

TUNE AND TEXTILE: Interrelatedness in the Music and Weaving Arts of the T'boli, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explicate the key concept for music called *utom* of the T'boli of Mindanao (Philippines) by way of analogy with T'boli design (*b'teken*) as found in their renowned *t'nalak* textiles. In so doing, basic aesthetic principles that are shared between the two different artistic domains are uncovered. My argument is that fundamental principles of T'boli weaving design are analogous with concepts of instrumental composition. In this context, the use of analogy to explain aspects of one artistic domain in terms of another is apposite because it resonates with the extensive use of analogy and metaphor within the cultural and social life of the T'boli. Moreover, as we shall see, the basic concepts and elements of weaving design are remarkably similar to those of musical composition. An understanding of the translatability between the two artistic domains, weaving and music, came from particular dialogues and interactions between the T'boli and myself during fieldwork. At the same time, it was also stimulated by a predisposition toward certain artistic and intellectual orientations in my own 'Western' culture, specifically, those that embrace intermodal, intermedial, intertextual, and synaesthetic approaches and which, at a general level, resonate with T'boli practices that extend the meanings of words and concepts from one cultural domain to another.

Keywords: T'boli, music weaving, analogy, intermodal

The ethnographic encounter with a new culture normally begins with the strong awareness of its strangeness and distance, its 'otherness.' There is a simultaneous struggle to make sense of the experience and at the same time translate acquired understandings of 'otherness' in terms recognizable to 'others,' albeit culturally nearer. Analogy and metaphor can be helpful in diminishing this sense of unfamiliarity and distance as well as provide a way of presenting understandings of 'otherness' to a wider audience.

This article seeks to explicate the key concept for music called *utom* of the T'boli of Mindanao (Philippines) by way of analogy with T'boli design (*b'teken*) as found in their renowned *t'nalak* textiles. In doing so, basic aesthetic principles that are shared between the two different artistic domains are uncovered. My argument is that fundamental principles of T'boli weaving design are analogous with concepts of instrumental composition. In this context, the use of analogy to explain aspects of one artistic domain in terms of another is apposite because it resonates with the extensive use of analogy and metaphor within the cultural and social life of the T'boli. Moreover, as we shall see, the basic concepts and elements of weaving design are remarkably similar to those of musical composition.

On the one hand, my discovery of a measure of translatability between the two artistic domains, weaving and music, came from particular dialogues and interactions between myself and the T'boli during fieldwork.¹ On the other hand, it was also stimulated by a predisposition toward certain artistic and intellectual orientations in my own 'Western' culture, specifically those that embrace intermodal, intermedial, intertextual, and synaesthetic approaches and which, at a general level, resonate with T'boli practices that extend the meanings of words and concepts from one cultural domain to another.

Mythic Relations

The most fitting place to begin a discussion of intermedial relations between music and visual design is in the particular episode from T'boli creation myth. In this episode the first earthborn women, Boi Henwu, ascends into the heavens with Lemugot Mangay, the celestial messenger of D'wata, a supreme deity. Before leaving this world, Boi Henwu bequeaths an eternal remembrance of herself, namely, a pair of crimson-breasted barbets.² In T'boli symbology the paired barbets are symbolic of the male/female complementarities that are central to T'boli dualistic thought about the nature

of the world. More specifically, this symbol embraces an association between the basic compositional components of figure and ground in instrumental composition (*utom*) and the antiphonal call of the paired barbets (*Mora Sounding Pantheon* 187). One version of the myth tells that:

In the time of old, the barbet (*fu*) originated from the wooden mallets used by Boi Henwu for weaving (*bogul lubag*). When they were thrown to the ground as she ascended into the heavens (*longit*) they transformed into a pair of barbets.

The voice of the barbet is the *utom* (instrumental composition) of the sound made by Boi Henwu's weaving mallets. When two barbets sing in pairs, one is female and the other is male. The one with the big (i.e. low) voice (*bong udel*) is the male and the one with the small (i.e. high) voice (*udi udel*) is the female. The male has a red head but the female does not (Montil Swan).

There are three important points to notice in this particular episode. The first is the metonymic relationship between Boi Henwu and the wooden mallets; the second is the metaphorical relationship between the sounds produced by the wooden mallets and the sounds produced by the barbets; and the third is the T'boli recognition of the sexual dimorphism of the barbet species.³ In this version of the myth the wooden mallets belonging to Boi Henwu are those typically used in the weaving process (*t'nalak*) to this day. The sounds produced by the mallets hammering on the woven cloth placed on a section of wood, which is done to smoothen and tighten the texture of the weave, are metaphorically linked to the 'fu, fu' sounds produced by the barbets, which are onomatopoeically referred to as *fu*.

However, in another version of the myth according to Manudal of Lembisol, the mallets referred to in the ascension episode are those used for music making, specifically for playing the wooden percussion beam (*k'lutang*).⁴ Nonetheless, the two versions of the episode are almost identical in content except for the difference in mallet type, and it is clear that both types of mallet have the same mythical function as metonyms for Boi Henwu and as objects for the transformation into her earthly symbol, the pair of male and female barbets. Further, there is a similarity between the two kinds of objects in terms of their practical function and their sounds. The percussion beam mallets are used to hammer on the wooden percussion beam and the weaving mallets are used to hammer the woven cloth, and the metaphorical

relationships between bird sound and hammered wood are the same. Thus, the two different types of mallets associated with different artistic domains, one with music and the other with weaving, are paradigmatically associated in the myth. In summary, a close examination and interpretation of the myth reveals metaphorical associations between (a) the sexually dimorphic barbets with their differences in the pitches produced by the male and female birds, the color, and nesting behavior, (b) sexual and gender difference among T'boli men and women, and (c) the musical components of figure (*utom*) and ground (*tang*) (Mora *Sounding Pantheon* 187).

The parallel between music and weaving, I argue, extends beyond the paradigmatic association in the myth to more extensive analogous relationships in formal design and aesthetics. Indeed, during my study of T'boli music, the weaving analogy helped to formulate the basic aesthetic principles that underlie instrumental composition or *utom*. Moreover, as we will see, for the T'boli, the weaving analogy was apt and fitted with their conceptions of instrumental composition. But firstly let me briefly discuss the use of analogy and metaphor as a common T'boli practice.

Analogy and Metaphor as Cultural Practice

My exploration and description of one artistic domain in terms of another is compatible with the T'boli practice of *heled*, which is the general term used for the application of analogy, allegory, metaphor, and simile in a wide variety of social situations. T'boli chieftains (*datu*), arbiters (*tau mogot*), and debating singers (*tau lemingon setolu*) are particularly adept at using analogy and metaphor when attempting to influence an audience through displays of rhetoric in ritual or in the execution of customary law. In expressive culture, ballads and stories are replete with metaphors and similes that describe the physical attributes of a lover in terms of natural things such as mountains, trees or flowers. The characteristic behavior and attributes of particular species of wildlife serve as metaphors and allegories for human strengths and weaknesses or as cautionary tales. The heavenly bodies, especially the sun and moon, are metaphors for fundamental cosmological principles, including those exhibited in human attributes or characteristics ascribed to gender difference. Metaphors are also used to describe musical attributes and processes.

