

## THE KAKULA OF CENTRAL SULAWESI AS THE SOUTHERNMOST POINT OF A LINEAGE: CURRENT PRACTICES AND CULTURAL LINKS

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### Abstract

Cultural links present throughout Southeast Asia have helped in the conceptualization of the region as a unit. Despite this, inter-national (a current boundary that is still present both in practice and analysis) cultural connectivities through performance presentations and different comparative studies have considered mostly dominant forms such as the Indonesian gamelan tradition (especially that of Central Java) and the Thai *piphat* ensemble, which enjoy a relatively elevated presence in their own nations and abroad. An analysis of the gong-row tradition located in the region of eastern Indonesia and its connection with the southern Philippines functions as a case of a Southeast Asian cultural linkage through non-dominant cultural forms.

Through an examination of the *kakula* gong-chime tradition in relation to other gong-row traditions, I further posit a quadripartite combination of critical features for the genre: the melodic instrument, the ensemble, the repertoire, and its performance. Following the notion of Indonesian historiographer Kartodirdjo (2001) of a history as supporting and developing symbolic identities, I argue that the gong-row instrument, ensemble, repertoire, and performance (this quadripartite conceptualization) constitute a shared connection for the peoples of this cultural complex. The tradition widely known as *kulintang*, a floating term in the region, functions as an identity marker for each locale as well as for a larger Malay identity. This paper examines the genre at micro and macro levels, juxtaposing local particularities and a shared common practice.



**Figure 1.** General Geographical Location of Considered [Google Maps-©2013 Google] Communities. 1 - Kaili, 2 - Tolitoli, 3 - Bolaang Mongondow, 4 - Sama Bihing, Sama Dilaut (Tawitawi), 5 - Tausug, 6 - Maguindanao, 7 - Maranao

### *Kakula* as Instrument

Among the Kaili people of Central Sulawesi, the term *kakula* is used to characterize the gong-row instrument. The *To Kaili* (Kaili person) as an ethnicity is characterized by the use of the Kaili language which is further subdivided into various dialects. In the latter we find *Kaili Ledo*, *Kaili Tara*, *Kaili Rai*, *Kaili Unde*, and *Kaili Da'a* among others, all of which mean “no” in their respective dialects (Ex. ‘ledo’ means ‘no’ in the Kaili Ledo dialect). Similarity one of the cultural markers that distinguishes the Highland Kaili from the Coastal Kaili is the presence of the *kakula* tradition among the latter. This paper analyzes the tradition as practiced in the city of Palu, capital of Central Sulawesi, and among the Kaili Ledo speakers in relation to other traditions of the region and abroad.

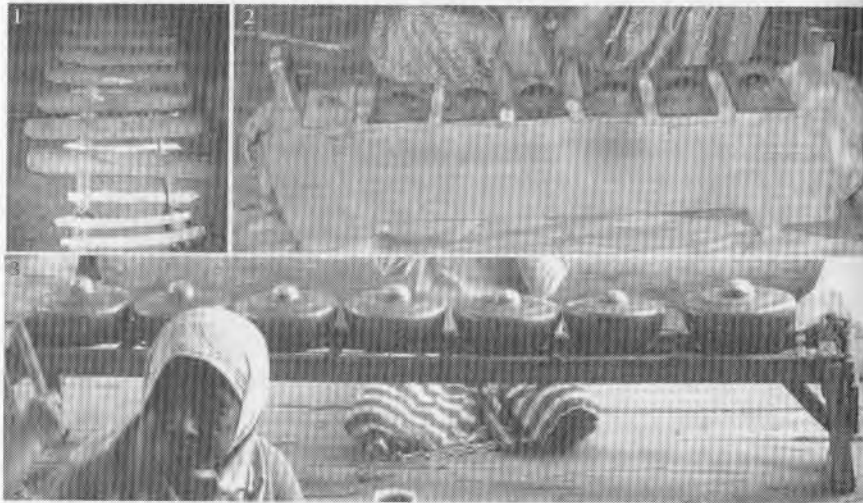
The *kakula* as an instrument consists of seven kettles placed on a rack with pitches arranged from low to high. The Kaili practice shares one

feature with the Bolaang Mongondow in North Sulawesi — the performer sits on a chair due to the height of the gong-row instrument. This is also the case mostly among the Maranao and Maguindanao in the southern Philippines. Although this is the general practice, especially when playing at weddings or other ceremonies, a player may also play sitting on the floor utilizing a lower rack, particularly during wedding preparations in a rather informal atmosphere to accompany the work done by women. Placing the instrument on the ground also takes place in Tolitoli in Central Sulawesi (north of Palu), as well as among the Tausug and Tawitawi Sama communities in the southern Philippines. Such flexibility of elevating and lowering the instrument does apply in Bolaang Mongondow.

