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Music and the invisible world: Music as a bridge between different realms

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ABSTRACT

Among the Wana people of Morowali, Central Sulawesi, music serves as a connection between the human world and the hidden world of spirits and emotion. For this reason, music has a central role during the *momago*, the main Wana healing ritual. Music makes it possible for shamans to tap power from mythical time. By examining the *momago*, I will clarify the role and the importance of music for Wana rituality. During the ritual, music serves as a ritual marker and, with its relation with the hidden world, calls the spirits, transforms ordinary time into mythical/ritual time and helps shamans to get into trance. Moreover, it contributes to the playful atmosphere that characterises Wana rituals and that allows the healing of the patient and the community through emotional catharsis. To explore the role of music in this shamanic ritual, this paper will analyse the structure and the aim of the *momago*, a ritual in which shamans and music join forces in the effort to find the soul of the patient and save his/her life.

KEYWORDS

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INTRODUCTION

This work will explore how a small Indonesian community, the Wana people, unite two divided worlds, the visible (human) and invisible (spirits, illness and emotions), through music. To engage with the invisible world, the Wana rely on the *tau walia* (literally human spirits), liminal beings existing between the two worlds and who, nowadays, are the only beings able to move between the two. Moreover, music, with its invisibility, becomes the perfect tool to act as a bridge between the visible and invisible, calling the spirits and controlling emotions.

The Wana people are not a famous cultural group among researchers, but there is some existing work, most notably from U.S. anthropologist Jane Monnig Atkinson. Between 1974 and 1976, she lived among the Wana in the Ue Bone area in the northern part of the Morowali, studying how the *mabolong*, a shamanic healing ritual, establishes a political order within the community. She produced an analysis of the ritual lyrics in her book *The Art and Politics of Wana Shamanism* (Atkinson, 1989). In addition,

Atkinson wrote a number of articles on other Wana-related themes, in particular the relationship between Wana and the other religious groups that reside inside the Morowali area (Atkinson, 1983, 1987, 1992, 2003).

The Wana people are an indigenous community that live inside the Morowali natural reserve in Sulawesi, Indonesia. In 1980 a World Wildlife Fund Report estimated that there were about 5,000 Wana people (Lahadji, 1999). The natural reserve of Morowali, with its 2250km² of equatorial forest (Lahadji, 1999), has been home to the Wana people since the arrival of the Indian kingdoms (Alvard, 2000), and possibly even before. The Morowali forest is in the central area of Sulawesi Island, and it extends from the Kolonodale gulf to the Bongka Tojo bay. A Wana settlement can range from 12 to 100 people, but these numbers constantly change due to their semi-nomadic culture. Primarily relying on swidden agriculture,¹ Wana also trade with the towns outside the forest, selling dammar gum, rattan and wood.

SHAMANS AND MEDICINE

Wana shamans do not have any more medical skills or medical knowledge than other members of the community, who ordinarily share a wide understanding of the medical plants growing inside the reserve and routinely use them to treat diarrhoea (*andolia*, *guampanha* and *gampu*), wounds (*koto*), colds (*umbu*) and lice and fleas (*kasiu* and *tambaole*). For more severe injuries, they resort to western medicine, especially pills bought in small pharmacies outside the jungle,² and go to the local hospital in Kolonodale. The *tau walia* take care of the 'inner illness', invisible problems affecting a patient's soul; these problems include when the patient's soul gets lost, escapes as a result of a strong emotion, or is attacked by a *setan*. Nowadays, the latter term is used to indicate a wide range of different demons,³ and is one of the many products of the influence of Christianity on Wana religion, provoking a simplification of their terminology. The inner illness is something that cannot be cured by doctors or by using indigenous medical knowledge because it is an illness of the soul, not of the body. Shamans are often called medicine-men by many authors (Demetrio, 1978; Eliade, 1972; Lewis, 1980; Miyazaki, 2000; Winkelman, 1990) but the latter term is inappropriate when discussing Wana shamanism. In his monumental work on shamanism, *Le Chamanisme et les Techniques Archaïques de L'extase*, Eliade notes that

the Shaman is the great specialist in the human soul; he alone "sees" it, for he knows its "form" and its destiny [...] and wherever the immediate fate of the soul is not at issue, wherever there is no question of sickness (= loss of the soul) or death, or of misfortune, or of a great sacrificial rite involving some ecstatic

¹ Also known as slash-and-burn agriculture or shifting cultivation, swidden agriculture is a typology of farming that involves the destruction of trees and plants with fire, with the aim of creating new farmable land. The new farm land created through this process has a short life, forcing the farmers to move on after few years and to restart the process on a new piece of land.

² It is important to underline that few Wana use pills with caution. This habit, beyond the danger of an allergic attack, can be quite dangerous, leading to inopportune or over use.