Such practices are, of course, not unique to the T'boli. Research into metaphor, particularly in the cognitive sciences, has provided convincing

evidence for metaphor as a constitutive cognitive phenomenon (see for instance Gibbs; Johnson *Body*; Johnson *Metaphor*; Johnson *Moral*; Lakoff and Johnson *Metaphors*; Lakoff and Johnson *Philosophy*; Ortony). I will return to this point later in relation to the metaphors the T'boli use when talking about visual and musical composition. In the meantime, let me discuss other predispositions that partly explain the ease with which the T'boli were able to elaborate upon the analogy between weaving design and musical pattern once I had raised the parallel to them; one of these predispositions concerns the nature of T'boli vocational knowledge and praxis.

While a T'boli individual may be considered as an adept (*tau mulung*) in a particular artistic tradition or form of knowledge, he or she normally practices more than one art form and inevitably draws on experience in one artistic domain and connects it to another. The knowledge and practices of instrumentalists, singers, storytellers, healers, mediums, midwives, weavers, jewelry makers, embroiders, brass-casters, dream interpreters, to name a few, overlap in various ways. For instance, epic singers (*tau lemingon Tudbulul*) can often invoke a detailed knowledge of traditional medicines in their heroic tales because of their familiarity with healing practices; lute players (*tau hemgulung*) are able to deploy love magic through performance because of their experience with ritual magic through their vocational ordination; and dream interpreters (*tau k'na*) can utilize ideas and patterns that emerge from dreams for the creation of new weaving designs. Part of the reason for the prevalence of intermodal skill among the T'boli is that all artistic practice and forms of knowledge have a common source, namely, the creative breath (*de nawa*) of the Supreme Being, *Dwata*. This knowledge is held in the *nawa* (literally, breath)⁵ of the adept. In other words, all creativity and knowledge are bound together through divine inspiration, which at a personal level is channeled through a spirit familiar or guide to the adept. T'boli epistemology, therefore, is grounded in intuitive, and not canonical, knowledge (Mora *Mind, Body* 92-93). T'boli adepts, as 'people who know' (*tau mulung*), have a certain poise and self-assurance when offering interpretations about anything related to *adat* (custom, tradition) or different artistic domains, especially when they are endowed with the kind of artistic versatility that is common among them.

Dialogue and Discovery

The parallelism between *utom* and the *t'nalak*, or instrumental composition and weaving design, first occurred to me when a T'boli weaver, Ye Bibi,⁶

was explaining one of her new designs. It was a dynamic pattern, with strong tensions resulting from a vibrant rhythmic shift in movement between foreground and background, otherwise known as counterchange. While I cannot claim to be a synaesthete, the effect and experience of looking at the design resonated with my experience in listening to T'boli instrumental music, which up to that point I had been trying to understand in relation to local classification schemes and which I will return to later. The impressions I had when listening to T'boli music were also characterized by a shifting play of tensions between specific musical elements, namely, the main part of the composition or melody (*utom*) and the supporting figure or drone (*tang*).

On another occasion, I was closely examining a piece of woven cloth given to me by a renowned weaver, Ye Lo.⁷ As the weaver explained to me the method of manufacture and the composition of the cloth, I was struck by the correspondence between the compositional terms used for weaving and instrumental music. The conceptual similarity between the two artistic media and their mythical associations invited closer comparison and weaving design soon became for me an analogy for the systemic complexities of *utom*.

Initially, I was reluctant to discuss in detail my thoughts about the weaving/music analogy with the T'boli until I had more time to consider their validity; I wanted to see whether their aesthetic thinking about weaving and music would bear any resemblance to my own way of thinking on the matter. Although I knew that at some stage I would end up discussing my own views to test their viability, I was in no hurry. After all, I was still something of a stranger to them and they had little understanding of my role as a researcher in those relatively early days of fieldwork.

So it was many months before I mentioned the idea to Bendaly Layul, a highly respected lute (*hegelung*) player and my teacher. We were admiring Ye Lo's woven cloth that was hanging on the wall of my room. With reference to this particular weave, I asked him if he thought there was something similar about the design of both T'boli woven cloth and instrumental composition. By then he was accustomed to my seemingly unusual questions about T'boli culture and thought for a moment. Then, grinning in his inimitable way he pointed to the white elements of the textile, which comprise the main design motifs, and traced them while emphasizing their particular patterns and referring to the notion of *utom*. He had, it appeared, interpreted

my question in reference to the main design element of instrumental composition or *utom*, that is, the main melodic line. Our discussion then turned to the notion of *tang*, a T'boli musical term for the drone, as well as *k'loonen*, or ornamentation and their parallel elements in the weave design. After thinking more about the analogy he uttered, with apparent approval, the expression: '*Tahu, tahu*' ('True, true').⁸

Encouraged by this exchange with Bendaly, I pursued the subject with other musicians and weavers and similar positive responses to the analogy followed. Subsequent discussions with them helped to refine and elaborate the basic analogy. While some T'boli said that they had not previously thought about their weaving and instrumental music in this particular way, most of them found little difficulty in talking to me about the one aesthetic medium in terms of the other. Thus, I took my initial understanding of the association between weaving design and instrumental music as an invitation to more closely compare the basic compositional terms and elements of both artistic media. Let me now turn to the weaving design.

T'nalak B'teken: Textile Design

Concordance of terms and design elements

There are three compositional elements that are basic to both weaving design and instrumental music. In analytical terms, these elements may be referred to as main design, ornamentation, and background (or ground). The three corresponding T'boli weaving terms are *ogowen*, *k'loonen*, and *lemen* which literally signify 'that with movement,' 'beautification,' and 'inside,' respectively. The parallel musical terms are *utom*, *k'loonen*, and *tang*, respectively. Before discussing the more formal design relations, let me briefly consider the function and symbolism of the colors used in weaving designs to help explain the relations among the compositional elements of weaving and help us better understand the analogical connections to music.

There is an invariable three-color system in T'boli weaving manufacture, namely, white (*bukay*), red (*hulu*), and black (*hitem*). As seen in Plate 1 (page 24), the pale, whitish figures in the textile design are the result of the natural, creamy-white color of abaca fiber,⁹ which is used to make the weave. Natural dyes produced from the root bark of the *loko* tree¹⁰ and the leaves of the *k'nalum* tree¹¹ are used to produce the red and black portions, respectively.¹² T'boli weavers as well as non-weavers refer to various

aspects of cultural life when explaining the significance of the three colors. For instance, an association is made between the black element and darkness or death in relation to the eschatological domain. When asked to elaborate on this association some T'boli say that black symbolizes the soul's (*loyof*) journey to the underworld of *mogul* after natural death. White, on the other hand, is identified with *longit*, the upperworld of *D'wata*, a Supreme Being. Other T'boli say that the darkness and blackness of the new moon is associated with a low ebb in creativity. The T'boli do not see the new moon as a sign of hope. Rather, they see it as a time when one is vulnerable and powerless to dispel the surrounding darkness. White by comparison is connected to the luminous full moon from whence comes the highpoint in the individual's creative cycle.