The *kulintang* from the district of Bolaang Mongondow, while belonging to the extended gong-row tradition of the region, has significant differences from the Kaili *kakula* tradition. The kettles in Bolaang Mongondow are suspended on the rack with two cords that run through small holes at the bottom part of each kettle. In this sense, the kettles are often stored along with the rack, and do not allow the player to play the instrument at a lower level sitting on the ground. This gong-row tradition consists only of five kettles. The use of five kettles is also present in *kulintang* or *remoi sahi sahi* present in Ternate (Kartomi, 2003), as well as in the *ta'buang* (5 or 6 kettles) of Buru (Yampolski, 1999). The tradition of Bolaang Mongondow historically and culturally shares stronger links to the region east of Sulawesi. In this paper, Bolaang Mongondow serves to demonstrate a number of differences with the Kaili tradition in Central Sulawesi. While both are present on the same island, the tradition in Palu shares closer links to gong-row practices from the southern Philippines.

The *kakula* among the Kaili shares strong similarities with the *gulintang* of the Tolitoli ethnic group (also located in Central Sulawesi). The presence of the instrument in the region of Tolitoli (mentioned above) occurs in three different forms: The *gulintang kayu* (wooden *gulintang*), a small metal *gulintang* (sometimes referred as *pipindi*), and the larger metal *gulintang* (similar in size to the Kailinese *kakula*) as portrayed below. The three types are used in different contexts to play a shared repertoire in this region. In Tolitoli, the performance of the *gulintang kayu* still takes place, although not as often as in the past. The keys of the instrument are made and tuned by the

player. The wood used to make the keys is referred to as *bayug* in Tolitoli. The *gulintang kayu* is played for self-pleasure or to practice in the kitchen, or while doing preparations in the plantation fields, especially those of *sagu* (sago palm), a historical object of trade. This instrument is also present in the Southern Philippines such as the Maguindanaon *kulintang a kayo* or the Maranao *alotang*, which uses *bayog* wood<sup>1</sup> (Otto, 1985).

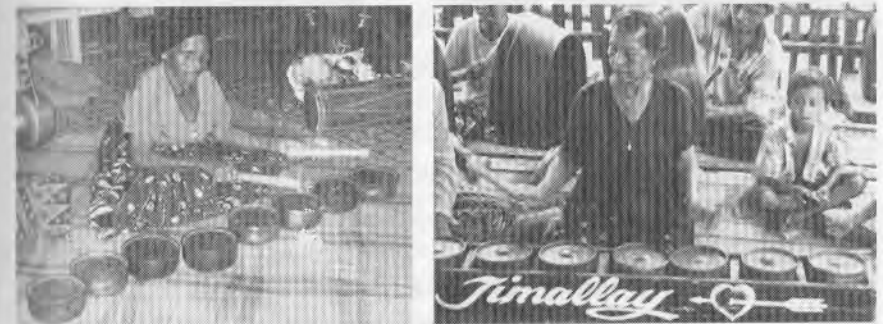


1 *Gulintang Kayu*; 2 *Small Gulintang / Pipindi*; 3 *Gulintang*

**Figure 2.** Three different types of *gulintang* from Tolitoli. Aside from slight changes in style, the three types play a shared repertoire of the region.

The smaller *gulintang* (or *pipindi*) was at times reported to have come from abroad, as mentioned by Pak Rizal “from a Tolitoli individual who went to Malaysia and brought it back” (Rizal, 2009 Pers. Comm.). Aside from the exact location of origin, it is locally conceptualized as part of the extended Malay culture, and the gong-row tradition reinforces such cultural belonging. In the northern region of Tolitoli (as it happens in other regions of Central Sulawesi), the *gulintang* is fashioned from the bottom part of a Petromax lamp. Access to electricity in this region is limited, and the Petromax lamp is common. The “Petromax *gulintang*” functions as a local solution to the costly kettles imported from abroad. Reshaping Petromax lamps also allows the player to tune the instrument to her specifications. Similarly this practice is also encountered among the Sama Dilaut in the region of Tawi-tawi. The latter example functions as an alternative to importing kettles from Cotabato on Mindanao Island. The difference

between Tawi-tawi and Tolitoli is that, in the latter the Petromax derived kettles do not include a boss, as they do in Tawitawi.