³ In the past there were different kinds of demons, such as the liver-eater *measa* or *pongko*, the soul trader *tau tolo*, the *salibi*, which punished those who speak badly, the *tabar*, which crossed the rainbow to hurt the Wana (Atkinson, 1989).

experience (mystical journey to the sky or the underworld), the shaman is not indispensable. (Eliade, 1972, p. 8)

This description is consistent with the behaviour of Wana people, for whom shamanic services and presence are needed only to treat problems related to the soul. Rex L. Jones adds,

Because the properties and conditions of the soul are within his domain of knowledge, the shaman is a curer and healer of disease. One might conclude that, wherever illness has nothing to do with the "soul", shamans and shamanism will be conspicuously absent. (Jones, 1968, pp. 332-333)

In my experience, even Wana shamans themselves use pills and other medicines to treat illnesses not related to the soul; once, Apa Tobi came to me asking for medicine for his toothache, while Apa Main also sought medicines from the pharmacy. Atkinson clarifies that "medicines, in contrast to names and spells, are not a requisite for shamanhood, nor is their use a part of shamanic performance, whereas without verbal magic a shaman is not a shaman" (Atkinson, 1989, p. 74). Considering the fact that "they treat not overt symptoms, but unseen causes" (Atkinson, 1989, p. 75). All these affirmations are convincing and I strongly agree with Atkinson and the idea that Wana shamanhood is strictly related to issues of the soul and not of the body, in other words with the invisible and not the visible. However, I have to point out that I did also witness one incident suggesting that spells, in the present time at least, can be used to treat small ailments not related to the soul, such as fevers and headaches. Once, the grandson of Indo Pino, a powerful female shaman, got a fever which I personally recorded as 37.8 °C. He was clearly feeling terrible, shaking and complaining about the headache, until Indo Pino recited a *do'a* (magic spell) on the head of the child. He quickly felt better and went outside of the hut to play in the rain, without showing any adverse signs.

The illnesses related to the soul are invisible to common people. They are part of spiritual reality, a world that in the past was one with the human realm but which, nowadays, is not accessible by most humans. Only shamans, sharing their status with the spirits, are able to move from their human (visible) being to become a spiritual (invisible) one through the control of their soul. Like in many other shamanic cultures (Eliade, 1972; Roseman, 1993), the Wana commonly believe human beings possess three souls: *lengke* (the shadow), *koro uli* (the blood) and *tanuana* (the 'agent of dreams'). While the *lengke* is always with his or her owner, and the *koro uli* is the soul that goes to heaven once the person dies, the *tanuana* leaves its owner every night during sleep to wander around the worlds. Wana believe that what we see in our dreams is what the *tanuana* sees and experiences in its night wanderings. "The *tanuana* is a tiny image of its owner, residing in the crown of the head at the fontanel. [...] When recounting a dream, a Wana speaks of the dreamed self as 'my *tanuana*'" (Atkinson, 1989, p. 106). In these excursions, it is possible for the *tanuana* to be abducted or wounded by *setans*, or to get lost in the spirit realm. An intense negative emotion, such as anger or jealousy, can make the soul escape or get sick; for this reason, Wana tend to have a resigned reaction to the negative events of their life, often coping with pain through humour. When the soul is wounded or separated from its vessel for a long period, the person falls sick and the shaman must venture into the spirit realm, accompanied by

their spirits, to find out the cause of the illness and to facilitate the eventual recovery of the soul. Among the Temiar of Malaysia, a cultural community that shares many common traits with the Wana,

prolonged absence of the head soul outside of the contexts of dreams and trance leads to the illness of soul loss (*reywaay* “to lose one’s head soul”). Soul loss is marked by weariness, excessive sleeping, and weeping, and may lead to coma, delirium, and death, while the patient’s dislocated head soul takes up residence outside the body with spirits of the jungle. (Roseman, 1990, p. 232)

The Wana, like the Temiar, also consider the head (specifically the area of the occipital bone) to be the house of the soul, and they show similar symptoms when they have the inner illness. Just as for the Temiar, the *tanuana* moves around the jungle with the other spirits, but the Wana conception of jungle goes well beyond the material representation. For the Wana, the jungle is the special place of the spirits but, actually, everything that is outside the human realm of the village falls under the realm of the spirits. Outside the village, the spirits can be found in the forest, dreams, the afterlife and even in the place of *Pue*.

TAU WALIA

Almost every Wana village hosts one or more shamans, although they do not operate in only one village or area but instead are a resource for all the Wana people of Morowali. As shown in one of the documentaries made by the French couple Journet and Nougari (2007), *tau walia* are ready to help everybody, even people that live in France; in the movie, the shaman Indo Pino tries to cure a friend of the couple. Indeed, when I fell sick during my first period of fieldwork, my friends and informers asked me if I wanted to organise a *momago*. Moreover, it is not rare that a shaman, while travelling between villages, stops to help or cure somebody. These services are not free but their cost, 10.000 Indonesian rupiah, is a trivial amount even by local standards (in 2016 the cost of one litre of petrol was 7.000 IDR). People do not become shamans for money or power, but to preserve the tradition and to benefit the community. Shamanism is not considered a job but a call, and shamans still have to work in mainstream jobs to sustain themselves and their families. In fact, the strongest shamans I met (Apa Ingus, Indo Pino and Apa Main) were all less well-off than the average Wana person.

Obviously, shamanic treatments would not be possible without the trust and approval of the community, and this trust is based on a history of good outcomes from past rituals and on the religious and mythical systems that frame and give authority to the shamans’ actions. According to myth, the first shaman was *Dungola*, son of the first human couple, *Santoto* and *Delemontu*. He was so powerful that his rituals lasted three days and three nights. *Dungola* was also the first musician, revealing the relationship between music and the world of spirits, and he was the first entertainer, underlining the important role of playfulness in shamanic rituals. Therefore, the three main characteristics of Wana shamanism are ritual, music and entertainment. Among the shamans I met, Apa Ingus seemed the perfect incarnation of this “shamanism-music-playfulness” triad. He is a powerful shaman, respected

by everyone; he is also a *geso*⁴ (spike fiddles) player and an extremely skilled *popondo*⁵ (chest resonators) player, plus, to my great surprise, a harmonica player (see Figures 1 and 2).