Clearly, some of these associations are universal. However, other associations are more specifically connected to T'boli social symbolism.¹³ For instance, black and white are linked to both the weaving process and the gender-based division of labor. Black is identified with women since the spirit owner of the *k'nalum* tree, from which the black dye is obtained, is considered female. Furthermore, only women are permitted to extract this dye from the leaves of the *k'nalum* tree. The creamy white of the natural abaca fiber is associated with both men and women. The spirit owner of the abaca plant is female, *Fu Dalu*, though it was the father of the T'boli epic hero, *Tudbulul*, who planted the abaca and bequeathed it to women.¹⁴ Moreover, abaca is normally harvested and processed from the raw state by men. So while there is no symbolic congruence between white and the male gender and black and the female gender in terms of the symbolism of the materials, there is congruence in terms of the gender restrictions placed on the manufacture process.¹⁵

The color red has associations with both men and women. Its association with women lies in menstruation and also to the materials and process of weaving. For instance, the spirit owner of the *loko* tree, from which the red dye is obtained, is female and only women are permitted to process the red dye. In addition, red is associated with women because red is the dominant color for decorating women's clothing, as exemplified by large red hats worn by women during ceremony or special occasions. Red is also associated with men because of its symbolic associations with death by the sword (*b'nonok*). In cosmological terms, red is the color of the upper, intermediary realm called *kayung*, where the souls of all those who have died by the sword reside.

Some T'boli gave more personal interpretations of the symbolic associations of the three colors. One renowned specialist in the creation myth, Manudal Andal, associated white with a clear and tranquil mind and black with a confused and troubled mind. For him, black suggests distressing emotions stemming from serious domestic problems such as adultery, the burden of a heavy fine that might have resulted from a dispute settlement, or the humiliation experienced from an unpaid debt. He also associated red, as the T'boli commonly do, with intense and violent emotion, particularly the jealousy and rage associated with illicit love and the consequence of murder.

Aside from these associations, the key features of T'boli color relations are (a) the complementarity and polarity between black and white, and (b) the one-to-one correspondence between the three colors black, white, and red, and the textile design elements *lemen* (background, ground), *ogowen* (main design), and *k'loonen* (beautification or ornamentation).

Compositional elements

The term *lemen* derives from the root word *lem*, which denotes 'in' or 'inside.' In the textile context, *lemen* refers to the 'inside' of the design or the background to the entire design. Aside from the color associations, the black *lemen* compositional element does not convey specific symbolic information. That is, there are no black figures or motifs that carry symbolic significance; the black element is non-referential. In this sense, black is a passive element of the design. By contrast, the white *ogowen* element constitutes the figural or motivic element which conveys symbolic information. The term *ogowen* derives from the root word *ogow* ('that used to make something move'). In the context of textile design, the term *ogowen* has the sense of 'that with movement or motion.' The white element, the figures and motifs, constitute the 'main design' and is referentially active. These figures and motifs are mostly representations of human, animal, and other natural forms. Normally, a single figure or motif dominates and gives each textile cloth its title, such as the 'frog design' (*b'teken tofi*), the 'python design' (*b'teken sowo*), the 'hawk design' (*b'teken kofi*), or the 'star design' (*b'teken blotik*). However, textiles are traditionally joined together to form large ceremonial cloths with a medley of designs.

For the T'boli, a textile design is aesthetically incomplete without the red, beautifying, and ornamental element called *k'loonen*. The term *k'loonen*

derives from the word *kenoon* meaning ‘beautiful.’ It signifies the beautification of some object. For example, *k’loonen* can apply to the adornment of a human body, a lute, a house, or a handle on a machete. Indeed, in many other parts of the Philippines, visual embellishment is also paramount. Filling in any available space with richly decorated motifs is essential to notions of beauty. The vivid decorations that were once commonplace as embellishments for jeepneys are an example of this sensibility. To the casual observer, T’boli textile designs can present some difficulty in distinguishing ornamentation from main design elements.

In textile design, *k’loonen* serves to embellish or to complement the main white figural motifs. Plate 2 (page 24), which shows the weaver pointing to the white *ogowen* main motif in this case, an abstraction of the human form illustrates the way the red embellishments both enclose and embed the main motif. It is significant for this discussion to note that the T’boli are the only mountain people of the Philippines that integrate the color red into the entire design of cloth that is made using the abaca warp *ikat* procedure.¹⁶ Among other mountain people who produce textiles using this procedure, red and black only appear on the same cloth in separate design bands and not together in the same design band, as with the T’boli (Hamilton 26).

Analytical Terms	Main Design	Ornamentation	Background
Compositional Elements/ Weaving Terms	<i>ogowen</i> (‘that with movement’)	<i>k’loonen</i> (‘beautification’)	<i>lemen</i> (‘inside’)
Color Element	<i>bukay</i> (‘white’)	<i>hulu</i> (‘red’)	<i>hitem</i> (‘black’)
Luminosity	high toned, forward	high toned, forward	low toned, receding

Fig. 1. Compositional elements and colors for *t’nalak* cloth

T’boli perceptions of the properties of the three colors, specifically their relative luminosity, are connected to the function and relations of the three design elements. Weavers describe the black in terms of its ‘farness’ (*mayuk*) and the white in terms of its ‘nearness’ (*ni*). From an analytical viewpoint, black has a receding quality as it absorbs light, hence the

supportive or background function it provides as the 'inside' (*lemen*) of the design. By contrast, white has a projecting quality as it reflects light, hence its attraction to the eye and the function it provides as the foreground element in the design. These characteristics partly explain why the white design element is designated as 'that with movement'—*ogowen* provides motion and symbolic information in the design.

The *lemen* and the *ogowen* components, therefore, are complementary opposites. In terms of design they constitute a positive/negative relationship. However, while the receding black (*lemen*) element complements the projecting white (*ogowen*) element of the design, it is also regarded as 'binding' the various elements of the design. The term the T'boli use in this context is *seleten*, which literally means "to insert something between two objects or categories in order to bind or connect them." In this sense, black holds the white main design element and the red beautifying element together.

The relations between the three basic elements of weaving design, therefore, can be incorporated into the two discriminations: inside (*lemen*)/outside (*ogowen*) and main design (*ogowen*)/ornamentation (*k'loonen*). We may describe these relations in perceptual terms using the notion of figure and ground, one of basic laws of perception in Gestalt psychology. The figure-ground phenomenon refers to the way we habitually organize our perception of reality into a figure that 'stands out' against an undifferentiated background, though what is figural at any one moment depends on patterns of sensory stimulation and on the momentary interests of the perceiver (see for instance Kohler). These relations are schematized in Figure 2.