Petromax *Gulintang* - Tolitoli  
(non-bossed kettles)

Petromax *Kulintangan* from Tawitawi  
(bossed kettles)

**Figure 3.** Examples of Tolitoli *gulintang*, and Tawi-tawi *kulintangan* made out of petromax lamps. Aside from manufacture differences, they constitute a shared approach in this cultural complex. (Courtesy of Bernard Ellorin, 2008)

The use of new materials for the production of gong-row kettles also takes place among the Kaili. Local manufacture provides a solution to importing kettles from Java. Aside from the overall costs, these kettles reflect a number of Javanese aesthetics that simply do not match Kailinese ones.<sup>2</sup> In summary the above mentioned features show, correlations between the gong-row instrument and its practices between Central Sulawesi and the southern Philippines. An analysis of gong-row tunings, registers and phrasal pentatonicities in Central Sulawesi (Santaella, 2007) further connects these regions as a cultural lineage.

### *Kakula* as Ensemble

The *Kakula* ensemble among the *To Kaili* include a *gimba* (double-headed drum), the *kakula*, and the *tawa-tawa* (a pair of hanging gongs). The use of a single drum differs from ensembles in the region of Tolitoli and Bolaang Mongondow where a pair of double-headed drums accompany the gong-row instrument playing interlocking patterns. Despite the similarity of instrumentation among the latter two, their drumming styles differ significantly. Another instrumental difference is the use of two hanging gongs in Palu instead of one as is the case in Tolitoli and Bolaang Mongondow.



Kailinese *Kakula* EnsembleTolitoli *Gulintang* Ensemble

**Figure 4.** The Kaili *kakula* ensemble and the Tolitoli *gulintang* ensemble, share close correspondence in traditional function and style.

Gongs and drums among the Kaili, Tolitoli and Bolaang Mongondow occur in other rituals and ceremonies without the gong-row instrument. The gong-row instrument is believed to have arrived in Palu during the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of Islam in the region. In this sense, the expansion of the ensemble by adding the gong-row instrument may be considered part of Southeast Asia's "Age of Commerce" (Reid, 1990). However, considering local collective memories, not every place associates the arrival of the gong-row instrument in their regions associated with the Islamic faith, yet the idea of the instrument having external provenance may provide a correlation for this period of material culture and other forms of exchange in insular (coastal) Southeast Asian history.<sup>3</sup> I should note that some communities believe that the instrument is native to their locale. Regardless of the precise point of origin (which is not the intention of this paper), historical conceptualization of this kind may constitute one explanation for inter-regional similarities and differences found in gongs and drums throughout the various gong-row ensembles.<sup>4</sup> Such historicity of oral traditions and material culture at the micro level in each locale suggests a regional or macro focus, and implies an understanding of a "Mari-cultural evolution" in the region (B. Andaya, 2006).

Following such conceptualization, the Malay term *gong*<sup>5</sup> also functions in the region as a floating term. Known as *tawa-tawa* among the Kaili, *pamandi* in Tolitoli, and *gulantung* in Bolaang Mongondow, such differences may sustain the historiographical notion that these arrived earlier than the gong-row instrument. The reference of the instrument as *tawa-tawa* among the Kaili does resemble the term used among the Sama Bihing, *tawag-tawag* (Ellorin, 2008). Different terms used for gongs also take

place in the southern Philippines, such as the Maguindanao *gandingan*, the Maranao *babandir*, and the Sama Dilaut *bua*, *panamukan*, and *pulakan*, to name a few.

