Features of Kammu music terminology
– A musico-linguistic study

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Background
Music terminology has seldom been studied by linguists except as a by-product of, for instance, the compilation of a dictionary. Some ethnomusicologists have cared for the matter, normally as an integrated part in studies of musical cultures. When linguists deal with musical terms they are usually not exact enough from a ethnomusicological point of view. On the other hand, ethnomusicologists normally lack the necessary linguistic training to be able to analyze and fully use their language material.

In a historical perspective, organologists, who study the details and history of musical instruments, used similarities in the names of instruments for comparative purposes, much in the same manner as ethnographers did. This use of music terminology still occurs. Alan P. Merriam approached music terminology as a general phenomenon in The Anthropology of Music (1964). He recognized ‘verbal behavior’ as one of a number of important factors in a music culture and he concluded that the verbal behaviour concerning music in the World’s cultures ranged from very little discussion to elaborate and technical verbalizations. Ethnomusicologists like Bruno Nettl and Bela Foltin (1972) concerning Iran, Alain Daniélou (1966) concerning India and John Blacking (1967) concerning Venda children’s songs, have built their studies completely on the insider’s terminology. This has since then become normal in ethnomusicological studies. In Sound and sentiment (1982) Steven Feld drew upon his background in linguistics in an ethnomusicological study of songs of the Kaluli of New Guinea. He used indigenous terminology of music and birds in order to understand underlying symbolic concepts.

In this paper our respective backgrounds in ethnomusicology and linguistics are the starting point for a description of Kammu music terminology with the aims to isolate similarities and differences to other music cultures in Southeast Asia and to identify categories in the traditional Kammu concept of music.
Instrument names

Some names of musical instruments are related to those of neighbouring peoples, and are most probably borrowed: kąŋg ‘gong’ (Lao, Thai), mōŋ ‘large bossed gong’ (Lao, Thai), créēŋ ‘cymbals’ (Lao, Thai), rōŋ ‘jew’s harp’ (Thai hoong).

Other instrument names seem to be indigenous. Many of them are obviously onomatopoeic, such as several names of wind instruments, which begin with t-:

- tūut  end-blown water-buffalo horn
- tpú  side-blown free-reed horn
- tōt  flute
- tlōdēl  flute

The corresponding instruments have quite different names among surrounding peoples.

The names of several idiophones of bamboo or wood begin with the minor syllable k-, kl- or kr-, which suggests that they are indigenous Mon-Khmer words:

- klōŋ  bamboo concussion tubes [Calung (Java)]
- trā krōōk  bamboo stamping tubes
- k’loōk  slit-drum of bamboo
- krēak  long wooden slit-drum
- krēēŋ  copper bell with a round opening and a clapper inside
- klōk  buffalo or cow bell made from a piece of bamboo or a calabash

A special category term is prīŋ which denotes struck instruments with a membrane or a string (cf. Lundström and Tayanin 1981 and 1982):

- prīŋ waŋ ‘long drum’, long double-headed wooden drum
- prīŋ klōk  small single-headed wooden drum
- prīŋ prā ‘monk drum’, small hourglass drum
- prīŋ pōt  idiochordic bamboo zither
- prīŋ pōē  ‘earth drum’, a ground harp

The words klōk and pōt are onomatopoeic.

Terms of instrumental ensemble playing

In the Kammu language there is a rich terminology describing characteristics of various kinds of musical function and musical performances. Though a number of terms are abstract, there seems to be no overall term comparable to the term music and no word expressing that a piece of music is beautiful.

There is a rather exact terminology for percussive playing manners. This can be exemplified by terms referring to ensembles of bamboo concussion tubes called klōŋ. These may be struck simultaneously, kmān, or in alternation, trsūhsis. In the latter case the individual instrumentalists in the ensemble are grouped according to the following schedule:
Beginning, follower, stopper, and never stopping are terms borrowed from Javanese music and have been integrated into Kammu musical vocabulary. This terminology describes various ways in which a voice or instrument can be used.

**Voice character**

Voice is called trōŋ ‘throat’. A nice voice is called trōŋ mían ‘nice throat’ or trōŋ tró ‘suitable throat’. A bad voice is called trōŋ hmpóke ‘hairy throat’, i.e. a voice that makes you feel like itching (the word hmpóke denotes the itching hairs that grow on certain plants).