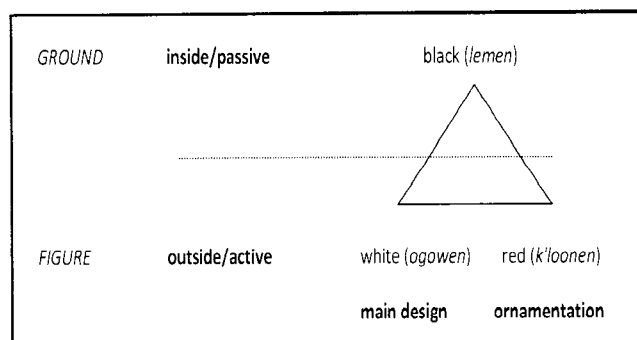


Fig. 2. Relations between the design elements of *t'nalak* cloth

In instrumental composition, there are also three basic compositional elements: *utom*, *k'loonen*, and *tang*, which are analogous to the *ogowen*, *k'loonen*, and *lemen* elements in weaving design. Figure 3 illustrates these relations.

	Main Design		Ornamentation		Ground
Instrumental Composition	<i>utom</i> ,	:	<i>k'loonen</i>	:	<i>tang</i>
Weaving Design	<i>ogowen</i>	:	<i>k'loonen</i>	:	<i>lemen</i>

Fig. 3. Concordance of weaving and musical terms

In order to develop the analogy between textile design and instrumental composition, it is first necessary to examine in some detail the concept of *utom*, which can be understood as a semantic domain containing several levels of reference.¹⁷ Cognitive anthropology offers a rigorous method for unpacking the complexities of semantic domains such as *utom*. In this method, rather than collecting data by getting “words for things,” whereby the ethnographer collects words or lexical items from another language by making correspondences with those from his own culture, the ethnographer gets “things for words;” that is, he strives “to define objects according to the conceptual system of the people he is studying” (Frake 126). This kind of ethnographic activity can result in the construction of folk taxonomies, which concern how people organize certain classes of objects or notions.¹⁸

A relatively simple example of a folk taxonomy in relation to music is that provided by the lexeme ‘*au*’ used by the ‘Are’are of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. At the most general level, ‘*au*’ signifies ‘bamboo’ as compared with other categories of plants. At another level, ‘*au*’ means ‘musical instrument’ to distinguish it from other cultural uses of bamboo. In a more specific sense, ‘*au*’ signifies ‘panpipe ensemble’ in contrast to the slit drum (Zemp 37).

The T’boli concept of *utom*, however, differs from ‘*au*’ in a significant way; *utom* is an abstract, musical concept and pertains to the musical ordering of sound per se rather than to musical instruments or their materials. More

specifically, *utom* refers to an autochthonous compositional model in which interacting, interdependent musical elements form a unified whole. Conceptually, the various references to the term *utom* within this model are interrelated within five hierarchical and contrasting sets. I will use subscript numbers to indicate their levels of reference as summarized in Figure 4.

Utom: Instrumental Composition

At the most general level, *utom* refers to instrumental composition as distinct from vocal composition (*lingon*). At the next level of reference, *utom* signifies the melodic or percussive rhythmic line (*utom₁*) of a composition as contrasted with the underlying tonal-rhythmic support or *tang*. The *tang* is essentially stable and unchanging in relation to the unstable and active main musical element or melodic, percussive rhythmic line; the *tang* recedes, as it were, into the background. Proceeding to the next level, *utom* refers to the non-ornamental tones (*utom₂*) as distinct from ornamental figures and tones (*k'loonen*). At a lower level still, *utom* refers to the central section (*utom₃*) by comparison with framing sections called *dalil* (*kebuten dalil* and *kedengen dalil* refer to the beginning and ending sections, respectively). The lowest level of reference is the 'true *utom*' (*tahu utomen*), which is the central musical sign or referential motif (*utom₄*) of the composition. The true *utom* is contained in a specific subsection of the central section called the *hebalingen*, which is distinguished from the subsidiary motivic material contained in a contrasting subsection of the central section called the *genolun*.

<i>Utom</i> instrumental composition	<i>lingon</i> vocal composition
<i>utom₁</i> main melodic or percussive rhythmic line	<i>tang</i> underlying tonal support
<i>utom₂</i> non-ornamental notes	<i>k'loonen</i> ornamental notes (timbre, dynamics, physical signs & gestures)
<i>utom₃</i> central section	<i>dalil (kebuten, kedengen)</i> beginning & ending framing sections
<i>utom₄ - tahu utomen, hebalingen</i> 'true <i>utom</i> '; subsection containing musical sign or referential motif	<i>genolun</i> subsection containing subsidiary motivic material

Fig. 4. Levels of reference of *utom*

We can further appreciate the meaning and function of these terms through the ways the T'boli use them as metaphors for rhetorical purposes. For instance, a speaker may use the notion of *utom* (at the level of *utom₁*) to refer to the main issue or point of an argument, and in everyday conversation *utom₁* refers to the gist of what is being communicated: "What is your *utom*" is the expression normally used. Specialist singers skillfully deploy this expression and related rhetorical devices during marriage negotiations, which involve wealth exchange (*sesunggud*). The negotiations occur during a marathon sung debate called *lingon setolu* (from *tolu*, lit. debate), which can last from dusk till dawn. The *setolu* normally consists of one male singer representing the bride and another male singer representing the groom. The singers compete to establish an exchange advantage for their respective parties. In such contexts the concomitant notion of *tang*, or more specifically *hentang*, refers to the act of supporting a singer or another person who is making a particular point or *utom* during the ritual debate (Mora *Sounding Pantheon* 203).

The T'boli metaphors for pitch differentiation also help elucidate the contrasting and complementary relations between *utom* and *tang*. The pitch used for the *tang* is referred to as *bong unihen*, meaning 'big pitch' (that is, low pitch), while the pitch/es used for the *utom₁* are referred to as *udi unihen* or 'small pitch/es' (that is, the high pitch/es). (We will return to these terms in connection with the differential sounds produced by the male and female barbets referred to in the creation myth.) Just as visual attention is drawn towards the projecting high color tone of the white main design element (*ogowen*) as compared with the receding low color tone of the black background element (*lemen*) in textile design, aural attention is drawn to the higher pitch/es of the *utom₁*, melodic line as opposed to the underlying lower pitch of the *tang*. There is a parallel, then, between the relative luminosities of the figure and ground (or *ogowen* and *lemen*) in visual design and the relative pitch frequencies of the figure and ground (or *utom* and *tang*) in musical composition.