Gongs, depending on each region, are, have been or are not locally manufactured. In contrast drums are both historical and contemporary examples of "local-ness" and "locale-ness". Accordingly, shapes, sizes, material, and other features differ significantly throughout the region. The type of drum used among the Kaili, locally referred to as *gimba*, resembles those of the central regions of Central Sulawesi. The double-headed drums in Tolitoli have a smaller body and their crafting differs from those of Bolaang Mongondow. However both are called *gandang* and are played with a wooden mallet. Such differentiation is also present in the southern Philippines through the Sama Dilaut and Sama Bihing *tambul*, the Tausug *gandang*, the Maranao *dbakan / gandang* and the Maguindanao *dabakan* (although similar in name, the goblet-shape Maranao *dbakan* differs significantly in shape and size and shows similarity with mainland Southeast Asia instruments). In this case, aside from the similar terminology used among the Maranao and Maguindanao, the term *gandang* acts as a larger floating term for the instrument in the region.

Despite regional differences of the gong-row ensembles, in each of the three Sulawesi regions mentioned above, i.e. Palu, Tolitoli and Bolaang Mongondow, the ensemble consists of four instruments, or elements (either doubling the gongs or the drums). The concept of four elements indicating structural completion is present in the Kaili *patanggota*, a traditional socio-political system of organization that consists of four main regions (another Kaili system of organization, *pitunggota*, consists of seven regions, analogous to the number of kettles present in the gong-row instrument). Similarly, it is connected to the historical conceptualization in the world of Maluku regarding the importance of the number four as completion (L. Andaya, 1993).

#### *Kakula* as Repertoire

A heightened expression of Kaili relationships takes place during wedding ceremonies, and the *kakula* as part of the ceremony serves various functions. Traditionally, the presence of the *kakula* accompanies

preparations, serving as an auditory announcement that a wedding is going to take place, among other functions. During the ceremony, *kakula* signifies customary procedural steps through its repertoire. The piece “Ndua-Ndua” is played to receive the groom and his family to the bride’s place. The piece “Anadara Botito” is then played when the groom sits next to the bride as well as when the pair gets ready to depart. Other pieces such as “Gambusu”, “Palanga”, and “Sarandayo” are played as entertainment after the customary protocol is complete. In the Kaili repertoire a specific coda called *kabalina* is played after the main phrases of each piece.

In Tolitoli, the piece “Anduan” resembles in name and function to the Kaili “Ndua-Ndua” both played as the opening pieces of the repertoire. Another shared feature is the presence of tunes associated with the Bugis ethnic group. The Kaili “Anadara Botito”, and the Tolitoli “Leleboting” reflect the historical presence of this ethnic group from South Sulawesi in these locales. In Palu and Tolitoli, the adaptation of tunes played on the gong-row continues until today depending on each ensemble. Melodic adaptations take place such as in the piece “Gambusu” (part of the traditional repertoire used for entertainment) taken from the Arab-influenced lute music also present in the region.

Aside from wedding ceremonies, the Tolitoli *gulintang* also accompanies *maragai*, a traditional set of movements used for the reception/accompaniment of special guests. *Maragai*, sometimes referred to as *kuntau* in the region, is originally a Chinese type of martial arts, also present among close Philippine neighbours Sama Bihing and Sama Dilaut and known as *kuntao* (Ellorin, 2008). Traditional movements based on *kuntao* performed for the reception of guests are found both in Central and North Sulawesi.

Pieces of the *kakula* or *gulintang* repertoire are usually referred to by their name. The term *toki* (hit) is regionally used as a verb or noun when someone plays the instrument or in reference to a piece. This popular term conceptually resembles the Tausug term *lisag* or the Javanese word *gamel* (to strike). In Palu the *kakula* player may be referred to as *topo tinti kakula* (the person who plays *kakula*). The concept of a piece in Tolitoli is present through the term *tinting* in reference to a piece. This resembles the *titik/tunis* concept among the Sama Dilaut of Tawi-tawi, also used in reference

to a specific melody. Examples of the latter are “Titik To’ongan” and “Titik Jama,” to name a few (Ellorin, 2008). Furthermore, in the region of Tolitoli, there are melodies that make reference to a place or an ethnicity. Examples of this are “Tinting Taranate” in reference to Ternate, and “Tinting Totori” which receives its name from the Tolitoli ethnic group, known in the local language as *tau totori* or *totori* people. Pieces in reference to a place or a people are also present among the Maranao such as “Kasinolog” or “Kasolosolog” in reference to the Sulu Archipelago, as well as “Kapmagindunaon” in reference to the Muslims of Cotabato (Otto, 1985).

