument in *Kulintang* was named based on the names of the instruments in the Keroncong orchestra.

With such enthusiasm, Lodewijk went into the forest and looked for the remains of the craftsmen. At that time, Lodewijk just took the edge, which in Tombulu language was called *kinupas*. Usually, this side of the edge was not used by craftsmen. In 1947 *Melulu Kolintang* was finally created. *Kulintang* instrument arrangement in the form of the early *Kulintang* musical ensemble was as follows (Rumengan: 2017, 248).

1. **Melody** one-and-a-half octave (12 notes) from C1 to G 2.
2. **Guitar 1** one octave from small f to F1.
3. **Guitar 2** one octave from G small to G1.
4. **Benjo** one octave from E1 to E2.
5. **Mandolin** one octave from G1 to G2.
6. **Ukulele** one octave from C2 to C3.
7. **Bass** from big F to small g.

Conclusion

Finally, from the perspective of musicology, something strange has happened, which is why the instruments in *Kulintang* ensemble are all played by striking but given names such as Banjo, Ukulele, Guitar, Cello and strum Bass. It is well known that these instruments are commonly known as instruments that are played by plucked. However, behind this oddity lies a big secret, that this was the background that opened the veil of the history of the birth of *Kulintang* Minahasa music. And, this incident occurred in the land of Minahasa. This is the basis and the very strong reasons why *Kulintang* music, later known as Minahasa Wooden *Kulintang* Music Ensemble was claimed by Minahasa people as their music. The prototype of Melody *Kulintang's* instrument in its singular form was born in Tonsea and was made by William Punuh in 1942. However, as a musical genre in the form of an ensemble, *Kulintang* was born in Tumatangtang village Tomohon North Sulawesi in 1947. The first maker of this ensemble was Lodewijk Supit Kaligis. Minahasa *Kulintang* Ensemble is a new music genre as a result of the transmutation of Portuguese Keroncong music which uses a conventional Western music system, in this case diatonic notes. *Kulintang* Minahasa music was born because it was motivated by the desire to fulfill entertainment needs in the conditions of Japanese war refuge.

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