As we noted in the discussion of T'boli textile design, the practice and aesthetics of musical ornamentation embody and reflect specific cultural sensibilities and conventions. Moreover, artistic conventions that exist outside of the domain of music may also be discovered in musical practice. Lois Al Faruqi, in her exemplary study of interrelations between Islamic musical and visual arts, demonstrated the inseparability of ornamentation from main design elements. In that context, the repetition and elaboration of key motifs

generate an overall, rich decorative quality often found in Islamic arts, as seen for instance in the mosaic. To some extent, similar observations may be made in relation to T'boli textile design and instrumental music.

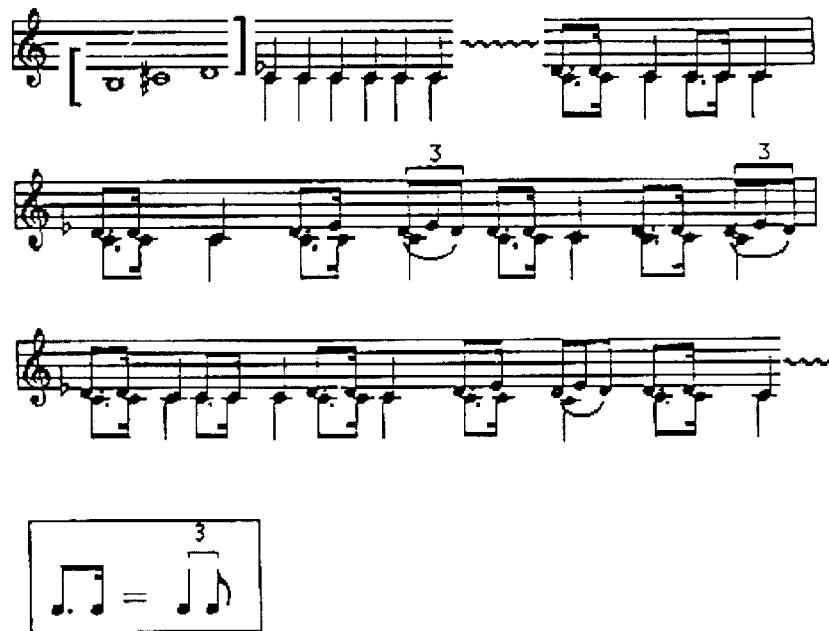
What is regarded as ornamentation and what is not can seem elusive; however, T'boli adepts are normally able to differentiate the two rather easily. Lute players, for instance, had specific names for the various musical ornaments they used and were able to name them while instructing me in lute (*hegelung*) playing. These ornaments were identified collectively as the *k'loonen* and were considered discernible from the *utom*. Despite their explanations, my own sense of discomfort at not being able to discern these distinctions was put to rest during one lesson when Blahing Mil of T'boli Town, an adept, said that *utom* is like the head and the body of the human, while *k'loonen* (beautification) is like the arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet and so on.

This simile is apt as it conceives of the ornamental and the non-ornamental as inseparable in practice, yet distinguishable in theory. As the ornamental *k'loonen* is interwoven into the non-ornamental *utom*, they form together into a seamless continuum that often makes it difficult to make out where one stops and the other starts.¹⁹ The ambiguity in demarcation made it sometimes difficult to obtain, much less record, totally unornamented versions of an *utom*. Performers were reluctant to play without ornamentation even for the purposes of demonstration. They insisted that performances were always played with ornamentation. It was only after asking performers to demonstrate how an inexperienced performer or a child might play that ornamental notes were largely, but still not completely, omitted. The fragment of one performance of an *utom* in Musical Example 1 illustrates how an adept lute player is able to skilfully employ ornamentation, while Musical Examples 2 is essentially the same melodic fragment without ornamentation.

Since *k'loonen* and *utom* are closely interwoven, one needs to essentialize the *utom* proper for the purposes of analysis. The reduction of *utom*, designated in this study as *utom*₂, to the minimalist form as noted above is not part of a musical performance. For the purpose of analysis, this minimal or unadorned *utom*₂ can be thought of as the equivalent of Blahing's 'body.' The notes contained in *utom*₂ are the main melodic or rhythmic design elements. The *k'loonen* in the *utom* proper, are tonal-rhythmic 'limbs,' adjuncts and additions overlaid on this basic form.

Musical Example 1. An example of *utom* on the *hegelung* (lute) with *k'loonen* (ornamentation)

While the concept of *k'loonen* or ornamentation refers to the embellishment and beautification of non-ornamental tones (*utom₂*) in instrumental music it also embraces the distinction between the decorative beginning and ending 'framing sections' (*dalil*) and the central section of the composition (*utom₃*), and which will be discussed in detail in the following section. Thus ornamentation applies to instrumental music in a variety of ways; the key point, however, is that it has the function of complementing what is considered central in structural or formal terms. In addition, the notion of ornamentation for the T'boli is not regarded as optional, as it is for much European art music. As noted above, ornamentation is essential and is difficult in practice to separate from the main melodic elements.



Musical Example 2. An example of the same *utom* on the *hegelung* (lute) without *k'loonen* (ornamentation)

While the beginning and ending framing sections in instrumental music (*dalil*) noted above are analogous to *fing* sections found in textile design, Figure 5 only includes the analogous relations between the structural role of *k'loonen* or ornamentation in instrumental music exemplified by the application of ornamental tones and the structural role of ornamentation in textile design as illustrated by the application of the red embellishments that both enclose and embed the main motif. The purpose of this summary is to sharpen the focus on the parallel between the three basic elements of textile design and instrumental music and how they are incorporated into the two discriminations: main design and ornamentation, on the one hand, and figure and ground, on the other. The figure/ground relations, as already noted, have been described by one of the basic laws of perception in Gestalt psychology. We now turn to the additional semantic content of *k'loonen* and its role as a structural segmentary device in both textile design and instrumental composition.

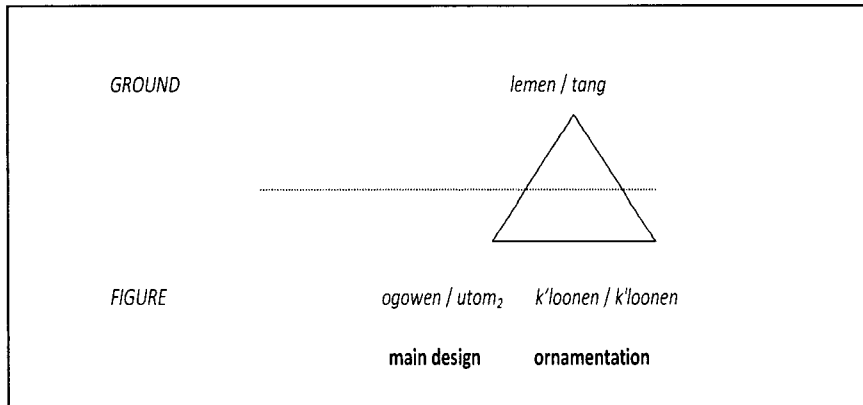


Fig. 5. Summary of conceptual unity between weaving and musical design

Analogies in the Formal Segmentation of Textile Design and Music

Border and frames

In the example shown in Plate 1 (page 24), the central section of the textile is bordered or framed on either side by sections called *b'longen*. The *b'longen* sections are rendered primarily in red and normally feature triangular, double-spiral, zig-zag, and plaited band patterns. As well as having a framing function, these sections have a decorative or beautifying function and are also referred to as *k'loonen* or ornamentation in addition to the red figurations that embellish the main motifs contained in the central section of the weave.

