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## Gong Ensembles and Rituals around South China Sea

Nicole Revel

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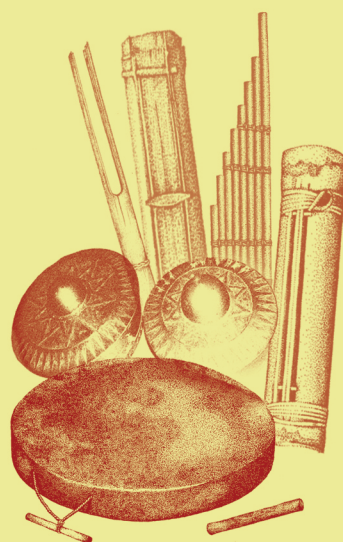
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# GONGS AND BAMBOO

SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL GONGS AND BAMBOO MUSIC FESTIVAL



**MUSIKA**  
**JORNAL 9**

2013

Center for Ethnomusicology  
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MUSIKA JORNAL 9

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MUSIKA JORNAL 9

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## GONG ENSEMBLES AND RITUALS AROUND SOUTH CHINA SEA

Nicole Revel

### Abstract

A variety of gong ensembles is found around South China Sea. By way of comparative lexicography and ethnography, we shall consider a larger maritime space, a highly homogeneous geo-cultural space with ancient trade routes and networks. A unity in objects, shapes, and functions as well as cognates in vocabularies is thus revealed.

I shall emphasize the ritual functions of gongs among national cultural communities of Central Vietnam and the Philippine archipelago, and show how the various gongs ensembles of the cultural communities of Northern Luzon are quite different from gong ensembles in Central Philippines and among the peoples of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Mindanao.

Gongs ensembles among the Dayak in Sabah, Sarawak, in east and West Kalimantan and other groups in Sumatra shall complete this attempt to sketch a vast fresco among the Austronesian family groups in Nusantara. Some insights in Yunnan 'the Mountains of the West,' shall be alluded to as well.

This attempt illustrates the importance of documenting these practices today – thus hopefully safeguarding for the future – as memory of this moving musical heritage always linked to ancient rituals of deep spirituality and wisdom around South China Sea.

Dr. José Maceda has called this area 'another Mediterranean' and this historical and geo-cultural notion has inspired the work I propose to share in this presentation.

## Introduction

An article entitled, '*Southeast Asia with South China Sea as Another Mediterranean. A Background for an Identification of Musical Exchanges in the Region*', followed by major theoretical papers and a very important book: '*Gongs and Bamboo, A Panorama of Philippine Music Instruments*' (1998), were set in motion in his life's work by Philippine ethnomusicologist and composer Dr. José Maceda. Viewing the South China Sea as 'another Mediterranean' was proposed initially by Dr. Denis Lombard, a French historian who saw the Javanese world as a 'crossroads' (*Le Carrefour Javanais, Essai d'histoire globale* 3, 1990) and later corroborated by Dr. Maceda's research in ethnomusicology. But as early as 1969, Jacques Dournes from les Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP) – who turned out to be a great anthropologist – had to leave the high plateau of central Vietnam. He had shared the life of the Sré, one of 15 Austro-Asiatic groups, in Djiring from 1947 to 1954 and the life of the Jörai (200,000 people), one of eight Austronesian groups, in Chöreo from 1955 to 1970. He decided to make a farewell journey along the South China Sea coast. From March to December 1969, he visited several groups in western Borneo, in Sabah, and in Sarawak, then proceeded to Sumatra. In 1970, he presented the results of his comparative linguistic and ethnographic survey based on 378 words collected among each of the 15 cultures and languages of the Austronesian family he visited. Starting from the Jörai and the Cham on the continent, he followed a route through insular Southeast Asia, visiting the Ilanun, Bajau, Kadazan, Murut, Bisaya, Kenyah, Iban, Lenau, and Bidayüh along the coast of Borneo; and the Malay, Minangkabau, Toba and Karo along the coast of Sumatra, including Nias.

Dournes had a vision: he was hoping to stimulate further comparative work in a quest for a genuine cultural heritage transcending boundaries, political cleavages, and devastating wars; a quest to bring together the peoples around the South China Sea. We do know that waterways do not separate but, on the contrary, connect people in a network of trade and cultural links, hence favouring the development of a rich and ancient common civilization that transcends the boundaries of modern nation-states.

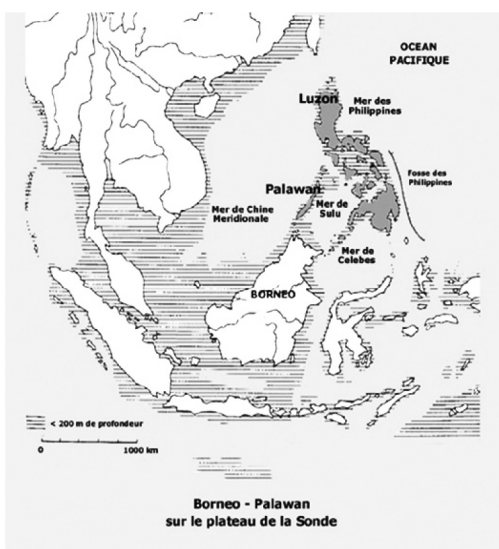
Hence, I propose to continue Jacques Dournes's route, from Vietnam the opposite side of the South China Sea, the Philippines, where I

had the privilege to work from 1970 until today as a linguist-anthropologist among various groups on the island of Palawan resting on the Sunda Shelf, in front of Champa and the high plateaus where the ‘Montagnards’ (Highlanders) of Central Vietnam live (Georges Condominas, 1974). As a linguist-anthropologist, I have worked in collaboration with the Palawan Highlanders. My published works are complemented today by the monographic works of several colleagues, linguists, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, who have worked in the Philippines and recent personal communications with each one of them.

Then I propose to proceed our route to the south, towards the Sea Nomads of the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagos, Mindanao and will visit Borneo (Sabah, Sarawak and Kalimantan). Finally I will visit the Highlanders of Sumatra before returning to Central Vietnam and ‘the Mountain of the West’, Yunnan.

*‘Southeast Asian music has its pocket cultures. Two such pockets may be found in the Philippines: one in the north, the other in the south. At least two musical instruments – flat gongs suspended with strings and held by hands which are found in the northern part of Luzon and gongs with boss suspended from a support or lying horizontally on a wooden frame -- are found in the southern Philippines’ (José Maceda, 1974, p.772).*

The vocabularies of gongs and gong ensembles that I have gathered, thanks to fieldwork by ethnomusicologists, linguists and anthropologists, are presented in a table, (Part II), followed by some linguistic comments (Part III), while examples of gong cultures and rituals are presented in Part I. The *gamelan* ensembles linked to court and rural music of Java, Bali and Sumatra are not discussed in this article as they are not present in continental Southeast Asia.



**Figure 1.** On the Sunda Shelf. Champa in Central Vietnam is facing Palawan in the Philippines



## PART I. Gong Ensembles and Rituals

### High Plateaus of Central Vietnam

Linguistically, continental and insular Southeast Asia is a highly complex area: five linguistic families are present, and on the continent, they are often intertwined or alternate vertically, following the mountain slopes, in the same territory. In the archipelagos, the situation is more homogeneous with the Austronesian Family. Hence in continental Southeast Asia we find the large Tibeto-Burmese Family (with the Hani, Akha, Lahu and others); the Miao-Yao Family; the Thai Family that came from southern China, (with the White Tai, Black Tai and Red Tai, Pu Thai, Nung, Lu); and finally, the Austro-Asiatic Family and the Austronesian Family (N. Revel, 1988, pp. 21-32). In the central part of the continent, the Austro-Asiatics are subdivided into two groups, separated by the Austronesians. North of them, we find the Katu, Sedang, Bahnar, Mnong Gar, Reungao, Jeh (or Die) groups. South of the Austronesians, we find the Mnong-Ma group of languages (the Brao, Sré, Maa, Alak, and Muong). The Jörai, Roglai and Rhade (or Eddé) belong to the Austronesian family and these groups live interspersed with Austro-Asiatic groups. They are matrilineal and matrilocal like the Mnong Gar. The Cham lived traditionally along the coastal area of South China Sea and formed a maritime kingdom, Champa.

The variety of musical instruments reflects this linguistic diversity but gongs are omnipresent among highlanders, lowlanders, and sea nomads among court cultures as well as rural cultures. Among the linguistic groups on the continent belonging to the Austronesian family the Jörai, the Eddé, the Churu, and the Cham, gong nomenclature is obviously non-Austronesian, but attests to Austro-Asiatic cognates with close Austro-Asiatic neighbours as we shall see later on in the linguistic comments (Part II). The cultural homogeneity of the gong ensembles and the function of this music linked to the rituals of agricultural cycles, funerary celebrations, and the *pösat lui*, 'the feast of abandonment of a tomb', followed by *huaq lui*, are described for the Jörai in Jacques Dournes's works as well as Georges Condominas's monograph on the Mnong Gar. The omnipresence of gongs in rituals extends to all the 'Montagnards,' on the Central Plateau of Daklak Province.



**Figure 2.** Jörai (Missions Étrangères de Paris, MEP)

### Jörai Rituals

Gong music is played by the youth and offered to the *Yang*, the Divinities. It is also meant to please the dead. *Yangor* ‘the sacred aspect of things’ translated as ‘Divinities’, is a term shared by all the groups of this area. They are invoked during domestic, agrarian and funerary rites. Gongs are also the highest money in trading or in payment of debts as well as fines according to the custom law.

There are five gongs ensembles, all of them having a ritual function either for procession, for funeral rituals or drinking rice beer in jars aligned in a row, for war, and also for taboo, a distinct set is reserved for the reception of the ‘Master of Fire’, *Potao Apui*.

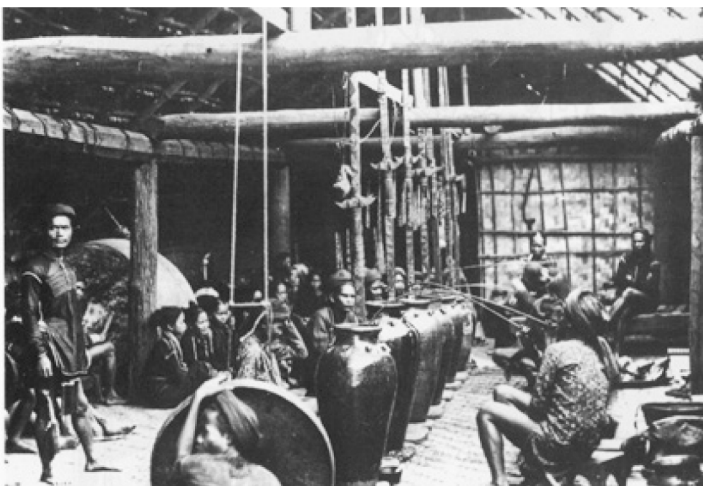
While drums announce death (the visit of the ‘Master of Elements’), the rhythm, number, and timbre of gongs are precisely linked to propitiatory rituals and funerary rituals. During the tomb festivals, linked to the ‘abandonment of the tomb’ of the relatives, the seven Jörai clans converge to celebrate. It is a way to clear the debts towards the deceased. After his journey across the cemetery the deceased must depart for good to the western region of the dead. Funerary rituals and the cult to the tomb, *pösat* – with a funerary set of 13 gongs *cing arap* (their value equal to 15 buffaloes) – are frequent and central to the culture. Gong performances represent sacred music par excellence, played from the house to the tomb and during

all the regular rites at the tomb. As each gong has a specific pitch, this gong ensemble is melodic and the procession has a pre-determined succession of flat gongs and 3 gongs with boss in the middle [1,2,4,5,6,7,8 - 3,9,12 - 10,11,13](Dournes 1965: 211-244; 1975: 351-384; 1988:24-33).