Moreover, Apa Ingus is a remarkably fun person and he likes to play pranks and to joke with other people. He used deliberately to sing badly while I was recording him, laughing aloud at the humour of the situation. Apa Ingus' comic verve is also clear in his teknonymy.

Ingus means "mucus" in the Wana language and he gave this name to his first daughter knowing that from that moment on he would be called "Father of Mucus" (Apa Ingus). Indeed, when Ajeran, my guide, explained to me the meaning of the name, others present did not try to hide their fun or perplexity regarding the choice of name.

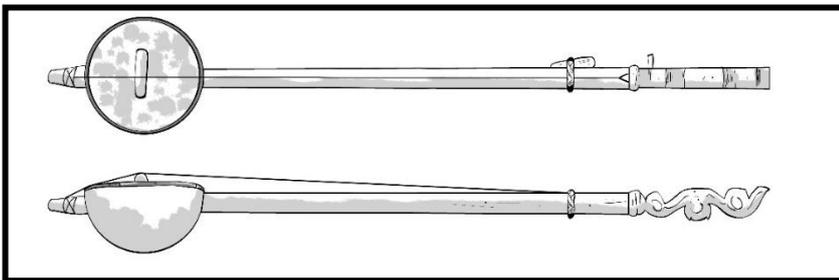


Figure 1: The side and the front of a *geso* (drawing by Santo D'Alia)

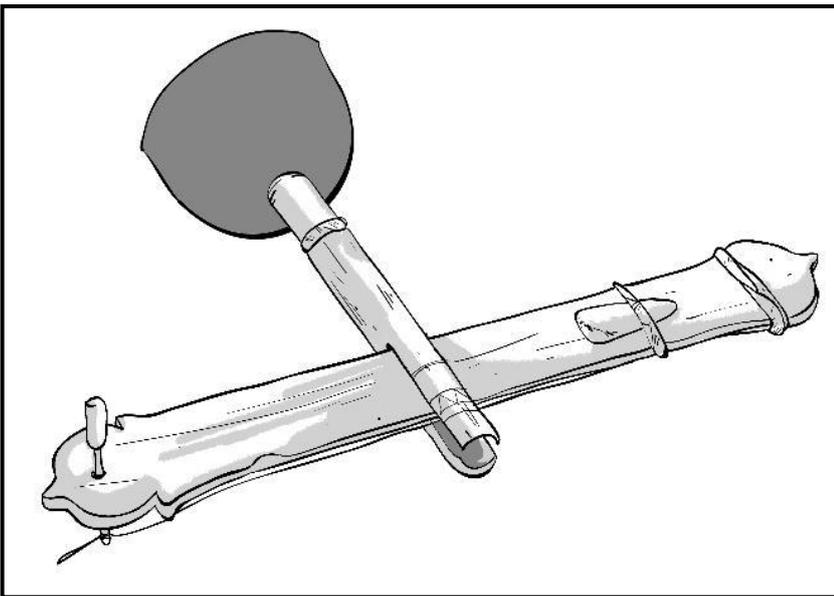


Figure 2: A *popondo* (drawing by Santo D'Alia)

⁴ The *geso* is a single-string spike fiddle, generally tuned a quarter of a tone under C3 and almost certainly of Muslim derivation. It consists of a coconut resonance box, covered with lizard (*kenbosu*) or snake skin. The wood of the *ba-a* tree is used for the handle, and much attention is paid to the decoration and personalisation of this part of the instrument. In the past, the strings were made from the fibres of the *enau* palm, but now fishing line or wire is used. The bow is made from bamboo, while the strings are still made from the fibres of the *enau* palm, which are cooked before use in order to make them more resistant. A fundamental accessory for the *geso* is the dammar gum that is passed on the string of the bow to increase friction.

⁵ The *popondo* is a chest resonator, of which the tuning seems to vary between a quartertone below and a quartertone above F3. It consists of a sound box made of half a coconut that rests on the player's chest, a wooden part, parallel to the chest, on which one string is fixed, and a piece of bamboo that connects the coconut to the wood.

Just as in many other cultures, Wana shamans choose to undertake this path following a shamanic call. These calls usually happen in dreams, a space-time that, as I have already noted, shares many characteristics with the invisible world. Unlike elsewhere in the world, however, this call is not mandatory in Wana culture. Studies of Japanese, Siberian and North American shamanism testify that refusing the call can bring illness and death to the individual. The shamanic call is not binding, as it is in Siberian shamanism (Balzer, 1997). We must consider that the work of a shaman is dangerous, even more so than working without any protection in a palm oil plantation or felling trees with a chainsaw. The shaman travels in worlds populated by demons and spirits, and he or she must always be ready to help the community. “[T]he desire to enter into contact with the sacred is counteracted by the fear of being obliged to renounce the simple human condition and become a more or less pliant instrument for some manifestation of the sacred.” (Eliade, 1972, p. 23) The ability to travel between the world of spirits and the human world, and their familiarity with both, places the shaman almost on the same level as that of *walia* (spirits). The shamans are called *tau walia*, literally human spirit. This liminal status, between humans and spirits, is the key of their powers. Many of these powers are available during the *momago*, especially in presence of ritual music. At these moments, ritual music transforms ordinary time into ritual time, a time that shares its power with myth. In these occasions, shamans that occupy a liminal space between the visible world and the invisible world of the spirits, between the everyday and the mythical, are able to perform wonders, to share their status with the spirits. Music acts as a bridge between the two worlds, a connection that the shaman can use to tap from the power of the mythical era. When *momago* is celebrated, the ritual music brings back into existence the mythical time.