In Tolitoli, especially in the Binontoan region, pieces are differentiated between those referred to as *pukulan adat* or customary pieces and those referred to as *pukulan lagu* or song pieces. While the former are used for traditional ceremonies, the latter are recent implemented pieces for entertainment purposes. The addition of new repertoire and its differentiation from traditional pieces also takes place among the Kaili in the region of Palu specifically in Talise where composed regional songs are implemented in the *kakula* repertoire and played during ceremonies. Due to different *kakula* practices, people may refer specifically to the traditional ensemble as *kakula nuada* (customary *kakula*). This dual presentation of customary pieces and recent adaptations resemble the duality of styles present among the Maranao between the *andung* or older style and the *bago* or new style pieces, and among the Maguindanao *kamamatuan* and *hagungudan* styles. Among the Sama in Tawitawi as reported by Ellorin (2008), “compositions are arranged by starting from the oldest *titik/tunis* and ending with a ritual or dance accompaniment *titik/tunis*.” Among the Kaili and Tolitoli the choice of playing adapted songs into the *kakula* or the *gulintang* repertoire is often a personal one, yet the “old” to “new” “traditional” to “adapted” and “customary” to “celebratory” progression of pieces are maintained.

This conceptual duality (or *duahan* as a Tausug reference) is also present in the repertoire played in Central Sulawesi. A musical analysis of the pieces “Anduan” from Tolitoli and “Ndua-Ndua” (Lit. “two-two”) from Palu shows that these consist mostly of eight-beat phrases (at times developing into four-beat phrases as seen in the Kaili *kabalina*) which are doubled or repeated with slight variations. The graph below shows the

basic melody of the beginning phrases followed by its repetition as an example of the melodic contour and phrasal similarities between the two.

Anduan	3 4	5 4	5 4	6 5	7 6	7 5	6 5	4 5	3 4	5 4	5 4	6 5	7 6	7 5	6 5	4 5
Ndua-Ndua	4 3	4 5	5 4	6 5	6 7	6 5	5 4	5 3	5 4	6 5	5 4	6 5	6 7	6 5	5 4	5 3
	First 8-beat phrase								Repetition							

**Figure 5.** First eight beat phrase and its repetition of the Tolitoli piece “Anduan” and the Kaili piece “Ndua-Ndua”. The basic melody is notated using TUBS notation (Time Unit Box System) (Koetting, 1970).

This melodic duality found both among the Kaili and Tolitoli repertoires is also present in the Southern Philippines. The transcriptions below include the first eight beats of both Kaili “Ndua-Ndua” and Tolitoli “Anduan” as well as the Maranao piece “Kapranon” used for the *kapagapir* dance in the region and the Maguindanao “Duyug” in the *kamamatuan* style (this phrasal duality is also present in “Sinulog” in the *kamamatuan* style among others). The examples below are transcriptions of the first phrase, which is later repeated in some cases with slight variations.



**Figure 6.** Transcription of the opening phrases of the Kaili “Ndua-Ndua”, Tolitoli “Ndua-Ndua”, Maranao “Kapranon”, and Maguindanao “Duyug a Kamamatuan” in staff notation.

### *Kakula* as Performance

Lastly, the practice of *kakula* denotes a fourth conceptualization of the term. The phrase “*orang ba kakula*” literally means “someone is *kakula(-ing)*”. Traditionally the gong-row instrument is played by women in Central Sulawesi, another marked difference with the *kulintang* in Bolaang

Mongodow, North Sulawesi, where the players are male. The melodic gong-row instrument is traditionally played by women and this is also the case among the Maranao and Maguindanao. Among the Maranao, playing the *kulintang* traditionally depicts attributes of “grace” and “frailty” in performances by women and also of men with female inclinations or being “endowed with extra-musicality” (Cadar, 1973). However, for educational purposes, travelling, or in new contexts, men began to play the instrument both among the Maguindanao, Maranao as well as the Kaili of Central Sulawesi. The Sama *kulintangan* of Tawi-tawi is more or less indifferent to this gender specificity in traditional practice (Ellorin, 2008).