### Anak Eddê or Rhadé

Among Austro-Asiatic and Austronesian groups, gongs and ancient Chinese jars are part of the 'heirloom', *pusaka*. Casted gongs from Laos and Cambodia are highly appreciated for their sound quality as there is a light percentage of silver in the alloy. A specialist tunes the gongs by scratching the inner side of the instrument with a spearhead in order to reach the desired pitch.

In order to be assured of the protection of the *Yang* in daily life activities, (hunting, travelling, building a house, but also healing diseases and death), sacrifices are made, *nag Yang* literally 'make Genii'. They are preceded by an invocation to the *Yang*, followed by an offering of the victim after cutting, distributing and sharing, then eating it and drinking rice beer (7 jars for 1 water buffalo). Gongs are played as the beneficiary of the sacrifice and his close relatives followed by the whole assistance, go to the jars tied up to posts along the main beam in the very middle of the vast room for festivities in the long house. Gongs play various rhythms of increasing intensity as ebriety and the feast reach its peak (Anne de Hauteclocque-Howe 1985: 21, 40, 223, 250, 260).



**Figure 3.** Eddê (*Missions Étrangères de Paris, MEP*)

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Mnong Gar Rituals

The music of gongs related to feasts and funerary rites is also omnipresent among the Mnong Gar. However, I shall refer now to another ritual function of gong music. In December, during 3 days, the collective celebration offered to the Genii of the Soil is preceded by an unction of charcoal, chicken blood and rice beer on two sets of six flat gongs, a set of 3 gongs with a boss *Mhaam cing*, a double headed drum *Mhaam nggör* and a giant flat gong, *shar*.

During two days, the orchestra of flat gongs performs several 'circuits of flat gongs', *rok cing*, headed by Wan Jông, the go between, followed by two sets of *cing* playing in a row. They enter every house in the village of upland rice cultivators to prepare the feast and the offerings to the 'Genii of the Soil' before a new forest is inspected and each man attributed a plot. By this ritual circuits of the music of gongs, the villagers are reminded of their commitments as the Genii are expecting the fulfilment of their promise (Condominas 1974: 366-368,376).

I would like to emphasize here that a precise rhythm has the potentiality to symbolize a specific social ritual event, hence we can speak of a 'symbolic rhythmicity' of the music of gongs and this observation on the high plateaux of central Vietnam is valid for the cultures around South China Sea and beyond. As John Blacking has written: "*Patterns of sound alone announce social situation and arouse in different people the feeling that they are associated with those events*" (J. Blacking, "Expressing Human Experience Through Music", Ch.1 in *Music, Culture, Experience*, 1995)

Let us listen to a poem by the Sré, a neighboring Austro-Asiatic group, with whom J. Dournes lived for eight years:

*Shivering in the whistling winds  
Shimmering the tiny leaves are  
Fly kite do fly  
This is the season of winds  
Turn top do turn  
This is the time of playing games  
And may the bossed gongs beat sound  
And may the loincloths their fringes swirl  
Following the dancers' arms  
Rising falling*

*Rising falling  
Loincloth' fringes flap  
Dancing arms rows...*

(Dournes 1990; trans. by N. Revel)

## Northern Luzon Philippines

### Music of flat gongs

Among wet-rice cultivators on rice terraces – Kalinga, Isneg, Tinggian, Kankaney, Ibaloi, Karao, Bontoc and the well-known Ifugao in the Central Cordillera of Luzon – in contrast to the central and southern parts of the Philippine archipelago, flat gongs are omnipresent and suspended gongs with boss are totally absent.

### Ifugao Rituals

In this stratified society with the splendid rice terraces as stairways to the sky, gong music is a festive music related to many rituals, *baki*, of the annual cycle of rice cultivation, and rituals for the *payoq* irrigated rice field, and tubers in the swidden fields. During marriages and funerals, as well as the progressive rituals to acquire the status of *kadangyan* (the ‘wealthy’), all Cordilleran groups dance to the music of gongs, drink rice beer, and eat a great deal of meat.

During the harvest season, with its *ahituluq* sets of rituals including animal sacrifice, rice beer and betel quids are offered to all, with the sounds of harvest drum and matched gongs. Gong playing is attested in relation to celebrations together with the *hudhud* (epics) performed by a chorus of 8 to 10 women with a leading chantress while harvesting paddy rice, *hudhud di pagi*, or during funeral wakes, *hudhud di nati*, when they are seated in a row not far from the dead *kadangyan* (‘wealthy’ man/woman) who is celebrated.<sup>1</sup> While *hudhud* are chanted, gongs are not played during harvest in the rice terraces. One example is the “*Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonhadan*”, for which brothers-in-law ‘push forward’ the feast by going several times to the place of the groom-to-be for a drinking party, bringing along a jar and meat, *halakhak*, as a contribution (Lambrecht 1967: 413-427).

Gong playing is not referred to in the *alim*, the long sung dialogues between men. However, parts of the *hongadinupdup*, a ritual for wellbeing,

includes the playing of gongs before the start of the ritual, during the ritual, and while chanting the *alim*.

Gongs are played in several parts of the chanting of the *alim*, as a prelude to what follows, which it symbolizes, or as accompaniment to specific parts of the chanting. In contrast to drumming accompanying a wrong-doing, the playing of gongs simultaneous with the chanting of *alim* enhances the beautiful positive image of the social status of the *kadangyan*, the 'wealthy one' ornamented with the brass leglet, and the shell-buckled belts described and interpreted by R. de Santos del Rosario (2003):

<i>Lengdahen tu n Bugan</i>	Bugan takes these valuable objects down
<i>Gukuhan Bugan</i>	Tucks them in her skirt
<i>Ot biklugan.</i>	And bundles them in.
<i>Ot lah-unen ko d taytay</i>	Then I step down the ladder
<i>Taytay an banmutan...</i>	The steps made of hard wood.

Flat gongs are played individually or in small ensembles of two or three instruments. 'The rhythm of playing the *gangha* is fast, gentle, *mahinay*, or just right. Three kinds of beat are used in playing the flat gongs: *bobbong* or 2/4 beat; *tullektek* or 4/4 beat; and *wohot* or 3/3 beat' (Lorrin 1978: 132-159). 'In combination, a principal gong, *tobob*, is always played (pounded, slapped, modulated) by hand on the outer face (Fig. 2), whereas a suspended supporting gong, *hebat*, is held free and beaten with a soft wooden stick near the centre of the inside surface' (Maceda 1977; Lorrin 1978: 149-150, 157; Conklin1980).



**Figure 4.** Bontoc Dancing with *khangsa* (N. Revel-Macdonald, 1971)

Bontoc

As among the Ifugao, flat gongs, *khangsa*, are a major family heirloom among the Bontoc: they are passed from father to son. They can also be used to buy land or animals. In trading, they are metaphorically called 'woven plate', *khiyag*. They are a mark of wealth and absolutely necessary when holding an important feast, but they are not played for those who died of a natural cause. They originally have two holes, with a string and a jawbone, but these are now replaced by V-shaped wooden handles for easy handling by the performer. The gong is struck with a stick, *pattong*.

These flat gongs are known to be manufactured across the South China Sea; they were bought from traders in the lowlands of the main estuaries and rivers as Abra River and bought by the highlanders of the central Cordillera, where they are highly valued. These flat gongs are clearly related to those of central Vietnam and originate from the continent. The music of flat gongs requires the cooperation of several people in order to correctly play in synchrony the various rhythmic patterns, making one musical composition. But in contrast to the music of the Jörai, for instance, on the high plateaus of Central Vietnam, the gongs of the Central Cordillera have a less precise pitch to make a melody. They can be struck by hand, by stick, or by the gliding palm. They accompany all the festive dances: each Bontoc man carries and plays a gong while dancing in a circle. Gongs are the most important musical instruments in all these celebrations.

Heirlooms:

Gongs are heirlooms kept in families for generations (in some communities for more than seven generations), offered in dowry, and if possible never allowed to leave the village. Old ones are fairly big, measuring about 35cm in diameter, with rims 5cm wide and weighing more than two kilos. Smaller ones are about 24cm in diameter; rims are about as wide as the bigger ones, some weighing about one and one-half kilos. Usually, there are no complete music ensembles in one family. In a feast, several families contribute to complete an ensemble or gather several ensembles (Conklin, 1987: 2-3).

Transactions:

'If a gong is broken, a replacement may come from other mountain areas where a gong as close in tone and colour to the abandoned one may be

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found. If there is a real need to sell one, costs are determined in terms of water buffaloes, rice fields, precious jars or heirlooms. In the actual transaction, besides paying with a number of buffaloes, the buyer must give gifts — beads, woven skirts, extra small things to important people of the community and relations of the group vending the gong. The tone of the acquired gong has to be tested to fit the rest of the ensemble by tapping on different parts of the instrument. Sometimes, tone adjustment has to be made by scraping both sides of the gong and even its rim' (H.C. Conklin, 1987, pp. 2-3).

*Local production:*

'From time to time new gongs are made from copper objects and other materials. They produce good sounds but have little or no cultural value' (José Maceda, 1998, p.11). 'Among the Ifugao there is a strong local tradition of iron forging and of lost-wax casting of silver and gold pendants, but none of making gongs. Bronze trade is the most highly valued. [...] Brass trade is next to it and can be substituted for bronze instruments but they serve only in a supporting role' (Harold C. Conklin, 1987, pp. 2-3). There are gong makers in Kiangon, Hingyon and Banawe (Ifugao) and in Lubuanga (Kalinga) up to now.

## Central and Southern Philippines

### *Music of suspended gongs with boss*

#### *Pala`wan Rituals*

##### *Taw`at`dayaq, 'Upland people' and shamanism:*

In the southern part of the island of the same name, in the forested area of the mountain range, the foothills, and some coastal areas too, live the Pala`wan. Shifting cultivators who hunt with a blowpipe, their bilateral society is egalitarian and non-conflictive. The custom of sharing, *adat`at`p`agbagi*, is manifest in daily life and during rituals. It implies the obligation to share food among neighbours and reaches its peak during the *T`ambil`aw*, a collective annual agrarian celebration. This is either preceded or followed by a 'Commemoration of the Master of Rice', *Tamw`ay`at`Ampuq`at`Par`ay*, with offerings of ritually cooked rice and a rice-beer-drinking ceremony. Every year in a seven-year cycle, it brings the agrarian cycle to a close after the last variety of rice has been harvested. While relatives from various hamlets gather, there are games of water sprinkling and painting each other with



charcoal and coconut meat, metaphors for abundant rains, black clouds, and white rice. The celebration comes to an end with the sharing of rice by all the members of a kin group. This major ritual is necessarily accompanied by the music of a gong ensemble, *basal*, which has the collective and magical function of connecting the community to the Master of Rice and to the ‘Weaver’, *Nägsalad*, or *Ämpuq*, the ‘Master of all’.