Among the shamanic powers mentioned above, invisibility seems to be the one that links shamans to the mythical time and their spiritual aspects most strongly. Atkinson describes the *bolag*, spirits of the forest, as also possessing the *jampu* (Atkinson, 1989); this similarity places shamans on the same plane of the existence as spirits while they are using that power. Eliade tells us that among the Menangkabau of Sumatra the shaman train in solitude: “there they learn to become invisible and, at night, see the souls of the dead – which means that they *become* spirits, that they *are* dead” (Eliade, 1972, p. 86).

I believe that the same is true regarding the Wana; during the *momago* the *tau walia* lose their human (*tau*) status to embrace their spirit (*walia*) status, and use this new identity to perform wonders, to travel among realms, and to serve the community. They do not act as if they were spirits; rather, they are spirits and, furthermore, they have the control of their soul during the *momago* – something that it is impossible for other members of the community.

Moreover, the following testimony about a female shaman of the north provides an interesting description of the relationship between trance and dreaming:

There’s a woman in Posangke called Mime. When she hears the music, she starts trembling. People cannot see them but there are spirits with her. And when she sings she is dreaming and the spirits speak for her.⁶

⁶ From an interview with Indo Pino, May 2011.

Moreover, Atkinson affirms

Shamans see in waking states what others can see only in dreams. [...] People liken the experience of a performing shaman to “the state of a person dreaming” (*ewa kare’e tau mangipi*) [...] As they sing, shamans close their eyes and see the spirit world. (Atkinson, 1989, p. 92)

So, the trance of a shaman and the state of dreaming are similar experiences for the Wana. “Dreams – perceived through the agent of one’s *tanuana* – are most people’s only direct access to spirits and hidden realms of existence” (Atkinson, 1989, p. 91). Like music, dreams act as a bridge between the visible and invisible realms.

THE RITUAL

The *momago* is the most common shamanic ritual among the Wana people. It is a night-long ritual during which a group of shamans enter into trance and travel between the human and the spiritual worlds to take care of the souls of their patients. The trance is made possible because of the ritual music, produced by two gongs and a drum, which calls the spirits and act as a bridge between the human and the spiritual/mythical world. The contraposition between human and spiritual, conceived of and expressed as an opposite of the visible and the invisible, holds a special position in the Wana way of interpreting reality. The atmosphere of the *momago* is characterised itself by another duality: the continuous alternation of centrifugal and centripetal forces produced by the many shamanic journeys. These journeys are incorporated into a bigger performance, during which the bystanders (both as observers and actors) enjoy the opportunity to stay, drink and joke, contributing to the playful and chaotic atmosphere of the ritual.

At the beginning of the *momago*, dozens of people wait in the darkness of the hut in which the ritual is to take place. Darkness is one of the key elements of the *momago*, and we will explain later that while music attracts the spirits, light keeps them away. For this reason, the *momago* must end before dawn and any strong light in the hut must be shaded or turned off. Once, during a ritual I witnessed in the Taronggo village, the only available light was considered too strong and the patient had to be protected from the light by a curtain. During this part of the procedure, people are still arriving and they take up places wherever they can find space; the ritual room becomes very crowded.

While the main patient has the attention of one shaman, usually the most powerful, for the entire night, all those in the village suffering from ailments have the opportunity to be visited, and ideally cured, by the other shamans. It is not unusual for mothers to bring their children to the rituals, and many of them need treatment.

Ritual music should never be played away from the ritual itself,⁷ because it would attract the spirits outside of the controlled situation of the *momago*. The only way to learn how to play the ritual music is to listen to it and gain experience playing it during downtimes in a ritual, when the shamans are present and ready to intervene in case of need. In this context, playing is both playing a game and

⁷ Wana people have a truly lax attitude regarding rules. Even if there are many things that should never be done (e.g., play the war trumpet, play ritual music outside the ritual, or use red *pompolonzu*), Wana do these things anyway.

playing a musical instrument. Through the former kind of playing, children learn the latter, becoming accustomed to dealing with the instruments through incorporating them into their games. This playful learning process also contributes to the atmosphere that characterises the ritual and that contributes to the healing of the entire community. The presence of children is a reminder of life's energy and of the community's future. Ultimately, it is also important to note that assiduous participation in the rituals from a young age creates a strong relation between listening to the ritual music and the triggering of various memories and emotions linked to those times. On one side, those memories reinforce the trust in shamans and their healing power, while on the other side, they can help the shaman to enter into trance (Becker, 1994).