The border or framing sections of the textile design have their musical analogue in the beginning and ending sections of *utom* called the *dalil*. As well as functioning as framing devices, these sections also serve as personal 'signatures' for leading adepts; that is, each adept has his or her own characteristic melodic and rhythmic patterns that are used to form the *dalil*. The *dalil* is distinguished from the central section of *utom* (*utom₃*) in that it is replete with embellishments, especially on instruments such as the lute, and is also considered as *k'loonen* or ornamentation. This feature is similar to the predominance of the red color in the bordering section of the textile design which, as we have noted, is also considered as *k'loonen* or ornamentation. Thus, there is an analogy between the segmentary features

in both the spatial/weave and temporal/musical domains where the central section of the former is marked off by bordering sections while the central section of the latter is marked off by opening and closing sections. In both domains, the bordering or framing sections are decorative and serve to demarcate the main sections of the visual and musical fields.

The main motif: the 'true *utom*'

Now let me turn to the symbolically and referentially central part of T'boli design in both textile design and instrumental music. As noted earlier, each textile design is normally named after its principal motif, for instance, 'frog pattern' (*b'teken tofi*) 'python pattern' (*b'teken sowo*), 'hawk pattern' (*b'teken kofi*), and so on. These motifs are rendered in white, as part of the *ogowen* section of the design, as may be seen in Plates 1 to 3. The compositional and formal relations between these main motifs and other subsidiary motifs that may be found in the *ogowen* are beyond the scope of this discussion. Our main aim here is to draw attention to the main motifs in terms of their symbolic and referential significance. As noted previously, individual textiles are sometimes joined together to produce a ceremonial cloth that presents a medley of designs, with each set of designs marked off by the bordering or framing sections. Thus the viewer is presented with an elaborate overall design comprised of separate panels.

Similarly, each *utom* has a specific title named after the extra-musical referent encoded in the composition. Various extra-musical sounds, both natural and humanly made, are represented in musical pattern within the *hebalingen* subsection, where the 'the true *utom*' (*utom₄*) is found. Thus, extramusical objects are encoded in musical pattern and given composition titles such as: 'the composition sound of the rice mill' (*utom luk mutul*), 'the composition of the cackling *m'naul* bird' (*utom t'kak m'naul*), or 'the woodpecker composition' (*utom k'lelet*). In each case, the notion of *utom* refers to a given musical pattern (not necessarily a 'melody'), which imitates the corresponding extramusical object in a particular way.²⁰ A major portion of the instrumental repertoire is imbued with references to nature, which normally stand as allegories for ethical conduct in social or religious life. In this sense, the function and concept of *utom* becomes a bivalent one because it brings two complementary notions together. The link between the musical pattern and extra-musical object is inseparable and the symbolism associated with the latter often pervades musical performance.

Kinaesthetic signs and gestures (*senyas* and *arti*) frequently bring to life the subject of the composition, that is, the extra-musical object, through physical movements. In a discussion of the poetics of verisimilitude, Dennis Tedlock shows how the use of gesture and onomatopoeia in the telling of Zuni tales gives the appearance of reality to a particular scene. He also shows how other devices used by the storyteller have the effect of bringing a picture from a scene out of the frame of its telling and into the 'lives of his hearers' (168). Similarly, the use of gesture and sound imitation in T'boli *utom* creates the illusion of reality and has the effect of intensifying or dramatizing the presence of whatever is being alluded to. Though these signs and gestures are 'framed' within musical performances, specifically within the *hebalingen*, performers are often able to project the thing being mimicked directly into the listener's space. For instance, it is not uncommon for the performer, in the act of mimicking the woodpecker, to start 'pecking' at a child engrossed by the performance (*Mora Myth 169*).

Thus, the formal design of *utom* is constructed in a kind of quasi-nested manner from large to small, from adjunct to core symbolic meanings. The various musical elements and meanings associated with *utom* cohere as contrasting sets. This strategy of formal segmentation serves to highlight the 'main point,' the 'true *utom*'; in a certain sense, this strategy serves as a musical rhetorical device to communicate the referential center of a composition. Compelling performance and aesthetic and affective gratification, however, depend on the player's skill in executing the composition in much the same way that a weaver's finished product is judged by the finesse with which she composes and executes the design. And in both domains, the concept of motion is fundamental.

Visual and musical motion

As previously discussed the notion of 'that with movement' or *ogowen* refers to the white main design element, which contains the main figural or motivic representations of human, animal and other natural forms. This is the most referentially active part of the textile. The dynamic effects of T'boli textile design are achieved through an interplay between the repetition of shapes, the continuation of line, closure, and figure and ground. Notice, for instance, in Plate 1 how the eye is directed around the design by way of the interconnecting white lines, angles, shapes, and colors. When prompted to explain how the design 'moves,' T'boli weavers typically trace a finger

in and around the various twists and turns of the white design element and describe the form as *tilob* (pleasing) or *kenoon* (beautiful).

In instrumental music, the attribute of *ogowen* or movement is also associated with an aesthetically and emotionally satisfying performance of *utom*. Verbal references to *ogowen* in this context convey the idea that the main melody (*utom₃*) has motion; that is, it has a sense of direction, which is achieved through skillfully manipulating patterns of tension and release. If the performance of an *utom* has no direction or movement, it may be described rather disparagingly as *la tengonen du ogowen* ('without direction or movement'). If the performance exhibits a feeling of direction or movement expressions such as *tey tilob ogow unihen* ('how very nicely the sound goes') or *ogow utom* ('the composition moves') are verbally expressed by listeners. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to detail the ways in which T'boli instrumental music gives rise to a sense of 'motion'. It suffices to say here that we encounter two ways by which this is achieved; one is related to pitch, primarily through the creation of melodic tensions over the drone (that is, figure and ground) and the other one is related to rhythm, through the creation of tensions between 'unstable' and 'stable' rhythms and their permutations, and patterns of rhythmic stress, syncopation, and the like. Of course, the two sources of motion, pitch and rhythm, are closely interrelated (see *Mora Myth*).