*Calling around and beneficial effect:*

On the eve of the celebration, gongs are played as an announcement and invitation to neighbouring hamlets. This is probably the most ancient and widespread function of these bronze instruments: to project a message into a larger space. The sound of gongs announces the social event and conveys the people a feeling of feast and social gathering. Gongs are also played during the preparation when rice and yeast, *puräd*, are put in a jar to ferment.

Gong music is played at dusk or in day time. It is hoped that the pleasure one derives from this music will have a beneficial effect on the fragrant fermented juice, *lihing*. With increasing joy, gongs are played up to the day of the feast. Then in the large meeting house, the master of the jar, *ämpuq ät siburan*, will open the jar, ritually accompanied by the music of gongs. Meanwhile, women dance, stepping in time on the bamboo floor, *taräk*, adding to the percussions of the gong ensemble. An invocation, *sägina* –addressed to *Ämpuq* and the protective souls, *Lapis*, inviting them to come down and join – opens the ceremony. The gong music stops while the invocation is made in a low voice, then resumes. There is no animal sacrifice, nor eating. The offerings of rice, *lutlut* and *minälmäl*, will be consumed the following morning. The gong ensemble keeps playing several rhythms until dawn. Men invite each other in turn to play the *agung*, and, in a sharing, cooperative way, without interruption, the music develops, pulsating inexorably. It overlaps the *karang ät siburan*, the alternated songs between guests and host around the jar.

This festive ritual celebration is sung in “*Kudaman*”, an epic that, lasting for seven nights, is a metaphor of the seven years of the Commemoration of the Master of Rice, *Tamwäy ät Ämpuq ät Paräy*.

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*'As for you, oh Nāgsalad the Weaver, watch over me well.  
It is I who prepared the rice beer.  
But once this preparation is done, oh Nāgsalad, without you  
to watch over my work...*

*Perhaps I have erred in making it.'*

*The Weaver says: 'Well, where would I be?  
I'm already there, among you, keeping watch over you...'*

*Kudaman says to his wives: 'As for me, I will watch you  
and see who among you knows how to dance.'*

*The story says that if you listen to the gong playing,  
if for an instant they stop, you would not perceive it.*

*'My brothers, when gongs are played like this, it's beautiful to hear.'*

*(Revel 1983)*

To accompany the preparation of the mead, *simbug*, and its drinking ceremony honouring the Master of Flowers, an exclusive slower rhythm, *kulumbigi*, is performed. This ritual music of suspended bossed gongs is always linked to agrarian rituals, fertility of nature, and good health, but never to funerals or death, in contrast to the ritual gong music of Austroasiatic and Austronesian peoples of central Vietnam. We saw that the music of flat gongs in northern Luzon is linked to funerals among the highlanders of the central Cordillera as well, but not always.

*Basal* is an ensemble of at least four percussion instruments led by a short wooden drum, *gimbal*, with a leopard skin, *damāng*. The physical arrangement of the group of instruments is based on the sound of the bronze and brass instruments. The gongs are beaten with two types of sticks: the large rim gong, *agung*, is beaten on the boss, *basal*, with a padded mallet, and the large amplitude of each sound is stopped by the palm of the left hand on the face of the gong. Two opposite small-rim suspended gongs, *sanang*, are beaten by two men facing each other, with a stick in the right hand striking the boss of the gong and another stick, in the left hand,

striking the rim. They play together, opposing and alternating loud and soft sounds. The long, slow, syncopated and calm *mälambäg* contrasts with the vibrant, sparkling and joyful *masanang*; both gongs produce interacting and answering sounds which are part of the language of this ensemble of bronze instruments. We know of five ostinati, rhythmic formulas with metaphoric content. 'A drone or ostinato, a constant repetitive sound, is carried by one, two, or three large rim gongs, *agung*, two small rim gongs, *sanang*, and the drum, *gimbal*, in the Palawan gong ensemble' (José Maceda, personal communication).

The Palawan highlands music of suspended gongs is characterized by rhythm and colour without melody. 'Syncopation, alternation, metricity and hierarchy are the distinctive features of this music' (José Maceda, personal communication). Some of these elements are also present in other suspended gong ensembles such as the *kulintangan* of Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, as we shall see later on.



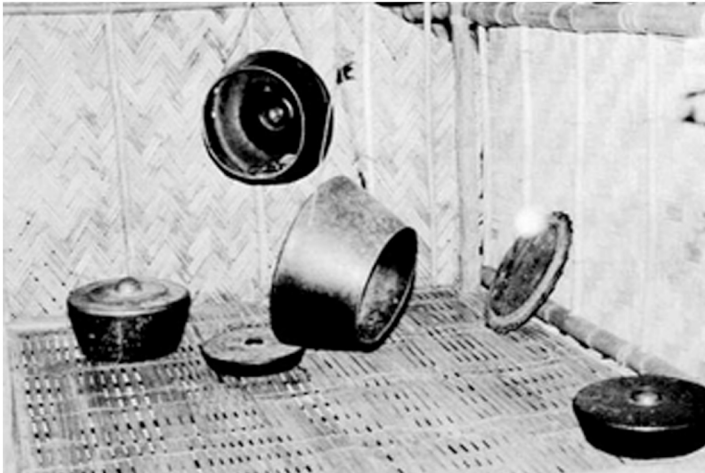
Figure 5. *Basal* (N. Revel-Macdonald, 1972)

*Punang-Iraräy Palawan: Sinsin and Budlung cycles:*

Inhabiting the hilly landscape facing Sulu Sea, the Palawan communities of Punang-Iraräy have a distinct ritual and festive life, honouring many 'deities', *diwata*, during the *Sinsin* cycle and the *Budlung* cycle. Through numerous symbols, costumes, gestures, postures, choreographies, and words, each *diwata* reveals himself/herself successively to the community. Every *diwata* is embodied by one, two, or three young maidens surrounded by the group of elder women and the leading knowledgeable chantresses, *ugang*.

The drinking of rice beer takes place at two moments: *minum tungan* followed by *minum rawas*. As described and analyzed by C. Macdonald, a serie of variations for each *diwata* is performed by the young maidens and narrated by the old chantresses (Macdonald 1990).

The music of gongs and the long conical ceremonial drum, *pālay*, has two rhythmic patterns: *sigbak*, a rather slow rhythm to accompany the planting of the sceptre in the jar, and the *rawas*, a faster rhythm to accompany the flowing of water in the jar, inviting men to drink two by two. The sound of the ritual is an intense one: percussions of gongs, drums, bowls and tiny bells, and loud voices of drunken men on the central floor, while women are performing the dances and *ugang* are chanting the various melodies of the deities successively embodied by the young maidens.



**Figure 6.** Set of Gongs for Sinsin & Budlung Ritual Cycle (N. Revel-Macdonald, 1976)

*Palawanun: Islamized Palawan on islets and seashore:*

On the South China Sea, Ransang, Rizal and Quezon, the coastal area is populated by many people in contact with each other. A multi-ethnic society has been living for a long time in this landscape of islands and islets (Pandanan Island, Bancalaan Island, Ramos Island, Candaraman Island, Lumbukan Island, Mangsee Island, and Balabac, Labuan na Jiong, ‘Port of the Sailboat’, and their various *barangay*), inhabited by Molbog, Tausug, Balangigiq, Ilanun, Sama Bannaran, Sama South Ubian, Sama Dilaut, Jama Mapun, and Islamized Palawan called ‘Palawanun’. This mixed population

is moving further north, towards Quezon, following a chain of islets, private properties of several *datu*s.

Besides the flute *suling*, here the main musical accompaniment is a gong ensemble, *kulintangan*: eight horizontal gongs of decreasing size, laid in a row on a bamboo frame, together with a set of three suspended gongs and a gong chime very characteristic of Mindanao and Sulu cultures. There is also a bamboo xylophone, *gabbang*, emblematic of the culture of the various Sama and Tausug groups in the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagos.

In the area of Quezon, in Panitiyan and the islands offshore facing Lipuun Point, Tataran and Sidanao, many songs were being sung or played on the horizontal gong chime: *taddaq*, *ambun-ambun*, *pintasan* and *baja-baja*, *tenes-tenes* and *leleng*, *anang-anang* and *laqila*. These songs are related to the *taddaq* and *pintasan* of the Tausug and also to the many repertoires of the Sama, who sing love through different compositions: *leleng*, *wari-wari*, *bagat-bagat* and *pantun* (See record by José Maceda and Alain Martenot, 1980). Contacts with the seafaring Sama and Tausug merchants are ancient ones. On the coast of Palawan, they are associated with raiding and silent trade to avoid contact.

In spite of a highly contrasted cultural identity between Palawan highlanders, Tausug on the western and eastern coasts, and Kagayan or Jama mapun - another Sama group - trade and cultural contacts in poetry and music, including intermarriage and a relative conviviality in some villages and on market days, are ancient features of this multi-ethnic region.



Figure 7. *Kulintangan* (N. Revel, 1981)

Legend for the table of rhythmic formulae for basal ensemble

∅ : instrument or women dance percussion absent

+ : Instrument present

Instruments percussion	<i>Gimbal</i>	<i>Sanang</i>	<i>Agung</i>	<i>Tarak</i>	Etymologies
Rhythmic formulae	Drum	Two small rimed gongs with boss	Large rimed gong with boss	Women' dance	
<i>Tināptapan</i>	+	∅	+	∅	⟨ <i>Tāptap</i> : feet beating the bamboo floor
<i>Sinātsapatan</i>	+	with the 6 rhythmic formulae possible	with 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formulae	∅	⟨ <i>Sātsapat</i> : a slow rhythm with syncopation
<i>Tunurimbakan</i>	+	with the 6 rhythmic formulae possible	With 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formula	∅	⟨ <i>Turimbak</i> : sound of axes cutting trees
<i>Tinuligbagan</i>	+	With the 6 rhythmic formula possible	With 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formulae	∅	⟨ <i>tuligbang</i> : sound of hands beating a smooth surface of water
<i>Kulumbigi</i>	+	+	+	∅	A rhythm exclusively performed during the preparation of the mead, <i>Simbug</i> ritual
<i>Tinalalaw</i>	With the 5 rhythmic formulae possible	+	With 3 out of the 5 rhythmic formulae	∅	⟨ <i>tālalaw</i> : rhythm alike the pecking beak of the woodpecker
<i>Sināriksikan</i>	Idem	+	with 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formulae	∅	⟨ <i>sāriksik</i> : fast beating rhythm
<i>liningisan</i>	Idem	+	∅		⟨ <i>lingisan</i> : slow rhythm alike the flying motion of the purple heron
<i>Bināngunan</i>	Idem	+	With 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formulae	∅	⟨ <i>bāngunan</i> : rhythm to stand up
<i>Tali-tali tinuran</i>	Idem	+	with 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formulae	∅	⟨ <i>tuwād</i> : stump of a tree on which an ancestor heard this beating
<i>Tinilāb</i>	∅	∅	3 agung	∅	⟨ <i>tilāb</i> :
<i>Tinabungawan</i>	∅	∅	3 agung	∅	⟨ <i>batungguq</i> : 'taggono', a rhythm specific to Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi
<i>Kināndaran</i>	with the 5 rhythmic formulae possible	∅			⟨ <i>kāndar</i> (or <i>turun</i> ): Shamanic dance making circles
<i>Sinaraksakan</i>	Idem	with the 6 rhythmic formulae possible	with 3 out of the 5 possible rhythmic formulae	+ ∅	⟨ <i>saraksak</i> : basic dancing step for women another percussion on the bamboo floor