People's presence at rituals from young ages also ensures that they become deeply sensitised to ritual stimuli, so that the music unfailingly triggers an emotional response, bringing them to healing, playfulness or into trance. Wana people grow up experiencing a *momago* almost every month from their first weeks of life, when their hearing is more developed than their vision and so is the main tool they use to understand their environment. It seems clear that a strong connection is created in the minds of infants between ritual music and playfulness (the sounds of people chatting and laughing). Other important elements, such as healing, rituality and trance, will be subsequently linked to the ritual music when other senses (sight) and conceptual understandings (the ideas of community, religion, ritual and so on) develop. Overall, this atmosphere of playfulness, joyousness and communality is also a resource for the patients; they are influenced by the positive energies around them and feel part of something that transcends their own existence. It is worth noting here more details of the nature of inner illness. It can be a symptom related to a physical illness such as cancer, or an issue of mental health, such as depression. Inner illness can also be caused by a strong emotion that is not tamed, such as an extreme sadness, anger or jealousy; all of these emotions are potentially threatening for the stability of the community. Wana people often told me that the main cause of inner illness is "speaking badly," indicating gossiping or swearing. In other words, being upset or undermining the stability of the community is thought of as a serious negative.

The final aim of the *momago* is not just to eliminate illness but also to restore a healthy emotional state to the individual and, in doing so, to the entire community. The shamans not only move between the visible and the invisible world, but with their mediation and narration they make visible (comprehensible) the invisible (incomprehensible), giving a shape and a materiality to the inner illness. As Capranzano notes regarding the Moroccan Hamadsha: "They [saints, jnun, and Baraka] are elements in which I would call the participational mode of explanation of illness and therapy. They may be considered *signs* of psychic states and *symbols* of socio-cultural processes" (Capranzano, 1973, p. 213. Italics in the original). Moreover, Peters (1978, p. 65) notes among the Tamang of Nepal that "the curing activities involved in shamanic healing are not exercises in the treatment of organic disease but attempts to treat disturbing emotional states and interpersonal relations".

In a society like that of the Wana, where people tend to support each other and where the community is more important than the individual, a conflict between two people can escalate and bring sickness to the community. The *momago* is an opportunity to dispel frustration and emotional stress. The ritual is an example of organised chaos that allows the Wana people a greater emotional freedom and, through alcohol, courtship and joking, to relax and resolve tensions inside the community. Like in a carnival, during the *momago*, social rules are looser; people can let themselves go by drinking, flirting,

joking and dancing, even if extreme behaviour is still prohibited. Drinking is also now becoming a common behaviour outside the rituals, partially diminishing the uniqueness of the event, but it is not well perceived by many people, especially women.

THE RITUAL MUSIC

According to the Wana, the *momago* starts and ends with music, with a drum solo introduction and ending called *topo* (slapping). A pair of gongs and a drum are the main instruments. The drum, called the *ganda*, is a double-skinned hourglass-shaped instrument of around 50cm in length. On one side there is reptile (lizard or snake) skin, and on the other there is mammal (cuscus, wild cat or deer) skin. During the *momago*, the *ganda* is suspended from the ceiling between the two gongs and played by two people positioned on either side of it. Atkinson affirms: "Typically, young men and boys play the drums, and young women and girls the gongs" (Atkinson, 1989, p. 27) but I never noticed any division or roles between the genders. The reptile skin is struck with a rattan strip knotted at the end, while the mammal skin is hit with two wooden sticks. In the area studied by Atkinson, the *momago* ritual is called *mabolong*, literally meaning "drumming." She explains: "The ritual takes its name from the two-skinned *bolong* drum, which, along with a pair of bronze gongs, produces the insistent rhythms that summon both humans and spirits to the ritual and accompany shamans as they dance" (Atkinson, 1989, p. 1). The ritual can be also called *walia moganda* (Atkinson, 1989, p. 207), literally meaning "drumming the spirits" or "the spirits of the drum." The fact that the ritual is named after the main musical instrument stresses the important role of music in the ritual.

The drum plays a very important role in the ritual: to keep the shaman safe. Any mistake made while playing the drum can hurt the shaman. A wrong beat or an unexpected stoppage in the music can cause a traumatic breaking of the bridge that links the humans to the spirits and that allows the shaman to go into trance. These problems are called *ganda masala* (problems of/with the drum), and can cause shamans to convulse and become rigid in the limbs; when this happens the audience is ready to help the shaman and to calm them or to stretch the blocked limb.

The smaller of the two gongs used during the ritual has an average diameter of 26cm, while the larger has a diameter of around 41cm. The instruments are not made locally; Apa Rahu and other people told me that the large gong of Marisa village was brought into the village of Kayu Poli around 30 years ago by a man called Nyole. The small gong in Taronggo was brought in 2010 by Anna Grumblyes, who had bought the gong in Bali. The large gong in Taronggo village seems to have been present in the jungle for at least 40 years. Apa Main, one of the most powerful shamans in the Taronggo area, told me that the gong was already around when he was a child and that he does not have any idea of what could have been played during the *momago* before it arrived.

Beyond helping the shamans to get into trance, ritual music has many functions and roles within the *momago*. First, the music functions as a ritual and emotional marker. In a ritual with a complex structure like the *momago*, music is the only way to mark the start and end and to distinguish ritual time from ordinary time. *Momago* are very common events, but they always bring the exceptionality associated with a ritual and a party.

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

As we saw before, the ability to see the invisible world is one of the main characteristic of Wana shamans, so the *pompolonzu* (a ritual piece of cloth) that is used to cover the eyes of the shaman helps him or her to enter into a dream-like state and to see the invisible world. In some cases, the trance achieved can be so deep that the shaman is not able to stand or to stop dancing. In these cases, people are always on hand to support the shaman or to stop the *motaro* by physically blocking him or her. When the dance has ended, the shamans concentrate on the patient. The shamanic cure, whether in a *momago* or in a different context, consists of attempting to suck the inner illness out of the body, often from the head or the back, and to cast it away. These actions are performed with the hands and the mouth, or with the help of the *pompolonzu*. The cloth is also used to “clean” the sickness, with it spat on and passed over the patient’s body. This part of the ritual is accompanied by shamanic chanting. The dramatisation of the healing process through the sucking and spitting out of evil is not a factor seen only in Wana rituals but is, in fact, quite common in diverse locations. In Nepal, for example, “this process is known as *jharnu*, or to blow the illness away” (Peters, 1978, p. 66).