Thus, T'boli aesthetics explicitly acknowledges the significance of motion in both visual design and music. But what, we may ask, is the experiential point of reference for motion in both domains? I suggest the answer is to be found in the metaphorical relations between space and time and the potential for synaesthetic experience that is connected to those relations; specifically, I propose that a spatialization metaphor for time underlies both phenomenological realms. While the T'boli do not explicitly articulate their experience of time, or space for that matter, they articulate one dimension of musical experience by likening it to a sense of movement. The notion of movement emerges from the experience of space and time; music 'goes' through metaphorical space. Clearly, this experience is metaphorical since music does not literally move anymore that visual elements in a weave move. It is the metaphorical reference to the way our body moves in space or the observation of objects that move in space that underlies the application of movement here. As metaphor theorists have argued, an awareness of time involves a particular type of spatial schema, 'one in which the observer moves across a [metaphorical] landscape and times are points or regions on

that landscape' (Johnson *Body* 103; Johnson and Larson 68-69). Aesthetic appeal in the textile design partly comes from the eye traversing the textile design just as the appeal of music partly comes from the feeling of motion that can be engendered through the ear. Motion in space provides the source domain for musical motion, which we see in the T'boli use of the notion of 'movement.'²¹ Moreover, movement and dynamic tension in T'boli textile and musical design are exploited in particular ways that involve ambiguous play in the figure-ground relationship and which is featured in some species of instrumental music.

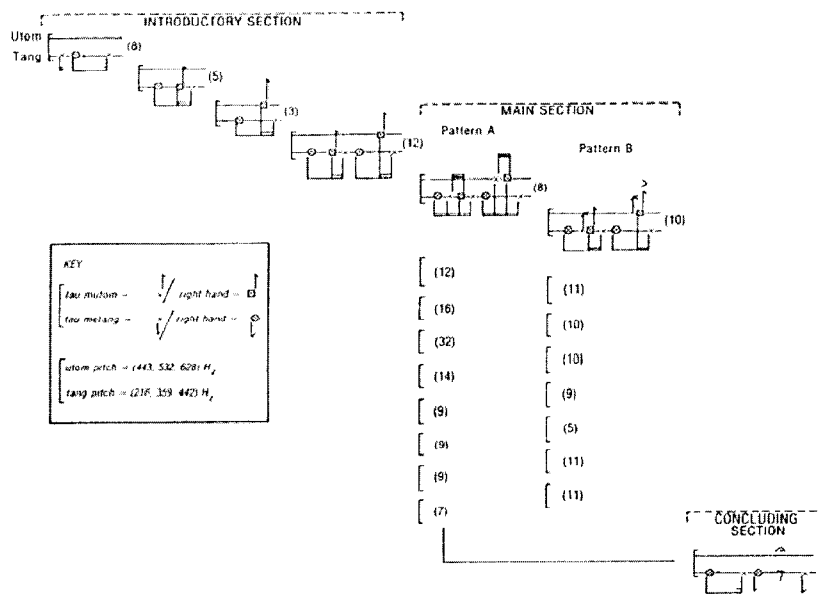
Visual and musical counterchange

In T'boli textile design, the usual hierarchical relationships between figure and ground are often subverted to create unstable and ambiguous readings of the design. For instance, in the example in Plate 2, it is possible to read the black shapes as the figure and the white shapes as the ground, or vice versa, depending on how the viewer sees them; the changing perception is momentary. The shift in perception is possible because the spatial relations between the figure and the ground tend toward balance resulting in what is called counterchange.²² In such cases the figure simultaneously provides the shape for the ground so as to produce another figure, and vice versa, much like the illusions featured in Escher's engravings or the famous Ruben vase.²³ The illusory effects of the figure-ground counterchange in textile design, however, are not routinely or systematically exploited by the T'boli as they are for instance in Islamic visual culture in particular in the art of the mosaic.

Similarly, in T'boli instrumental music, perceptual ambiguity between the figure and the ground can be found in three species of instrumental music, namely: the *s'ludoy sekebit* (a single polychordal zither played by two performers), the *setambul* (two gongs played by two performers), and the *k'lutang seko* (a percussion beam played by two performers). The *seko* commonly features two women performers each using a pair of wooden mallets, as illustrated in Plate 4; one performer plays the *utom*, and the other plays the *tang* in a closely coordinated, interlocking manner. Musical Example 3 is a transcription of a fragment of a *seko* performance.

As may be seen in this example, the musical counterchange comes from particular interlocking performance techniques. T'boli performers are able

to readily identify the figure (*utom*,) and the ground (*tang*) elements in such instances; nevertheless, counterchange results from the way in which the performer playing the figure (*utom*) incorporates the pitch normally reserved for the ground (*tang*) into the figure. Another way of describing the result is that the figure takes up the aural space of the ground or the figure helps shape the ground; conversely, the ground may be thought of as projecting into the aural space of the figure. The additional use of accents, syncopations, and the balanced distribution of the durations of rhythmic patterns within the figure and the ground add to the aural tension and ambiguity. Thus, in both textiles and music, counterchange occurs as a result of unstable figure-ground relations; the attention of the eye and ear in the visual and aural domains, respectively, shift back and forth between figure and ground.



Musical Example 3. A transcription of a *seko* performance



Plate 1. An example of T'boli textile (*t'nalak*) design

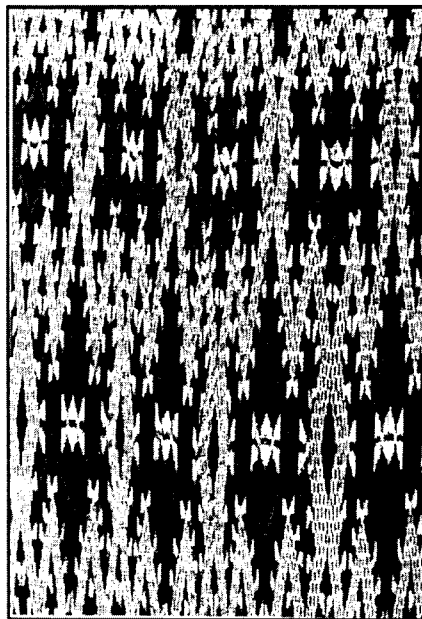


Plate 2. An example of figure/ground flip or counterchange in T'boli textile design

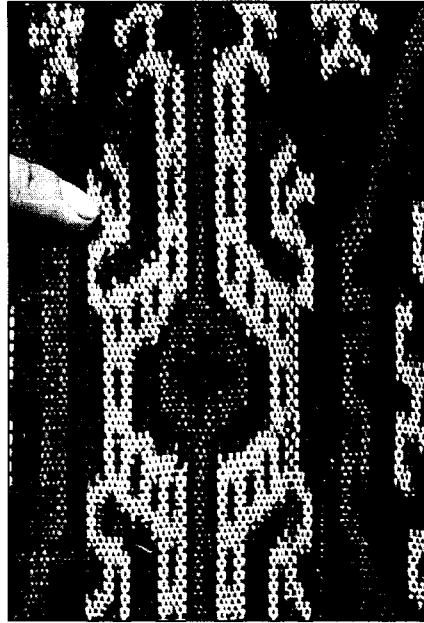


Plate 3. An example of a main motif of the textile design



Plate 4. *K'lutang Seko* performance

Conclusion

The weaving analogy has helped to explicate the organizational and semantic complexities associated with *utom*, particularly with respect to its multi-level references. The formal design and semantic meaning of *utom* are constructed in a kind of quasi-nested manner from large to small, from the peripheral to the core symbolic meanings and with the various components, concepts and musical elements cohering as contrasting sets. This strategy of formal segmentation, which is informed primarily by the principle of complementarity, serves to mark what is of symbolic, referential import - the 'main point' or 'true *utom*.' The analogy has helped to verify and elucidate the analytical proposition that *utom* is fundamentally bivalent: it is both musical code and encoded extra-musical reference. The extension of the analogy to various organisational levels within the two artistic domains has served to illustrate the role of the cultural paradigm, of shared meanings and understandings in governing aesthetic experience.