**Table 1.** The various rhythmic formulae for *Basal*, the Palawan gong ensemble

### *Sama, Sama Dilaut Rituals*

The function of gongs is linked to the major rituals of a life-cycle, such as weddings and funerals, but also the curing of the sick, as occurs among the Sama Dilaut, the ‘maritime Sama’ or ‘Sea Nomads’. ‘Initially, during the Sulu Sultanate among royal family, *agung* was beaten to announce in the kingdom the Sultan’s or the Datu’s death, but also when the Sultan’s wife gave birth. Gongs were also beaten to invite people around to come to the abode, *astanah*. *Agung*, then, functions as a call’ (Talib Lim Sangogot, personal communication).

There is a precise distribution in Southeast Asia of another major gong ensemble: it is found among the Tausug, the Sama, the Yakan in Basilan, the Maranao, the Magindanao, and the Subanun in Mindanao, and the Sama Dilaut. It is also found in coastal Borneo and farther in the Moluccas. In Sulu, the *kulintang*, a set of five to twelve gongs laid in a row on a wooden or bamboo frame, is a melodic instrument performed by a woman. It is accompanied by suspended gongs, a drum, *tambul*, struck with two sticks and one castanet, *bola-bola*.

‘In the Sulu archipelago suspended gongs may be played alone independent of laid-in-a-row gongs *kulintang*. The Sama of Sitangkai play a music for three suspended gongs *tamuk*, *bua* and *pulakan*. *Tamuk* plays a slow, steady beat which serves as a fundamental for the two other gongs to interchange rhythmic phrases with syncopations and permutations. The musicians identify their music with the names *bua bakkal*, *bua bud*, *bua dipa* and *bua pukka pukka*’ (Maceda & Martenot 1980).



**Figure 8.** José Maceda with a *kulintang* in Sitangkai (A. Martenot, 1975)

More recently Birgit Abels witnessed the *Regatta Lepa*, a three-day festival held annually in Semporna, Sabah. She described ‘the colourful lepa arriving one by one with a complete kulintangan ensemble playing at all times’...a teenage daughter dancing on the prow, some boats moving at any given time yield a powerful aural effect, ‘a thick soundscape consisting of a large number of *kulintangan* layers, spiced up by the sound of conversations and life on the pier’ (Abels 2012).



**Figure 9.** Dancing on a *lepa* (R. B. Fox, 1968)

### *Tausug Rituals*

Among the Tausug, the *kulintangan* ensemble is composed of the hanging gongs *bua* and *pulakan*, and one bamboo pole *tungtung*, with a distinct and varied sound quality and rhythms. These instruments can accompany ‘dancing’ *pag-igal* as entertainment during weddings and even during a wake for the dead. But among the Sama Dilaut, *pag-igal jin* ‘dancing by men and women mediums’, *wali jin*, is also performed under full moon in front of the house of *akalamat* where a *tagunggu* ensemble has been set for curing the sick.

*Titik limbayan* corroborated by the *titik igal* is followed by the *titik tabawan* corroborated by *igal tabawan*. At this time, the *wali jin*, the spirit bearers will enter the dance and the *titik jin* exclusive to men will take over with the *igal lellang* and finally *titikik*. “The dance is a dance of men, cosmos and *Tuhan*... If fulfilled, the balance of the elements is restored and maintained .It is a crucial ritual task to accomplish for survival” (Hanafi Hussin, 2012).



## Maguindanao Rituals

*A parallel cure for the sick, bpagipat, was witnessed by J. Maceda in Dulawan, Cotabato:*

‘At the sound of the *tagunggoq* music played on eight gongs laid horizontally in a row *kulintang* and a drum *debakan*, the woman started dancing. Within a short time, she became excited, very nervous, perspiring profusely, her eyes shut. The *tagunggoq* melody sounded in a more hastened pace; she was in a trance. [...] She danced, twirling her handkerchief one way and then the other way. Before she went out of her trance, she stopped before an older woman, who seemed to whisper to her some words, after which she stopped dancing, lay on her side, covered herself completely from head to foot with a long tubular clothe *malong*, sang a short phrase, and went out of the trance. Immediately, she behaved in a light gay manner, seemingly released from a certain tension which the public also felt. Someone asked her some questions, but she could not explain how the spirit left her body’ (Maceda 1984: 93).

In his dissertation (1974), José Maceda analyses all the features (categories, content, function and repertoire) of Magindanao music. *Kulintang* pieces fall into four categories, according to their four rhythmic patterns. A different social function and emotion is attached to each rhythm and conveyed during performance. Whereas *sinulog* and *tidtu* pieces are heard in a variety of festivities, *tagunggoq* is exclusive to rituals and particularly to curing rituals. While *binalig* is played to express intense feelings of anger, love and joy, *sinulog*, in contrast, conveys a feeling of sadness. In this case gong music turns out to be a metaphorical expression of feeling. *Tidtu* pieces display the musician’s virtuosity, and are often heard in musical competitions.

‘*Kulintang* music is a musical art among the Maguindanao of Mindanao with certain techniques, a social role, and a spirit of competition attached to it. One of the qualities of good *kulintang* playing is the performer’s skill at improvisation or choice of gong permutations’ (Maceda 1974: 773).

‘The *kulintang* may also be played with three other gongs – *babandil*, *agung*, *gandingan* – of different sound qualities (a metallic sound, short cut-off sounds, long low sounds) and a drum with an animal-skin top, *dabakan*. The ensemble produces a set of musical colours impossible to imagine as

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composite except by the very culture that created the music' (Maceda, 1974:773).

*Agusan Manobo*

The observation and hermeneutics of gong music in relation to healing has been deepened by the ethno-musicological work of José Buenconsejo.

Among the Manobo of Agusan River in northern Mindanao, gongs, always associated with drums, are the sacred instruments being played to cure the sick. 'In possession rituals, spirits are called by their paired sound because the sound of infused matter indicates presence; it is a musical gesture that indicates relationships formed between persons meeting in a given ritual space-time. The visual equivalent of this sonic infusion is the medium's body. Being possessed involves being penetrated by various presences of tutelary spirits. The medium's body is a material matter on which spirit voices are inscribed (Buenconsejo 2013: 345).

The music of gong is opening the way to the sacred, invites the members of a community to participate and creates a festive atmosphere inviting the spirits to enter the ritual space and join the people. Thus gongs are 'a symbol of sociability, par excellence'. 'Their music involves a social cooperation', it is 'a gift that places the individual within a larger social order' (Buenconsejo 2013: 346).

## Part II: Vocabulary of Gongs along South China Sea: Austronesian Family Malayo-Polynesian Branch

This compilation is based on:

- Harold C. Conklin record on *Hanunóo Music*, (1955)
- Jacques Dournes *Dictionnaire de langue Jörai*, (1955) listing of Austronesian (and Austro-Asiatic vocabulary 1970); *La musique chez les Jörai*, (1965)
- José Maceda & Alain Martenot record on *Sama de Sitangkai*, Philippines, (1980)
- José Maceda & Nicole Revel-Macdonald record on *Palawan Highland Music*, (1991)
- José Maceda, I Made Bandem, N Revel-Macdonald on *Kenyah and Modang Music*, (1979)
- José Maceda's book *Gongs and Bamboo*, (1998)
- Charles H. Macdonald book *Le cycle rituel féminin de Punang-Iräräy*, (1990)
- Manoleta Mora book (2005) and personal communication, (2 Dec. 2009)
- Gérard Moussay: *Dictionnaire Cam-Vietnamien-Français*, (1971)
- Gérard Moussay: *Dictionnaire Minangkabau-Indonésien-Français*, (2000)
- Laurence Reid 1961, 2009, from the online *Talking Dictionary* and personal communication, (23 Nov. 2009)
- Leonard E. Newell, (1993) *Batad Ifugao Dictionary*
- Arsenio Nicolas, (1977), Rosario Lorrin, (1978)
- Patricia Afable on Ibaloy, Rosario de Santos del Rosario on *Ifugao*, Talib Lim Sangogot on *Sama*, (24 and 25 Nov. 2009),
- Dana Rappoport on Tuqung, personal communications by e-mail, 2009.
- Nicole Revel's, (1993) published and unpublished personal notes.
- Maria V. Stanyukovich "Philippine Ifugao Music Instruments from the Collections of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Kunstkamera, Saint Petersburg, pp.256-257.



**Figure 10.** Map of Central Vietnam

Central Vietnam

Languages	Names of Gongs	Gong Ensembles
Jörai	<p><i>cing gong</i>  <i>cing mông</i>, gong with boss  <i>cing sar</i>, wide rim flat gong from Laos  <i>cing brau</i>, recent gong from Vietnam  <i>cing jal</i>, small gong, high pitch  <i>cing tai</i>, large gong, low pitch</p> <p><i>sar</i>: wider, flat gong</p> <p><i>Cing kram</i>: gongs of sliced bamboo</p>	<p><i>ring ching</i>, gong set:  <i>cing arap</i>:  13 gongs carried by hand in pitch.  +1 drum, <i>hogar</i> (funerary ritual)  <i>cing trum</i>:  set of 3 gongs with boss (lining up &amp; turning around: buffalo sacrifice ritual) (procession for the Spirit of the house <i>Yang sang</i>)  3. <i>cing tönah</i> or <i>cing mönyun</i>:  set of 9 gongs:  1 <i>sar</i>+ 3 gongs with boss+ 5 flat gongs) + 1 small drum (rice-beer drinking feast)  4. <i>cing kom</i> :  a sacred set of 3 gongs (Pötao's visit or village taboo)  5. <i>cing juar</i> :  set of 8: 3 gongs with boss + 5 flat gongs + <i>högör</i>, drum (return from war with prisoners) and (domestic rituals: for a new house)</p> <p>A set for children</p>
Radé or Eddé	<i>khan</i> or <i>kenha</i> , flat gong	
	<i>char</i> , wide flat gong	
	<i>cing</i> , gong with boss	
Röglai	<i>cing</i> , gong with boss	
Churu	<i>cing</i> , gong with boss	set of: flat gongs + bossed gongs
Cham	<i>Cêng</i> , gong with boss	
	<i>sar</i> , large flat gong	