Sometimes, the shaman’s job is not to suck out illness but to reinsert the patient’s lost soul. This process is also dramatised. The shamans grasp at the air, as if to catch and retrieve the escaped soul, and gesture to restore it to the owner’s head.

Shamanic texts are best described as dramatic dances [...] in non-literate cultures religion is always a performing art, and the sacredness of religious stories or prayers resides not in the words of the texts as they have been or could be transcribed but in the power invested in them through performance. (Porterfield, 1987, p. 726)

Therefore, the Wana *tau walia* can be understood as entertainers, musicians and living manifestations of the mythical, but they are also psychologists. The rituals deal with the beliefs, traumas, culture and memories of patients; they are working on their psyche.

Actually the shamanistic cure seems to be an exact counterpart of the psychoanalytic cure, but with an inversion of all the elements. Both cures aim at inducing an experience, and both succeed by recreating a myth which the patient has to relive. But in one case, the patient constructs an individual myth with elements drawn from his past; in the other case, the patient receives from the outside a social myth which does not correspond to a former personal state. (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 199)

Dramatisation is crucial for the success of the ritual; it helps the patient to understand what it is happening to them, especially considering that people in this context do not have an extensive understanding of contemporary medical science. It is, in effect, making something frightening and incomprehensible simpler and relatable to the worldview of the people involved. Again, the example of the Tamang of Nepal illustrates the prevalence of this phenomenon in other traditional cultures: “the illness is placed within a conceptual framework. The patient’s symptoms and all the mysterious and

chaotic feelings of distress were organized and their causes identified by the shaman during diagnosis." (Peters, 1978, p. 82)

This process has been recognised by the psychiatrist Fuller-Torrey (1972, p. 16), who considers this "naming process" a "universal component of psychotherapy which is used by both witchdoctors and psycho-therapists alike." Fuller-Torrey believes that once the illness is put into a suitable cultural frame, the patient can empathise with other people previously cured of the same complaint, with identification helping to reduce anxiety and to put the patient into a more serene state of mind. A similar theory was already expressed in 1944 by Kluckhohn, who underlined how the identification of the illness helps the patient and their family to make order from the chaos created by a previously unlabelled complaint. As Peters (1981, p. 135) explains, "the diagnostic process through which illness is identified makes a transformation from chaos to order in the eyes of the patient and those concerned for him, and that has therapeutic effectiveness".

Of course, all this happens in the subconscious of the person because ritual symbols may

refer to extensive and complex ideas of value, structure, and transformation, whose verbal statement requires considerable time. Consequently, the symbolism of ritual is often obscure, since it refers to intentions and beliefs that are complex and, in part, unconscious. (Wallace, 1966, p. 237)

The battle between the shaman and the illness is played out on a symbolic plane, where the words, music and action build a powerful world around the patient. The shaman "holds a dialogue with the patient, not through the spoken word but in concrete actions, that is, genuine rites which penetrate the screen of consciousness and carry their message directly to the unconscious" (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 200). Particularly fascinating is an idea from Peters that

the underlying effect of all these exercises in Tamang healing puja is to transmute the patient's symptoms and behavior into socially useful channels. In accomplishing this purpose, the symbol serves, I believe, as a guide or vehicle for the reorganization of the emotions released during the traumatic cathartic experience. (Peters, 1978, pp. 85-86)

We should note that while the single shaman is busy with his/her trance, all around him/her there are shamans who are intent on dancing or treating people. Bystanders are also chatting, joking and drinking, and while the players take turns the music stops for a long time or changes, becoming faster or slower, depending on the requirement. With myth, drama and performance, the *tau walia* create a frame that brings sense to the pain of the patient. For a community with almost no access to modern medicine, it is much more difficult to explain things like asthma or psychological problems than it is a broken bone or skin wound, without reference to the hidden world. During the *momago*, the illness is presented as a material object within the patient that the *tau walia* has to suck up and dispose of. This materialisation of the invisible makes sense of what otherwise could not be understood. Geertz not only underlines the power of the shaman to create meaning, but also the role of chanting in these processes:

a sing is mainly concerned with the presentation of a specific and concrete image of truly human, and so enduring, suffering powerful enough to resist the challenge of emotional meaninglessness raised by the existence of intense and unremovable brute pain. (Geertz, 1973, p. 105)

Because “as religious problem, the problem of suffering is, paradoxically, not how to avoid it, but how to suffer, how to make the physical pain, the personal grief bearable: something, as we say, tolerable” (Geertz, 1973, p. 104).