The general word for ‘sound’ is siāŋ. It can be used for pitch. Thus, siāŋ nè ‘small sound’ or siāŋ còŋ ‘high sound’ denote high pitch, and siāŋ nám ‘big sound’ or siāŋ hntè ‘low sound’ denote low pitch. The word siāŋ is also used for other sound qualities. The following apply to the human voice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Siāŋ</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>siāŋ hncim</td>
<td>soft sound, weak sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siāŋ krâŋ</td>
<td>hard sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siāŋ prèek</td>
<td>shrill sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siāŋ kmpñ</td>
<td>low-pitched sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siāŋ hntûr</td>
<td>‘slack sound’, i.e. muffled sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siāŋ klyłoŋ</td>
<td>‘swimming sound’, i.e. rolling sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Song categories**

A number of verbs meaning ‘to sing’ denote various degrees of recitation or singing, which are related to specific traditional musical situations, and to sex or age groups. Each of these types of singing employs one melody type, i.e. each type is monothematic in the sense that one melody type is used for a number of song-poems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tōm</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tōm</td>
<td>singing of the kind used at social parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hñhi</td>
<td>singing of the kind used outside the party situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yãm</td>
<td>‘weeping’, i.e. singing done by women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hrow̃</td>
<td>singing with the refrain hrow̃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hução</td>
<td>singing with the refrain hução</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The word tōm is also used as the general verb for ‘sing’. The noun tno m is derived from this verb by the noun-forming infix -tn-. It means ‘song-poem’, but is also used in a general sense meaning ‘any type of song’, or ‘singing’, as in tno m kōn nè ‘children’s song’.

Social singing in different dialect areas is described by the name of the area: tōm Yûan, tōm Kwèen, tōm Cwàa, tōm Uû, tōm Lûan Pràbáan.
Other songs that belong to certain situations, ceremonies or rituals have their names after the situation, or the function within that situation:

lûy kôon sîs ‘lull child to sleep’, lullaby
lôôñ nôôr ‘showing the way’, sung at funeral wakes in order to
guide the soul of the deceased to the land of the dead
yâam rôoy ‘cry for the spirit’, dirge
kôôy kmâ ‘calling the rain’
ôôc ‘begging’, a wassail song after the harvest
yûun òîñ ‘stamping tube dance’, song at house-building feast
yûun rwâay ‘tiger dance’, song to drive out the tiger spirit

Singing styles
The following are names of three distinct styles of singing:

tôam sîn ktâm sing heavily
tôam sîn hmcâal sing lightly
tôam kâp krân sing in a relaxed way

Songs can be sung quickly without holding out individual tones or they can be sung so that certain tones are long. These are referred to as ‘short’ and ‘stretched out’ respectively:

tôam làt lôot ‘sing shortly’, i.e. sing quickly without pausing
tôam tôôc hôot ‘sing stretched out’, i.e. sing slowly with many long tones

Other ways to express these contrasting manners and to describe various ways of prolonged tones are:

tôam sîn plôk plôk ‘sing with a jumping sound’, i.e. sing staccato
tôam krli krâñ ‘sing in circles’, i.e. continue to sing on final tones of phrases to an undulating melodic movement

Several terms denote various kinds of legato singing. Many of them refer to an undulating melodic movement. The phrase tôam knhûul knhôoc has several meanings. The verb knhûul means ‘to breathe as if breathless’ and also describes the sound of the wedge-tailed pigeon, hôôc. If a person sings like this, people can say that he sings like this pigeon. This verb also describes the sound of the flute tôot and the bamboo idiophone tâawtâaw (the so called ‘tuning fork’ or rere, cf. Kaudern 1927). The verb knhôoc means ‘puff as if breathless’. In singing, the expression tôam knhûul knhôoc refers to a longdrawn phrase sung to a deep breath, but there is also a short rhythmic-melodic pattern which is repeated in this legato manner with a rhythmic pulse reminiscent of short puffs. In certain cases the singer may employ the technique of singing while catching his breath. The words