**Table 2.** Central Vietnam flat suspended gongs & bossed suspended gongs

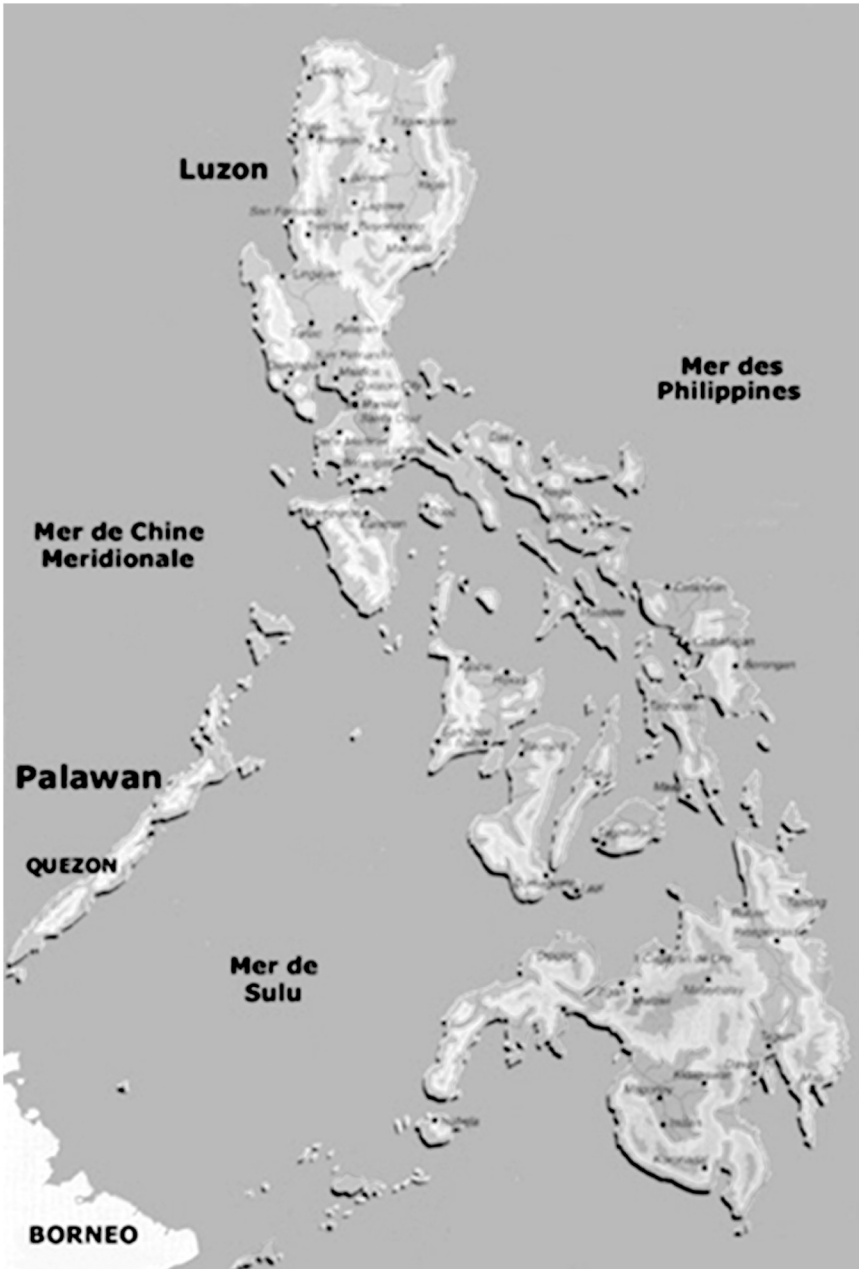


Figure 11. Map of the Philippine Archipelago

Languages	Names of Gongs	Gong Ensembles
Kinina-ang Bontok	<p><i>khangsa</i>, flat brass gong</p> <p><i>khangkhangsa</i>, imitation gongs made of tin cansa &amp; drum covers (diminutive form)</p> <p><i>khongkhong</i>, large diameter gong</p> <p><i>folinsi</i>, gong with a sharp, tinny sound</p> <p><i>lobnot</i>, gong with a good reverberating sound</p> <p><i>khiyag</i> 'woven plate' (gong' name in trading)</p>	<p><i>pattong</i> dance: 6 or more <i>khangsa</i> beaten with sticks</p> <p><i>khangkhangsa</i>: children game imitating <i>pattong</i> dance or <i>patpatton takik</i>: <i>a dance style with gongs</i> beaten with sticks (and the sticks)</p> <p><i>tachek</i> : slow beating of gongs in unison with certain ceremonies followed by</p> <p><i>faros</i>: challenge shouted &amp; <i>wé-er</i> chorus</p> <p><i>foqfokhi</i>: fast beating of a gong + a free style solo dance</p>
Ibaloi	<p><i>angsa</i>, <i>khalsa</i>, flat gong (the inner ventral side, <i>pinsak</i> , of the gong is struck by a mallet)</p>	<p>a unique set of 5 instruments: 2 <i>khalsa</i> gongs + 1 <i>sulibao</i>, conical drum + 1 <i>kimbal</i>, drum beaten by hands + 1 <i>tiktik</i> or <i>palas</i>, iron clappers <i>Kulimbet</i> : 1 <i>gangsa</i> + 2 <i>sulibao</i> + <i>tiktik</i></p>
Northern Kalanguya	<p><i>Ganha</i>: flat gong</p>	<p>A set of: 5 <i>ganha</i>, gongs+ 1 drum</p>
Ifugao	<p><i>Gangha</i>: flat gong <i>tobod</i>, lead gong played with open palm (playing technique)</p>	<p><i>gangha</i>: 4 gongs, 2 beaten with hands, 2 with sticks <i>hebat</i>: 1<sup>st</sup> accompanying gong struck with a stick <i>whot</i>, <i>ahot</i>: 2<sup>nd</sup> accompanying gong <i>atlun di hebat</i>: 3<sup>rd</sup> accompanying gong (musical function)</p>
Isneg (Apayao)	<p><i>Gangsa</i> or <i>hansa</i>, flat gong</p>	<p>2 <i>hansa</i> +1 drum, with beaten sticks</p>
Kalingga	<p><i>Gangsa</i>, flat gong</p>	<p><i>topayya</i> : 6 or 7 <i>gangsa</i> of diminishing size in a row, laid on each performer half-kneeling lap, beaten with 2 palms <i>palook</i>: 6 <i>gangsa</i> beaten with sticks</p>
Kalingga- Tinggian	<p><i>Gansa</i>, flat gong</p>	<p>4 <i>gansa</i> touching the ground 2 with palms &amp; 2 struck with sticks +1 drum <i>pinalaiyan</i>: 4 <i>gansa</i> + 1 drum <i>pinalandok</i>: 6 <i>gangsa</i> or more with men standing, palms beating</p>
Tinggian	<p><i>gansa</i>, flat gong</p>	<p><i>sinuklit</i> : 6 <i>gansa</i> beaten with hands <i>tinalao-katikan</i> : 3 <i>gansa</i> + 1 drum beaten with sticks <i>palo-ok</i> : several <i>gansa</i> beaten with sticks</p>
Karao	<p><i>Gangsa</i>, flat gong</p>	<p><i>Itundak</i> 7 <i>gangsa</i>, beaten with sticks</p>
Ilonggot	<p><i>cangsa</i>, flat gong <i>pariyuk</i>, flat gong</p>	

**Table 3.** Northern Philippines: Luzon Island Flat Gongs

Languages	Names of Gongs	Gong Ensembles
Hanunóo	<i>agung</i> , small diameter gong with boss, shallow rim, beaten with 2 sticks	<i>alipay</i> , merry music A set of: ' <i>agung</i> + <i>kudyapi</i> ', "guitar" + <i>gitgit</i> a 3-stringed fiddles
Ilonggo	<i>Ahgong</i> , wide diameter brass gong	
Batak	<i>agung</i> , wide diameter brass gong with a boss and deep rim	A set of: 1, 2 or 3 <i>agung</i> + 1 <i>gimbal</i> , cylindrical drum + 1 <i>sabagan</i> , percussion beams
Tagbanwa	<i>agung</i> , wide diameter brass gong with deep rim  <i>babandil</i> , gong with boss, shallow rim	A set of: 2 <i>agung</i> + 2 <i>babandil</i> + 1 <i>gimbal</i> , cylindrical drum
Pala'wan Highlands	<i>agung</i> , large diameter brass gong with wide rim <i>babandil</i> , shallow rim gong <i>sanang</i> , 2 shallow rim gongs	<i>basal</i> : ensemble: 1 <i>gimbal</i> , cylindrical drum +1, 2 or 3 <i>agung</i> , + 2 <i>sanang</i> + <i>tarak</i> , dance of women fast steps beating the floor with the percussion
Palawan (Punang-Iraráy)	<i>agung</i> , large brass gong with deep rim <i>babandil</i> , smaller gong with boss <i>pálay</i> , long conical drum exclusive to <i>Budlung</i> ritual	<i>basal át tungan</i> : <i>agung</i> + <i>babandil</i> + 1 <i>gimbal</i> , drum + <i>sigbak</i> : slow rythm alternating with faster rhythm, <i>basal át rawas</i> : + 1 <i>gimbal</i> , small drum for <i>Sinsin</i> ritual: 1 <i>pálay</i> , long conical drum
Palawanun (Islamized group on South China Sea)	<i>Kulintangan</i> , 8 small gongs tuned to a scale (4 <i>ina</i> , mother + 4 <i>anak</i> , children) suspended on two cords across a bamboo frame 8 iron bars laid in a row in a wooden frame	<i>kulintangan</i> ensemble: 3 <i>agung</i> + 1 <i>kulintangan</i>
Sama Dilaut (Islamized group) Tawi-Tawi	<i>agung</i> , large brass gong, <i>tamuk</i> , deep rim gong <i>pulakan</i> , medium rim gong <i>bua</i> , shallow rim gong <i>kulintangan</i> , 7 or 9 small gongs tuned to a scale beaten by 2 sticks <i>lisag</i> suspended on two cords across a bamboo frame	<i>Kulintangan</i> : set of: 1 <i>kulintangan</i> + 1 or 2 <i>agung</i> + 1 + 1 <i>bua</i> + 1 <i>tambul</i> , cylindrical drum, + 1 <i>tamuk</i> + 1 <i>bola</i> ? - <i>bola</i> ?, bamboo castanets <i>Tunggalan</i> : set of: 1 large diameter brass gong + 2 other brass gongs
Tausug (Islamized group) Sulu	<i>tunggalan</i> , deep rim gong  <i>buahan</i> , shallow rim gong  <i>kulintang</i> : 8 or 11 small gongs tuned to a scale suspended on two cords across a bamboo frame	<i>Kulintangan</i> ensemble: 1 <i>kulintang</i> + 1 <i>buan</i> + 1 <i>pulakan</i> + 1 <i>gandang</i> , cylindrical drum + 1 <i>tungtung</i> , bamboo perch  <i>tabunggu</i> ? or <i>tagunggu</i> ? a set of gongs and home made drums playing together

