

= Gandingan =

The gandingan is a Philippine set of four large , hanging gongs used by the Maguindanao as part of their kulintang ensemble . When integrated into the ensemble , it functions as a secondary melodic instrument after the main melodic instrument , the kulintang . When played solo , the gandingan allows fellow Maguindanao to communicate with each other , allowing them to send messages or warnings via long distances . This ability to imitate tones of the Maguindanao language using this instrument has given the gandingan connotation : the ? talking gongs . ?

= = Description = =

The instrument is usually described as four , large , shallow @-@ bossed , thin @-@ rimmed gongs , vertically hung , either from a strong support such as a tree limb or housed in a strong wooden framed stand . The gongs are arranged in graduated fashion in pairs with knobs of the lower @-@ pitched gongs facing each other and the higher @-@ pitched gongs doing the same . Normally , the lower @-@ pitched gongs would be situated on the left side and the higher pitched gongs on the right side of the player if he / she were right @-@ handed . This arrangement in fact is similar to the arrangement of gongs on the horizontally laid kulintang ? so much so , in fact that master musicians say it duplicates the pattern of intervals used on the four lower @-@ pitched gongs of the kulintang .

The gongs , themselves , although variable in pitch , are relatively similar in size . Diameters range from 1 @.@ 8 to 2 feet and 5 to 8 inches ( including the boss ) in width for the smallest to largest gongs respectively . Because of their slight differences , smaller gongs could be placed into larger gongs , making transport of these gongs more portable than an agung ? s , whose turned @-@ in @-@ rim eliminates that possibility .

Traditionally , the metal used for the gandingan was bronze but due to its scarcity , gandingan are more commonly made of less valuable metals such as brass and even iron . Recently , galvanized iron sheets have been used where different parts of the gong ( the knob , body and rim ) would be made from separate sheets and welded together , then grinded out to produce a finished product . Comparatively , these newer gongs have a higher pitch and are smaller in size than those made in older times .

= = Technique = =

The gandingan is usually played while standing behind the instrument with the gandingan player holding two wooden mallets . The mallets , called balu , are wrapped tightly with strips of rubber at one end and are considered lighter and smaller than those balu used for the agung . The rubber ends of the balu are held between the opposing knobs of the gandingan and the player would use them to strike the knobs to achieve a sound .

Gandingan players can demonstrate different techniques dependent on the occasion . In formal kulintang performances , players would use all four gongs , but during some informal occasions , such as a playing style called apad and kulndet , players would use only three of the highest pitched gongs of the gandingan . And in instances such as gandingan contest , gandingan players may be assisted by two mulits ( kulintang assistants ) who would hold the gongs steadily in place as players ferociously demonstrate their virtuosity on the instrument .

= = Uses = =

= = = Ensemble = = =

Traditionally among the Maguindanao , the main function of the gandingan was its use as a secondary melodic instrument after the kulintang in the kulintang ensemble . In olden style of play ,

strictly done by women , the patterns used function to feature / highlight / reinforce the rhythmic modes already established by the singular babendil and dabakan . Women players would use a limited number of patterns that were repeated to provide a sonorous foundation to the entire ensemble .

#### = = = Contest = = =

Newer styles of play have recently emerged , pushing the bounds of what the gandingan was traditionally used for . One type of play called kulndet requires players to perform highly dense , complicated rhythmic patterns upon the gandingan . This type of play unlike the olden ( kamamatuan ) style of gandingan playing requires assistants to hold the gongs to avoid long suspensions of sound . Because of the strenuous type of play , male musicians usually perform this style during contests held at weddings where players would demonstrate their virtuosity , considered a sign of masculinity , on the gandingan . During a gandingan contest , two expert gandingan players ( pagagandings ) would play a particular piece several times in rotation with each other . This type of play is said to have evolved from the spread of virtuous style on the agung .