The connections between the invisible and mythical power are expressed especially strongly during the *momago*. The ritual must take place during the night and end before the sunrise. Moreover, an almost pitch-black darkness is required for the ritual, because light pushes away the spirits (just as music attracts them). This darkness helps to set the atmosphere and it is in line with the idea that “miracles can still happen but only in secret;” great wonders (like the shaman’s powers) can only happen in the dark, where the mystery can be preserved and where invisible beings dwell. Moreover, the shamans use the *pompolonzu* (ritual cloth) to cover their eyes when they are “seeing far.” They close their human eyes to activate their spiritual sight: “there is no elaborated transition between ‘states.’ As they sing, shamans close their eyes and see the spirit world” (Atkinson, 1989, p. 92) and “As he sings he uses ‘the eyes of his spirit familiars’ to see hidden aspects of the world” (Atkinson, 1989, p. 121). Despite Atkinson’s suggestion that sight and not hearing is more central to the language of extraordinary experience, the music (the singing) is a constant presence when entering into contact with the invisible world. Thanks to their liminality, shamans can tap into mythical time and use their spiritual power to see the invisible world. This is a power that it is not always active; if it were, shamans would be fully invisible beings rather than points of contact between humans and spirits. In fact, “Shamans with such magic insist that they possess such vision only in the context of a shamanic ritual, whereas vampires use such vision at all times” (Atkinson, 1989, p. 96). The shamanic ritual is a context characterised by the presence of music.

Building on these reflections about the opposition between the visible and the invisible, other elements of Wana life and rituality can also be categorised according to this visible-invisible dichotomy. There is, however, an important element of Wana life that does not fit into this dichotomy: emotions. There is no obvious binary counterpart to emotion in this construction, but the control of emotion in particular ways plays an important role in Wana life, particularly through how people cope with the frustrations of living a “miserable” life. They are an invisible force that can bring great danger, and the control of emotion is crucial for the survival of the individual and the community. Despite their power, emotions share the invisibility that I have just discussed as an important shaper of Wana social life.

I would suggest, also, that there is a direct connection between the use of music and communication with the invisible world. Following the theories of James Frazer (1889) on sympathetic magic, I see important connections between the invisibility of music and other invisible elements of Wana life (spirits, emotions and so on). I understand music as a bridge and link between the visible and the invisible worlds.

Secrecy or invisibility (*jampu*) is the main characteristic of everything that is non-human and, hence, extraordinary. Previously, I outlined how *jampu* is one of the main powers of shamans, and how

this power is strongly related to their spiritual nature. Shamans, in Wana language *tau walia* (literally person spirit), are the living manifestation of liminality between the human and the spirit. As humans they have a body and they live and interact in the same reality as all other Wana people, but as half-spirits they also belong partially to the invisible world of the spirits. Indeed, spirits are not the only invisible element of Wana life that is visible to them; illness and emotion are also accessible to them.

Inner illness, by definition, is invisible to normal people, and only shamans can see and treat it. This kind of illness is caused by problems of the soul or wounds caused by *setan*, both of which are also invisible. It is the role of the shaman to make these illnesses “visible,” by describing them in their *do’a* (magic spells) or in songs, to help the patient in understanding and “materialising” the illness. In the *momago*, the illness is described as a rock that it is thrown away, but also as something that can come in contact with other people and infect them. In the *molawo*, illnesses are fishing hooks that are tearing the flesh of the patient and that the shaman removes after having obtained permission from *Pue Lamo*, the vengeful god of lightning that it is punishing the patient. For Wana people (along with many other peoples), that which is invisible is mysterious, and often dangerous. It seems likely that the jungle, as the place of spirits, is considered dangerous partly because of the difficulty in seeing more than a few meters around. The shaman acts as a mediator between the visible world of the humans and the invisible world of the spirits, helping Wana people in understanding what they cannot see and experience by themselves.

Emotions are also invisible, and Wana people are highly concerned with them, with strong emotion considered the primary cause of inner illness. It seems unlikely it is just a coincidence that music, something invisible, is used to control emotion and to treat the inner illness. In Wana culture, music seems closely linked to these two invisible elements, emotion and spirits. Wana people consider music the best tool to enter into contact with the non-visible world, that of emotion and spirits. Invisibility is the element that links these phenomena together. Shamans are a living liminality, a hybrid between human and spirit. In this liminal state, shamans are able to do things that are impossible to normal humans, and to interact with the human world in a way that it is impossible to spirits. I discussed the powers that shamans can employ while listening to the *momago* music; in those moments, the shaman is more spirit than human.

Ultimately, invisibility should be thought of as a special form of existence and, of course, shamans cannot simply interact with it using mundane language. As Rudolf Otto (1956, p. 125) points out, “What is essential and great requires to be sung”. Atkinson (1989, p. 54) explains that “It is not uncommon for one who is skilled at playing a musical instrument such as flute, tuning fork, or stringed chest resonator to play haunting and plaintive songs to attract hidden beings”. Here, the relationship between sound, or music, and the invisible world is made even clearer. Music is present during the entire *momago* and *kayori* rituals and it takes a very important role. Moreover, non-ritual music also has a great power; the *popondo* and the *tulali*⁸ (Figures 3 and 4) are two instruments with the power to greatly influence people’s sexual desires. Atkinson herself even describes the *yori* (tuning fork) as an instrument able to attract the spirits, in a similar way to the ritual music of the *momago*. At the other extreme, instrumental music is forbidden in the *kayori* because the aim of the ritual is not to call the

⁸ The *tulali* is a bamboo flute with three holes and a mouth opening (*pagoma*) that is similar to that of a panpipe. It can be decorated with *rando* (decorations) of geometric patterns. After engraving, they are coloured white with a powder derived from molluscs.

spirits (centripetal force), but actually to keep them away and to send away the soul of the deceased (centrifugal force). Music is thus used as way of calling the spirits, and as a tool for interacting with the invisible realm that is available not only to the shamans but to everyone. In addition, it is possible to draw a direct connection between the invisibility of emotions and of the spirits, and the invisibility of music.