**Table 4.** Central and Southern Philippines Suspended Gongs with Boss Mindoro, Panay, Palawan Islands, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi

Maranao (Islamized group)	<p><i>kulintang</i>, 8 to 12 small gongs supported on two cords across a bamboo frame, tuned to a scale</p> <p><i>babandir</i>, small diameter gong, shallow rim gong</p> <p><i>gandingan</i>, larger gong</p>	<p><i>Kulintang</i> ensemble: 1 <i>kulintang</i> + 1 <i>babander</i> + 1 or 2 <i>agung</i> 4 <i>gandingan</i> played by 1 man + <i>ldadabuan</i>, drum</p>
Magindanao (Islamized group)	<p><i>agung</i>, wide rim gong</p> <p><i>babandil</i>, <i>babandir</i>, small rim gong</p> <p><i>gandingan</i> a large diameter, shallow rim gong</p> <p><i>kulintang</i>, 8 small gongs supported on two cords across a bamboo frame, tuned to a scale</p>	<p><i>basalan</i>, gongs ensemble: 1 or 2 <i>agung</i> + 1 <i>babandil</i>, +1 <i>débakan</i>, tubular drum + 1 <i>kulingtan</i> + 4 <i>gandingan</i> played by 1 man</p> <p><i>Tagunggoq</i> ensemble : 1 <i>Kulintangan</i> + 1 <i>débakan</i>, drum</p>
Subanun (Lumad group)	<p><i>agung</i>, <i>gagong</i>, <i>gaggung</i>, <i>gandingan</i></p>	<p>Set of: 1 to 3 <i>gaggung</i> played on the boss or on the rim</p>
Bila'an (Lumad group)	<p><i>agung</i>, <i>agong</i>, large diameter, deep rim brass gong <i>salmag</i>, wide rim gong</p>	<p>2 gongs played by 1 man or 2</p>
Tiruray (Lumad group)	<p><i>Agung</i> large brass gong</p>	<p>5 to more light <i>agung</i> with independent rhythms, producing a coherent musical structure</p>
Tboli (Lumad group)	<p><i>b'lowon</i>, gong of bronze to call attention</p> <p><i>sembakung</i>, smaller suspended gong</p> <p><i>b'nogol litok</i>, gong of iron</p> <p><i>k'lintang</i>, 8 small gongs tuned to a scale suspended on two cords across a bamboo frame</p>	<p><i>s'lagi sotu</i>: 1 person playing 3 or more suspended gongs <i>b'lowon</i> + 1 iron gong <i>b'nogol litok</i> making vertical gong chime</p> <p><i>s'lagi lewu</i> or <i>s'lagi setang</i>: 2 persons (Δ/O) playing 3 or more gongs</p> <p><i>sebelang</i>: a set of <i>s'lagi lewu</i> + 1 <i>t'nonggong</i> drum beaten with sticks, <i>kasal</i></p> <p><i>k'lintang</i> ensemble: 1k'lintang+1b'lowo+ 1b'labad single headed drum with sticks</p>
Bagobo (Lumad group)	<p><i>agong</i>, <i>ahung</i>, large diameter, deep rim gong</p>	
Mansaka (Lumad group)	<p><i>agong</i>, large diameter, deep rim gong <i>bubundi</i></p>	<p>Ensemble of: 1 <i>agong</i> + 1 <i>bubundi</i> + 1 <i>gimbal</i>, drum</p>
Tagakaolo (Lumad group)	<p><i>agung</i>, large diameter , deep rim gong</p>	<p><i>tagunggu</i> : 6 <i>agung</i> &amp; 2 players</p>
Manobo – Cotabato (Lumad group)	<p><i>Agung</i>, large diameter, deep rim gong</p>	
Manobo-Agusan (Lumad Group)	<p><i>agong</i>, <i>agung</i>, large diameter, deep rim gong</p>	
Bukidnon (Lumad group)	<p><i>agong</i>, large diameter, wide rim gong</p>	

**Table 5.** Central and Southern Philippines Suspended Gongs with Boss  
Mindanao Island



## Island of Borneo

Languages	Names of Gongs	Gong Ensembles
Melayu	<i>gong, chanang</i> small diameter gong with boss, shallow rim	set of: <i>gong</i> + <i>gendang</i> , cylindrical double headed drum
Dusun	<i>kulintangan</i> : 8 small gongs tuned to a scale suspended on two cords across a bamboo frame	set of: 1 <i>kulintangan</i> + 1 <i>tanyang</i> + 1 <i>tawag-tawag</i> , suspended gong, + 1 or 2 <i>gandang</i> , cylindrical double headed drum
Kadazan	<i>tawag</i> : deep rim gong with boss <i>sanang</i> : small rim gong <i>gulintangan</i> , 7 to 12 gongs small gongs tuned to a scale suspended on two cords across a bamboo frame	set of: 1 <i>gulintangan</i> + <i>tawag</i> + <i>sanang</i> + 1 <i>gendang</i> , cylindrical double headed drum
Murut	<i>ahung</i> , gong with boss, shallow rim <i>tawak</i> , deep rim gong with boss	set of: <i>ahung</i> + <i>tambur</i> , drum
Bisaya	<i>agong</i> , <i>tatawa</i> ?	set of: <i>agong</i> + <i>ddumbak</i> , drum
Iban	<i>Engkerumung</i> : small gongs on frame tuned to a pitch <i>bebendai, bendai</i> , small shallow gong with boss <i>tawak, setawak, tetawak</i> : a bronze gong with lower tone than <i>bebendai</i> <i>chanang</i> , a gong with boss smaller than <i>tawak</i>	set of: <i>Engkerumung, kerumung, kromong</i> small gongs on a frame, tuned to a pitch  gongs ensemble

Table 6. Island of Borneo: Sabah, Sarawak

Languages	Names of Gongs	Gong Ensembles
Taman and Mbaloh	<i>garatung</i> , large gong with small boss <i>tawak</i> : large suspended gong with large boss <i>babandi</i> or <i>bobondi</i> small suspended gong	A set of: <i>Galentang</i> , small gongs on a frame tuned to a pitch
Melanau	<i>agung</i>	
Kenyah	<i>agung</i> , large diameter gong with small boss <i>tawε?</i> , <i>tawak</i> , large gong with larger boss <i>mudi</i> , small suspended gong <i>məbang</i> , flat gong	A set of: 1 to 3 <i>tawa?</i> + 1 long conical drum, <i>gattung</i>
Modang	<i>agung</i> , large diameter brass gong  <i>selbun, tebhan, mende?</i>  <i>məhbiang</i> , flat gong, smaller diameter	A set of: 4 gongs + 1 conical two-headed drum, <i>təwung</i> .
Kayan	<i>agung</i> , large diameter gong with small boss <i>tawε?</i> , <i>tawak</i> , large gong with larger boss <i>mudi</i> , small suspended gong <i>məbang</i> , flat gong	

Table 7. Island of Borneo: West and East Kalimantan

Languages	Names of Gongs	Gong Ensembles
Minangkabau	<i>Aguang</i> , large rim gong with boss  <i>Chanang</i> , small flat gong	A set of: several <i>Aguang</i> + several <i>Gendang</i> drum,  <i>Talempong</i> A set of: 5 gongs  <i>Gendang lasuang</i> A set of: 1 <i>talempong</i> ensemble + 2 or 3 <i>saluang</i> , flûtes 1 <i>talempong</i> + 1 double headed drum + 1 mortar  <i>Gandang sarunai</i> : a set of: gongs, clarinets + drums  <i>Gandang tigo</i> a set of: 3 decreasing gongs (large, medium, small)
Karo	<i>Gung</i>	A set of: <i>gung</i> + <i>göndang</i> , drum
Tabo	<i>Ogung</i>	A set of: <i>ogung</i> + <i>gordang</i> , drum
Nias	<i>aramba</i>	A set of: <i>aramba</i> + <i>gödra</i> , drum

**Table 8.** Island of Borneo: Sumatra

### Part III: Discussion on linguistic, ethnographic and historical data compiled and presented in the tables

According to the nomenclatures I was able to gather for this study, the words used to designate ‘gongs’ in some of the Austronesian languages of central Vietnam – namely: *khan* or *kenha* among the Eddê; *khangsa* among the Bontoc; *gangha* among the Ifugao; *hansa* among the Isneg, and in all the languages of northern Luzon (Philippines) – are clearly cognates. All the variants of this word designate exclusively ‘flat gong’. The instruments designated by the variants of this word are close in type, size and sound, the manners of playing them are comparable, and the lexemes designating them are cognates. Ultimately the lexemes are related to sanskrit: *kañśa/kangsha* is a sanskrit word that designates the metal alloy ‘brass’, but also a ‘metal bell’ – a musical instrument made out of brass. A cognate is also found in Hindi; in Old Javanese and in Malay *gansa* is attested too. In the Philippines, the word also designates an object forged out of a quenched high-tin bronze (Conklin 1987). *Gangsa*, ‘bronze’, a copper alloy used in gong-making, has been attested too in Semarang, central Java, from 1907 up to the present (Qingley 1995, cited by Nicolas 2009).

However, in continental Southeast Asia, among the Austro-Asiatic linguistic groups, gong nomenclature is quite different: *cing*, 'a set of flat gongs'; *shaar*, 'a giant flat gong'; *goong*, 'gong with a central boss' (Condominas, 1974).

Thanks to the comparative list of 378 words compiled during the inquiry he conducted from March to December 1969, Jacques Dournes estimated that the Jörai vocabulary has 45% in common with Malay and other Austronesian languages, 14% related to Austroasiatic languages, and 23% related to Cham (Dournes 1970: 33-44).

Among the Jörai, the Rhadé, the Churu, and the Cham, the linguistic groups on the continent belonging to the Austronesian family, gong nomenclature is obviously non-Austronesian, but attests to Austroasiatic cognates with their close Austroasiatic neighbours.

In Cham, where 700 out of 9,350 words are derived from Sanskrit (Gondal1998), the vocabulary of musical instruments *céng*, *sar* and *paranung* is definitely not related to Sanskrit. In fact the most important instruments are three drums: *kinang* and the two double-headed suspended drums, *hakar sit* and *hakarprong*.