Most *kakula* and *gulintang* players in Central Sulawesi learned the tradition from their mothers, through accompaniment and the auditory assimilation of pieces. This produces differences of personal style through the interpretation of patterns, variations, and melodic decisions in performance. One significant difference when playing the *kakula* in Central Sulawesi is the location of the gong-row instrument. During ceremonies, the rack is generally placed at a higher level, and the player sits on a chair giving her a certain flexibility and mobility. Among the female Kaili and Tolitoli players, while holding wooden sticks, the right palm generally faces down while the left palm faces up (See Figure 4, “*gulintang* from Tolitoli”). Performance by Maguindanao female musicians in the Philippines is identical. Some Kaili players, played the instrument “backwards”, that is, with the higher pitches on the left and the lower pitches on the right.

Among the Kaili living in Palu, as mentioned above, the *kakula* is associated with the arrival of Islam in the region brought as an exchange of significant possessions. In this sense historically, the presence of *kakula* acted as a status signifier during ceremonies, meaning that a person of noble descent was getting married. Nowadays with Palu as part of the Indonesian Republic, and through practice changes, the ensemble takes on an added meaning as ethnic signifier— its presence means that a member of the Kaili community is going through marriage. Considering such changes, some players have expanded the repertoire, developing pieces for the entertainment function of the ensemble. However other players limit themselves to the traditional and historical functions and repertoire.



## Conclusion

Throughout this paper, while focusing on the under-documented traditions of Central and North Sulawesi, I have tried to indicate possible socio-cultural connections with the southern Philippines through an analysis of the gong-row practices present in both regions. While considering Southeast Asia as a historically and culturally related unit, I have argued that the gong-row tradition constitutes one expression of interrelatedness in the Malay world. The paper provides one further step toward closer cultural connectivity of regions currently divided by political boundaries and contemporary nation states. Given the dearth of historical documentation for the region, the gong-row and its tradition in each locale provides an important material cultural link. We have seen that traditional practices in Tolitoli and Tawi-tawi share close correspondence. Furthermore, the gong-row traditions among the Kaili and Tolitoli ethnic groups reflect commonalities with Maranao and Maguindanao practices of the Philippines, than to their closer Indonesian neighbor, the Bolaang Mongondow. Similarly for the southern Philippines, the gong-row of the Maranao and Maguindanao share closer correspondences to practices among the Kaili and Tolitoli ethnic groups of Central Sulawesi than to their closer neighbor, the Yakan of Basilan.

The quadratic combination of critical features analyzed in the instrument, ensemble, repertoire, and performance provides a concise analysis of specific shared features, which as a whole demonstrates inter-regional connectivities. Although constrained by length allowed by this journal, this article attempts to be both ambitious and visionary. It seeks to provide closer cultural links through non-dominant forms, some of which are facing decline in practice or undergoing significant change. This study of shared material culture and traditional practices establishes another link among different locales and provides a promising point of departure for comparative research in other domains. Through an analysis of music at micro and macro levels, we see that symbolic identities extend beyond those of respective nation states and can blur (at least partially) present political boundaries.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Tomini-Tolitoli languages (See Himmelman, 1991) are on the border of the Philippine group languages proposed by Robert Blast (1991) which include the languages of North Sulawesi and Gorontalo. While sharing close correspondence, further linguistic research needs to be done among Tomini-Tolitoli languages in relation to the Philippine group.

<sup>2</sup> The lack of "damping" or "muting" from note to note in *kakula* produces an extended and blurred melodic result when using kettles from imported from Java. A similar effect as if playing a single melody on the piano while continuously pressing the sustain pedal. In Central Javanese *gamelan* practice, the *bonang* kettles are generally "dumped" or "muted" from note to note.

<sup>3</sup> With settlements in Toli-Toli and other parts of Sulawesi, the Bajau seafarers, who were also involved in trading fish, tortoise shell and other goods in the southern Philippines (Sather, 1997), might also have played a historical role in the dissemination of instruments in the region.

<sup>4</sup> Wades's (2009) 'Early Age of Commerce' in the years 900-1300 manuscript functions as a hypothetical explanation to the presence of gongs in the region, supported by Arsenio Nicolas (2009) reports of gong exchanges during this time frame by looking at various insular Southeast Asian shipwrecks.

<sup>5</sup> The word 'gong' used in the English language is a loanword of Malay origin, as well as "sago" and "rattan" among others. All three were important items of trade in insular Southeast Asia at the time of possible incorporation into other languages (c. 1500/1600's)

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