#### = = = Communication = = =

Another type of play , called apad , is used for conveying linguistic messages from one player to another . This ability to mimic the intonations of the Maguindanao language on the three highest @-@ tuned gongs has dubbed the gandingan as the talking gongs .

Traditionally , because of strict rules forbidding direct conversational interactions between the sexes , the gandingan presented a means for teenagers to interact with one another . Using the gandingan , young men and women would spend hours teasing , flirting , gossiping , playing guessing games , trading friendly insults and simply conversing with one another . For instance , if friends were telling a boy that a girl liked him but the boy didn't like her back , the boy wouldn't resort to telling his friends literally he didn't like her . Instead , he could use the gandingan to express his reasons and his friends would be able to pick up the message by translating his song .

In fact , during the 1950s , many families would intentionally hang gandingan outside their houses so other neighbors could easily hear them play . Young men would gather around the gandingan and gossip about people they dislike , usually chatting with other gandingan players further away . Locals say much of this jovial talk even contained sexual innuendoes , where all kinds of dirty words could be heard penetrating the night air .

Gandingan were also used by a young man and woman who were having strong feelings for one another and if the feelings were just right , the couple would elope with one another . For instance , if the young man wanted to ask the young woman to come here , the man would play on the gandingan , Singkaden Ka Singkaden . Another common message couples would play is , Pagngapan ko seka , literally meaning , I am waiting for you .

Along with those trivial messages , gandingan were also used in more serious matters when signaling to others of imminent danger . During martial law , gandingan were used to warn villagers of incoming Marcos soldiers . Every time the villagers received the signal , they would disappear leaving the soldiers aloof until the soldiers themselves brought in a translator who told them , the gandingan was responsible for the scurry . So they arrested the gandingan player . A similar story talks about a brother of a man who stole someone's carabao . In order to keep his brother from getting arrested , the brother set up a gandingan up in a tree and would clang it every time the police arrived to warn his brother to leave their house . But like Marcos soldiers , the police bought a translator and so they were finally able to arrest the thief for stealing and the brother on the gandingan for obstruction of justice .

#### = = = Origin = = =

The etymology of the term , gandingan , is unknown but it appears in many Maguindanao folk

tales and epics . For instance , one folk tale states the Malailai Gandingan is a place known for a powerful sultan and his beautiful daughter while in another epic , Raja sa Madaya , Gandingan is the proper name of a place where hostile datus ( who attempted to abduct a princess from the prince of Madaya ) live . Perhaps the most significant mention of the gandingan in an epic tale is in the Maguindanao epic Diwatakasalipan , where word ? gandingan ? actually refers to the instrument itself . In the epic , a young princess , Tintingan na Bulawan , uses the gandingan to inform her sister , Initulon na Gambal , about a hero prince , Diwatakasalipan , who was looking for a wife . Thanks to that message , Initulon na Gambal was able to entertain the hero prince using a kulintang into her heart . This use of the gandingan in this epic exemplifies that its use as a form of communication was pre @-@ Islamic in origin .

The origins of the gongs themselves are still disputed by scholars . It is likely , as observed by Thomas Forrest , a British explorer , that gongs without knobs on them ( like the gandingan ) came from China . However , other sources suggest the gandingan came to the Philippines via Indonesia or Malaysian Sarawak due to similar gandingan @-@ type instruments found among the Tausug of Sulu .

= = Similar instruments = =

The set of four , large hanging gongs is confined mainly to the Maguindanao . Scholars says the Maranao used to use the gandingan but the instrument has disappeared from usage in Maranao ensembles of today . The Tausug have a gandingan @-@ type gong with a narrow @-@ rim called a buahan or huhagan. one of the three agungs used in the Tausug kulintang ensemble . The Samal have something similar called a bua . Other gongs similar to the gandingan are the handheld gongs of the Subanon ( gagung sua ) and Tiruray ( karatung ) used in their agung ensembles , the latter group sometimes substituting Maguindanao gandingan gongs for their karatungs .