In Chinese we find the following terms:

*qing*, 'gong';

*seng qing*, 'buddhist priest's gong';

*yuan qing*, 'circular gong';

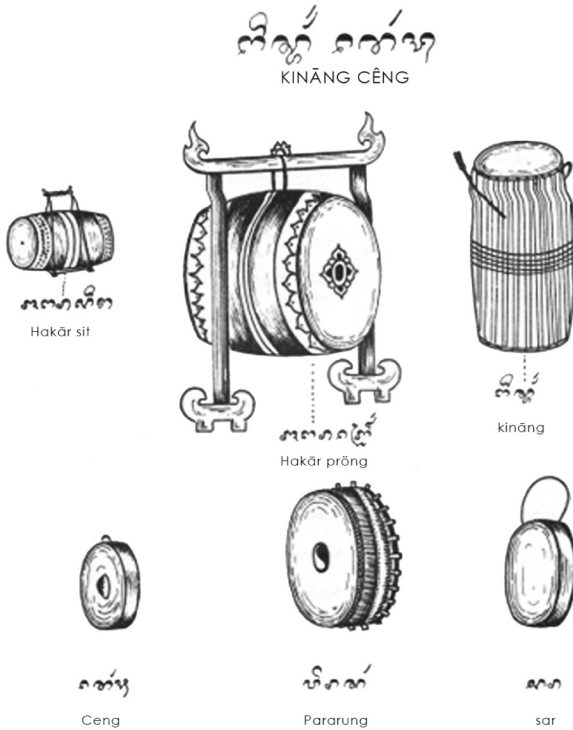
*bian qing*, a L shapes flat stone chime deposited on a horizontal table making a scale struck with a wooden stick and played melodically;

*bianzhong* brass bell chime are found in the Marquis Yi tomb (432 AB); and

*yen luau* 'gong chime with the 'density of clouds' (yun) is framed and suspended.

These stone chimes originated from a great antiquity and serve the solemn cults of the State, namely: the dialogue between the Emperor and his Ancestors (genetic chain) but also the dialogue between the living and the dead. Later, in Song Dynasty monasteries, they marked religious prayers and songs in Buddhist temples and were very common. They belonged to temples together with bells, hand bells, cymbals (Cl. Salmon, 2008, pp.

7-14): *bian zhong* is a chime with 65 bells; *jing zhong* is a ‘whale bell’; and *huang zhong* is a ‘calling bell’. In China there are dozens of types of drums, *gu*. Bells and drums serve as important calls in official ritual life of the cities and in battle and war, while gongs serve to make announcements.



**Figure 12.** Cam gong and drum ensemble (Drawings Gérard Moussay & Photo Albina Fereiros)

On the opposite side of the South China Sea among all the highlanders of Northern Luzon, gong nomenclature is quite homogeneous, but distinct.

In order to interpret this phenomenon, we need to consider the ancient maritime trade routes. They closely followed the coast, as it was difficult to cross the South China Sea, from Champa to Palawan for instance. There were many dangerous unknown shoals (known today as the *Parcels* and the *Spratleys*). Maritime archaeologists have identified two major routes allowing Chinese merchants access to the Gulf of Bengal: the eastern route via Taiwan, northern Luzon, Palawan, and Borneo; and the western route following the coast of Vietnam and Champa. The two routes joined up in the Straits.

As early as the 9th and 10th centuries, we have archaeological evidence of manufactured bronze objects coming from China by sea. However, this is surely not the earliest contact, although the brass culture is related to Dong Sön and the 'Mountains in the West' of Yunnan. It could be that gongs were introduced by Indian traders prior to these centuries, at a time corresponding to the Song Dynasty (10c - 12c).

In the highlands of the Central Cordillera of Luzon, among more isolated groups, the originally Indic word has remained stable through the centuries, up to now. These bronze instruments, linked to ritual life, feasts and ceremonies, are highly valuable and considered in traditional societies to be the most important form of wealth. Together with land and water buffaloes, they constitute the heirlooms transmitted from generation to generation within a kin group.

In Borneo, gongs also represent prestige goods and investment objects in longhouses and isolated villages (Skog 1993) and this cultural feature could partly explain the stability of this vocabulary through time, despite three centuries of Spanish domination in the archipelago that became 'the Philippines'.

This cultural unity can explain the homogeneity of the vocabulary of gongs despite distinct language families. Gong music is also attested in

northern Vietnam, Laos and Yunnan, but we have not yet considered the nomenclatures they use.



**Figure 13.** *Tuung, Kalimantan (D. Rappoport)*

#### *Importance of onomatopoeic words*

In the vocabularies related to gongs, onomatopoeia seems a clear linguistic device. By onomatopoeic, I refer to words imitating or pretending to imitate a human or an animal sound, a natural sound or a sound inherent to an artifact: *goong, agung, 'agung, egun*, transcribed *aghon* by Antonio de Pigafetta (1521). This word has been adopted in European languages as 'gong'.

Gong has become a generic term, used in translations to designate a complex set of round percussion instruments with various diameters and various rims, with or without a protrusion, a boss in the centre, and made of bronze, brass, or copper, then later of iron. Only bronze can sound pitch. This ancient alloy is highly valued. Depending on the alloy, the quality of resonance of the gongs varies from low to medium, to high; the beating techniques vary too, from hard to gentle, using a stick, a padded mallet, or the palm of the hand. They may be suspended from a fixed beam, from a pole carried, or hung from the hands of musicians.

These idiophones produce sounds in which pitch has a broad spectrum, distinct from a singing tone. These traditional musical bronze instruments because of their beautiful sound qualities (only bronze can produce this refined pitch) are highly valued.

More specifically, *agung* designates a large type of gong (35cm to 50cm in diameter) with boss and deep turned-in rim, struck with a padded mallet, highly valued by the highlanders of Palawan, Mindanao, and the Dayaks of Borneo. In a stratified society, as among the Kenyah in Kalimantan Timur, it is a status symbol. The 'great noble' of the *paren* strata, in full attire, stands on the gong, with a line of all the women and a line of all the men forming an alley leading towards the central entrance of the longhouse. In this dominant posture, the great noble welcomes visitors as they come up from the riverbank on a massive log ascending the cliff (Unesco Record 1979; an ASEAN Workshop on Music and the Performing Arts conducted by J. Maceda and I Made Bandem in Kalimantan Timur, 1977).

On the other hand, flat gongs, *mehbiang* or *mehbang*, were also used as trays for ritual paraphernalia. However, among the Kayan, the flat gong was played in an ensemble of three gongs (Maceda, I Made Bandem & Revel 1979).



**Figure 13.** *Kayan* (J. Maceda, 1977)

*Tawag* and *agung*, suspended gongs with bosses and turned-in rims of different depths, are widely distributed in Sabah, Brunei, Sarawak and Mindanao. In Sulu and Palawan they are the necessary musical accompaniment to life-cycle rituals and rice-cycle rituals.

*Tawag-tawag* in Malay music is the most common gong type, either made of bronze, 5 to 6 mm thick, and quite heavy, or made of brass, a thinner and lighter alloy. If the possible place of origin is Semarang in Java, it was manufactured to export to the outer islands of Indonesia. In the

16th century, the gongs observed by A. de Pigafetta in the Philippines were of the Javanese kind. But gongs were also manufactured in Brunei since the Majapahit period, and more particularly the *sanang* type with dragon motifs in relief. Since Brunei was part of the Javanese empire, it is possible

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that casting in Brunei was introduced from Java (Skog 1993: 173-174). Later, gongs were also manufactured in Mindanao.

### *Trade*

An inter-island trade with small boats between northern Borneo, Palawan, and Mindanao was very active. Goods continued towards the highlands on the river-ways. The *agung* type has not been found on shipwrecks of large vessels, nor is it found in Java or Bali (Nicolas 2009: 85). In the various cultures I have observed in the southern Philippines, this type of gong is not necessarily associated with the final journey of the dead, as was mentioned in Bernet Kempers (1988). Certainly *agung* is played as an invitation or call to celebrate feasts and ceremonies when two agrarian cycles join among the Palawan, for instance. In Palawan, *tawag* is the root word meaning 'call', precisely the word for this type of gong with boss used in northern Borneo. It is a signaling device (in case of fire, floods, raids) and for ceremonial music, as the very sound of these gongs creates a ritual space keeping away Malevolents, while attracting and pleasing Benevolents, the Master of Rice or the Master of Flowers, for instance.

The *chanang*, *sanang*, *tanyang* are also a pair of gongs with boss and a shallower rim than *tawag*, played in a contrapuntal manner and widely distributed over Southeast Asia. Made of bronze or of brass, they were cast with high-relief decorative features in moulds using the lost-wax technique. They often had a dragon motif in relief and were cast in Brunei and Sarawak.

*Tang*, most probably an onomatopoeia for 'sound' (Romualdez 1932: 12), is appended to a variety of instruments found in the southern Philippines. Among the T'boli we have *k'lintan*, *k'lutang* (suspended bossed gongs, tuned to a scale and laid on cords in a horizontal frame). Among the neighbouring Islamized Maguindanao, a similar instrument is named *kulintang*. It is also attested among all the Sama groups, the Sama Dilaut, the Tausug and Palawanun, with several phonemic variations. On the other hand, *tinhtang* in Vietnamese is an onomatopoeic word for 'the sound of plucked string' instruments (Manolete Mora, personal communication).



These terms are also found beyond the Philippines, in Sumatra: *kulintang* and *kelittang*. The bisyllabic or trisyllabic word could also be an onomatopoeia of sparkling sounds that finally came to designate the instrument itself. It is a horizontal gong chime of eight small bossed gongs of decreasing size, ornamented with a five-pointed star motif. This melodic bronze or brass instrument is tuned to an anhemitonic pentatonic scale. The right hand plays a melody while the left hand may duplicate the rhythm of the *babandil* (Maceda 1966: 34).

*Enkerumpong* or *kromong* is a similar gong chime among the Iban of western Borneo. It is probably a Javanese instrument that diffused northwards, but also eastwards (Skog 1993). There are also lamellophones made of iron, which are an inexpensive substitute for a gong chime and also called *kulintangan*, which we observed among the Palawanun, living near Lipu'un Point in an area facing the South China Sea.

#### *The Art of Casting Gongs and Location*

The art of making brass gongs, *tom-tom*, with their full and deep sound, is of great antiquity in China. In this civilization of casting (melting and dripping in casts), the melting of the alloy, as well as casting and the difficult forging were kept secret, until it was observed by Champion near Shanghai in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several Chinese gongs were revealed to have 17 percent tin, one percent iron, and possibly a trace of nickel. 'The gong was hot worked, being reheated as often as necessary in the areas being worked. When the final shape had been achieved, the whole gong was heated to a dull red, then quenched by being plunged into cold water. The gong was further beaten lightly and with great care: this was done to repair the warpage caused by the quench' (Harold C. Conklin, 1987, p.16, and Appendix A; Champion in Goodway and Conklin, pp. 20-24). It is important here to remember that only bronze can sound pitch.

During the Ming Dynasty there were *lu*, a place rich in iron mines and important for casting copper and iron, in Foshan, near Guangdong, in the south. As a matter of fact, towards the beginning of the end of the Ming dynasty (15c.-16c.), the presence of many Japanese pirates *Wokou*, prevented the trade to continue in the north east and the flourishing coastal area of Tientsin was devastated (Danielle Elisseff personal communication).

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Among the Ifugao of northern Luzon, there is 'a strong local tradition of iron forging and of lost-wax casting of silver, gold, and copper pendants and other small solid objects, but apparently none of making gongs. Non-bronze types, including the next most valued (though by 20 to 25 times less valued) brass trade gongs, can be substituted for bronze instruments if the latter are unavailable, but in ensembles they serve preferably only a supporting role' (Goodway and Conklin 1987: 2).