In the context of the ethnographic enterprise, the exploration of the analogy in the field has shown how dialogue forms the basis of knowledge production. Bendaly and I found a way to communicate which led to new insights into his culture. His willingness to engage in my analogy-making in that particular encounter with T'boli textiles had a purpose and rationale; my expression of desire to learn gave rise to his goal of satisfying it in a way that brought to light the connections between the senses and different artistic media.

At the same time, this particular ethnographic experiment also suggests that certain areas of expressive culture are grounded in universal aspects of human cognition, namely, the understanding of one domain in terms of another, as exemplified by the common use of analogy and metaphor, and as illustrated in the conceptual, organizational and affective parallels between T'boli music and weaving design. The key empirical task though remains: how do metaphors grounded in apparently universal aspects of cognition give rise to differences in cultural values, interests, practices, and the understanding of music?

NOTES

- ¹ My research among the Tcboli began in 1983 and continues to the present day and I have conducted numerous fieldtrips among them over this period. The most extensive periods of fieldwork were conducted between 1983 and 1984, 1985 and 1986, several months over 1994, 1997, 2000, and between 2002 and 2005. The last period of field research was completed with the support of a Hong Kong Research Grants Council, CRCG research award.
- ² *Megalaima haemacephala mindanensis*
- ³ Dimorphism, as defined by Oxford University Press' *A Dictionary of Biology*, is the 'existence of two distinctly different types of individual within a species. An obvious example is sexual dimorphism in certain animals, in which the two sexes differ in coloring, size, etc.' Aside from size and color, the presence or absence of parts of the body used in courtship displays or fights, such as ornamental feathers, horns, antlers or tusks are also found.
- ⁴ See Plate 4 for a photograph of the *k'lutang* played by two women.
- ⁵ Also related to soul/*loyof*.
- ⁶ Ye Bibi was from the village of Lembisol, Lake Sebu.
- ⁷ Ye Lo was the wife of Datu Mafok, an important chieftain from the village of Lemlahak in the Lake Sebu area. She was widely regarded as the most expert weaver in the region.
- ⁸ Also connotes 'authentic', 'genuine', or 'traditional.'
- ⁹ I am unable to identify the specific variety of abaca fiber or hemp (*Musa textilis*) used in the production of T'boli textiles.
- ¹⁰ *Morinda citrifolia*, Hamilton, *Rainbow's Varied Hue*, p.26.
- ¹¹ *Diospyros*, Hamilton, *Rainbow's Varied Hue*, *ibid*.
- ¹² T'boli *t'nalak* are warp *ikats* whose designs are created using the resist-dye procedure. Small waxed threads (*lendek*) are tied or knotted into the prepared abaca fiber. After the tying is completed, the long fibers or warp from the loom are submerged in a clay pot and boiled and then steamed in a pot containing the black liquid dye. Only the sections of the weave not covered with the waxed threads are thus permeated with this black coloring. The next step of the dyeing process involves untying the areas to be dyed red. The warp is again submerged into the clay pot but this time of a red dye. Finally, after the red dye has taken the remaining small waxed threads are untied. This remaining section is the natural whitish color of the abaca fiber (Casal 141-144).

¹³ Research into associations between concepts of color and emotions in Germany, Mexico, Poland, Russia, and the United States found that the colors of anger were black and red, fear was black, and jealousy was red. The findings suggest that cross-modal associations originate in universal human experiences and in culture-specific variables, such as language, mythology, and literature (Hupka 156-171).

¹⁴ According to Ye Bibi, one of the finest weavers from Lembisol, after K'mokul bequeathed the abaca plant his daughter, Boi Mobung Kedungan, began the tradition of weaving.

¹⁵ For a discussion of color symbolism in textiles amongst the Bagobo, Mandaya and Bilaan of Mindanao see Reyes, L. A. N. *The Textiles of Southern Philippines: The Textile Traditions of the Bagobo, Mandaya and Bilaan from the Beginnings to the 1900s*. Quezon City: U of the Philippines P, 1992.

¹⁶ "Ikat" is a Malay word that means "tied" or "bound" and which describes the process whereby threads are woven into the warp and/or weft of a weave to create a pattern or design. The word has come to describe both the process and the cloth itself. *Ikat* textiles are produced in cultures all over the world.

A warp is the series of yarns extended lengthwise in the weaving loom and crossed by the weft.

¹⁷ A domain is "an organized set of words, concepts, or sentences, all on the same level of contrast that jointly refer to a single conceptual sphere" (see Weller).

¹⁸ See also D'Andrade, R. *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.

¹⁹ The type and degree of musical ornamentation is determined by the particular attributes of the instrument in use. Instruments regarded as possessing 'feminine' qualities (*lemnek* or meticulous and *lemnoyor* refined) such the two-stringed lute (*hegelung*) are able to produce a wide variety of ornaments including those similar to the mordent, acciaccatura, slide, trill and vibrato. Instruments regarded as possessing 'masculine' qualities (*lembang* or large and *megele* or hard) have less capacity for producing these types of melodic ornaments (Mora *Lutes, Gongs* 233-235).

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the mimetic process in T'boli instrumental practice see Mora, M. *Myth, Mimesis and Magic in the Music of the T'boli, Philippines*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2005.

²¹ According Johnson, M and S. Larson: We 'experience and learn about motion' because (a) We see objects move (b) We move our bodies and (c) We feel our bodies being moved by forces. These fundamental and pervasive experiences of motion are, for the most part, nonconceptual and prereflective, and yet they give rise to a large body of knowledge that we have about motion. For

example, we experience objects and we experience ourselves moving from one point to another along some path, and so we develop our sense of locomotion (movement from one place [*locus*] to another) (68-69).

²² Also referred to as the 'figure-ground flip'.

²³ Developed around 1915 by the Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin, Rubin's vase is also known as the Rubin face or the figure-ground vase and was part of a well-known collection of cognitive optical illusions.

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