Gong forging in Indonesia was carefully observed in 1906 by Jacobson and Van Hasselt. They report that gong metal was made of 10 parts of pure copper to 3 parts of pure tin (Toth's translation 1975: 132) which would give 24 percent tin if none was lost by oxidation during melting (Goodway and Conklin 1987: 16). Nowadays gong making is attested in Borneo, the Malay Peninsula and Java.

*From Ports of Origin to Entrepôts and to Ports of Destination*

For the gongs found in the Philippines, José Maceda proposes the following origin:

'It is not known where exactly the gongs in the Philippines come from. possible source of those with rims not too wide are bossed gongs in central Vietnam and in northern Thailand with similarly shaped gongs. In the islands just mentioned, they range significantly in size, with varying widths of rims and heights of bosses. Gongs in Borneo, Mindanao and Palawan are distinct ensembles from those of Java and Bali. They may be played alone or with other suspended gongs' (Maceda 2002).

'These instruments could be as old as the regimes of Chenla, Funan and Champa about the 10c to the 9c., although it cannot be pinpointed exactly when these gongs came by sea and reached Luzon' (Maceda, 2002).

Then Maceda quotes Pô Dharma, a Cham scholar at l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO): 'The gongs would have come from the mountain people of Champa rather than Champa itself, but the transfer to Luzon may have occurred any time even before Java raided Champa in 774, when already maritime routes united this coast to Sumatra and the Malay peninsula' (Pô Dharma 2000, pp. 183-184).

In Asia, early bronze manufacturing may have had several centres: in the Dong Sön area of today's Vietnam and Yunnan, in Thailand as well. Indeed it has been demonstrated that high-tin bronze bowls in India and Thailand have similar components to quenched high-tin bronze flat gongs in northern Luzon (Higham 1996, cited by Nicolas 2009).

Very recently our knowledge has been enriched thanks to maritime archaeology and the exploration of various shoals and shipwrecks in the South China Sea, offshore from Brunei, Palawan and Mindoro but also near Butuan an important trading hub in northern Mindanao, between Sumatra and Java. A disciple of José Maceda, Arsenio Nicolas, in a detailed recent article, '*Chronological list of gongs, cymbals, and bells in archaeological sites, possible routes and dating*' (2009), provides a chronology of gong trade as established by archaeologists. Nicolas's information is based on what we know today about the many shipwrecks (more than one hundred) that have been located along the sea routes, but not necessarily brought to the surface or inventoried (Pierre-Yves Manguin, personal communication).

Table 1 presents shipwrecks, ports of origin, and destinations of the musical instruments from the 9th and 10th century to the 17th century (Nicolas, 2009, pp. 64-65). Two examples of the inventories:

- Among the five shipwrecks with flat gongs (1-5) of the 10 c,  
Tanjung Simpang, northern Borneo:  
61 flat gongs were conveyed from China to the Philippines.
- Among the three shipwrecks with bossed gongs (6-18) of the  
14c-15c,  
Phu Quoc, Vietnam:  
51 bossed gongs were conveyed from Thailand to Borneo and the  
Philippines.  
Tradeware: Sisachanalai, Sawankhalok, Vietnamese.

It is interesting to note that bells and cymbals (9c-10c) were traded prior to the trade of flat gongs (10c-13c). According to these two examples flat gongs seem to precede the trade of bossed gongs (13c-17c). But we do not have enough shipwrecks or enough professional analysis to have any certitude. The suspended gongs with protrusion seem to be

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the most numerous in insular Southeast Asia. This, at least, gives us some hypothetical insight.

Other archaeological findings might change the chronology and our knowledge of the history of gong trade, ports of origin – wharfs where cargoes could be loaded – and ports of destination. ‘Together with porcelain and stoneware jars, copper-alloy gongs have long served Southeast Asian societies as culturally valued trade with high emblematic as well as diverse utilitarian functions’ (Conklin 1987: 2).

Their origin is in China or mainland Southeast Asia but the first seafarers were the Austronesians, who were among the ‘great sailors of Asia’. ‘They were carrying their own products into world markets, they commanded the sea routes [...]. Whether shipping on the Straits, portage from Melaka to Kedah, traffic to and from China took on water and supplies along the Cham coast, the east coast of the Malay peninsula, in the Philippines and eastern Borneo, along the west coast of Borneo and Java [...] the Austronesians were directly involved’ (Reid 1995: 315-317).

Then during the Song Dynasty (12c.), Chinese fleets blossomed and developed on various routes (Pierre Yves Manguin, personal communication). Seafaring manufactured goods were exchanged for local inland products with the mediation of estuarine groups: forest products (almaciga resin, musk, wax and honey, among others), food products (staples, like rice and sago), fruits, meat, and gold were the counterpart in this trade.

Sea routes on the South China Sea and Java Sea were continued by waterways (Abra River, Vigan, and Manila Bay in Luzon; Butuan, with Agusan River and tributaries in northeast Mindanao): ‘Butuan was an advanced transit port and/or trading centre (probably a small entrepôt too) in Mindanao and the southern archipelago during the proto-historic period. Butuan served as a link between the foreign and local trade networks’ (Cembrano 1998: 38-39). This trade favoured the propagation of Islam, and with the emergence of Sultanates, Brunei in western Borneo, Melaka on the Straits, Jolo in the Sulu archipelago, these places grew from the 4th century to the 17th century to be among the region’s most important city-ports.

Various ethnic groups interacted with their respective products and technical know-how, and each group had socio-economic roles in the trading activities.

Indian seafaring merchants trading with southern China were very active during the Maurya Dynasty in the 3c. In this way Indian civilization spread and Indianized states arose: Funan and Champa in the Malay Peninsula, Srivijaya Thalassocracy, centred in Sumatra, followed by Majapahit, centred in Java.

Austronesian boats named *jong* expanded this multifaceted flourishing trade from various ports and wharfs along the coasts of southern Sumatra and Java, of Champa and the Malay Peninsula. This was the first 'Age of Commerce', taken over by Chinese boats in the 17c, and 'junks' became the borrowed name. It continued with the famous "Spice Routes", then as steamboats and a more powerful navigation technology developed, the Europeans took over.

*Thong Gu, Tong Khu: Kettle Bronze Drums, Distribution*

Let us briefly consider the famous kettle-drums. Many kinds of musical instruments dating from the Bronze Age have been excavated in a vast area on the continent, and in insular Southeast Asia. The *Thong gu* area in *Dong Shan*, the 'Mountains of the West', known as 'Dong Sön' in northern Vietnam and Laos today, also covers Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi and Guangdong provinces. Kettle-drums are found among the Thai-Kadhai peoples. They are still present and used among the Yi, Miao, Hani, Wa, Lamet, Kammu and Karen. These kettle-drums have a diameter of around 50cm and a height of 40cm. They have no bottom and the cavity is empty.

The word to designate them is based on 'drum' *guor khu* (not on gong, *qing*) and the material is 'bronze' *thong* or 'brass'. 'Like the gongs they are all solid metal idiophones, struck percussion instruments, made by casting. Gongs are circular metal plates either flat or bulging with a protrusion in the centre. This shape resembles a bowl made by forging' (Kempers 1988).

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Among the Yi people of Guangxi province in China, an account of a performance of bronze drums is described as follows by Minzu Yin Yue:

‘Usually they are used in a set of two. One is big and the other is small. The big one is identified as a female drum; its sound is low and it lasts a long time. The small drum is male, with a clear and high-pitched sound lasting relatively a long time. The sound at the centre of the drums is equal to the tone *Cl*. When they are played together, they are lifted from the ground, and the heads of the two drums face each other, with the player using a soft-headed mallet in his right hand to strike the centres of the two drums and the side of the large drum alternately. A stiff bamboo stick in the left hand strikes at the side of the smaller drum now and then. Since the sound of the drums formulates the harmony of *do, mi, sol*, the cooperation of male and female instruments gives a harmonious and vigorous sound. It is very reasonable for Yi nationalities to say, “It is impossible to separate one drum from the other”. ‘Since the sound of the beating on the side of drum is not *do, mi, sol*, and it consists of rhythmic beats, this rhythmic variation is very rich’ (Minzu Yin Yue, 1985, 4, pp. 41-42).

‘We know that initially these drums had a shamanic function and were part of funerary accompaniment. Vibrations and amplitude of sounds were considered appropriate to accompany the soul of the deceased in his ascending ‘voyage’. They were the abode of an ancestor’s spirit. Later on, these drums were linked to agriculture and turned into rain drums’. When inverted with a cover and sculpted characters they were used among the Miao to store rice or as chests for cowries, a wealth box (Danielle Elisseeff, personal communication).

They were also symbols of the high status of a chieftain or a king. In Dong Sön ships they served as magical coast guards. They are struck on the centre of the wide surface with a padded stick and on the rims with tiny twig-like sticks.

In the Malay Peninsula, the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands, ‘a large number of artifacts of precise Dong Sön affinity, especially Heger type I drums, have survived in villages or turned up as chance finds without coherent archaeological contexts’ (Bellwood 1999: 277). They are called *moko* in Alor and still in use today.

In the Philippines since the beginning of our work in 1970, we never came across any evidence of bronze drums. We have to refer to recent archaeological findings to learn about the distribution of these ancient musical instruments.

According to Peter Bellwood's summary: 'Within the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago, it may be important to stress that Heger drums have mainly been found in Peninsular Malaysia and in the islands of the Sunda chain (Sumatra, Java, Bali, and the Lesser Sundas, Southern Moluccas). Two drums have recently been found at Kota Waringin in West Kalimantan [...] but none have ever been reported from the rest of Borneo, Sulawesi, the northern Moluccas, or the Philippines (Bellwood, 1999: 279).

The Tabon Caves complex and many other caves on the central west coast of Palawan have a very important jar burial assemblage dated by Robert B. Fox from the beginning of the first millennium, but no metal was found. Only Solheim in Masbate found an assemblage with metal (Solheim, 1964). As of now, no kettle drum was ever found in the Philippine archipelagos.

### Conclusion

In spite of so many conflicts and wars throughout a long history, the culture of gongs is still somehow alive in continental and insular Southeast Asia. We have attempted to show a wealth of diversity, and simultaneously, a deep cultural unity at the level of comparative lexicography, technology, organology, cultural anthropology and history of contacts and trade.

As an object of ancient, modern and contemporary trade, gongs have connected peoples and playing them safeguarded beautiful musical conceptions and artistic expressions. This is a genuine cultural heritage beyond boundaries, political divisions, intolerance, and war devastations. To search for it is to search for what unites the peoples around the South China Sea.

Gong music is a distinctive feature of civilization that inspires emotion and respect. The ritual relationship uniting this music to the life cycle, the agricultural cycle of rice and the funerary rituals, followed by a constant dialogue with the Ancestors, provide us with ancient and new sources of inspiration for human behaviour and creativity as well as a broader social harmony in today's global world.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Brass gongs, *ganha*, are found among the 'Ipugo (Ifugao), but there is a rare wooden substitute, *balimbang*, in the shape of a hanger that is hidden in the house – forbidden to be touched as it is related exclusively to violent death in feuds and headhunting. It is present during the *himung* ritual (M. Stanyukovich, personal communication).

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