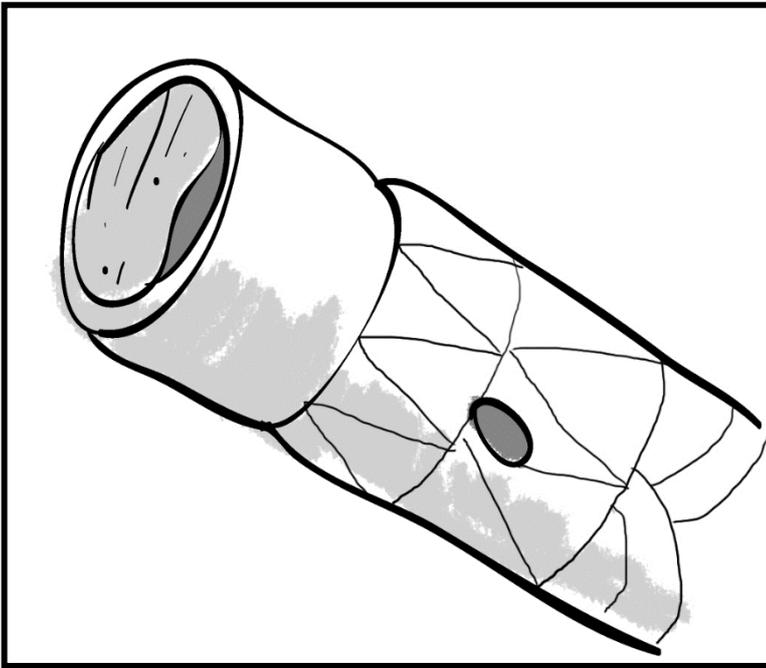


Figure 3: Detail of a *tulali*'s mouth opening (drawing by Santo D'Alia)

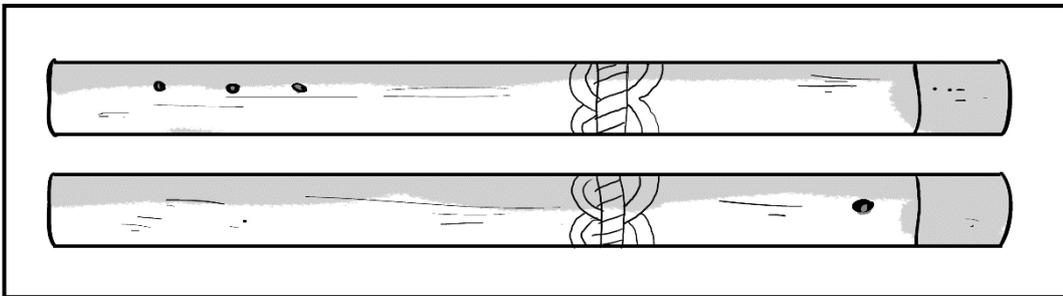


Figure 4: A *tulali* with typical decorations (drawing by Santo D'Alia)

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, it is reasonable to conclude that Wana people see a connection between sound and the invisible world; this is evident considering the Wana belief that sounds produced by invisible beings can be heard. Sound on its own, however, is not enough to communicate with the invisible world; normal speech is too mundane for interacting with non-human beings, especially gods. For this reason, Wana people use music to communicate with the spirits and to control emotion. Music creates an atmosphere and sets the stage for wonders to happen. During the *momago*, it is the music that marks the beginning and the end of the ritual. Likewise, it is not darkness or not-seeing that separates

mundane time and ritual time, but music. Taken in this light, music seems to take on a central role in the relationship between humans and the invisible people.

In this sense, Wana culture adds new insights to wider discussions on the link between music, emotion and wellbeing. These are connections drawn since antiquity (Plato, 2005) and continuing to fascinate scholars and professionals. Wana people look at music as a tool to communicate with spirituality, through its strong connections with the inner world of emotions. For this community, emotions are crucial for the wellbeing of the single person and therefore of the entire community. Humans are not only comprised of flesh and symptoms, but they manifest a complex system in which emotion, spirituality and mental health are crucial. To control and manage this system, Wana people use music, seeing invisibility as the common factor uniting these elements. Even if the Wana live in a very different environment and culture than the Western one, we share many commonalities as humans. Among these commonalities are the power of emotion upon us, the need for spirituality and the ability of music to touch us and bring us into new worlds.

With this article and with its view from a culture so distant from us, I intend to push forward the discussion on how we see ourselves and patients, not only as monolithic beings but as unions and interconnections of many elements that are not always clear to our eyes. In times of religious fluidity and personal spiritualities, acknowledging the inner emotional world present in ourselves and our patients will open new doors to their physical and emotional health and to the use of music therapy. As the Wana case shows, music can be a unique tool for safely creating a safe healing space-time and for uncovering the 'inner illness' of our patients, working as a bridge between the inner and the outside world of the patient and his or her illness. This will be extremely important when working with patients coming from different religions and cultures, with whom music can help to communicate and collaborate better than words. In the end, there is an important need to know and understand the other to successfully work with it and, more than anything, to link our inner world with the inner world of the patient through music.

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Ελληνική περίληψη | Greek abstract

Η μουσική και ο αόρατος κόσμος: Η μουσική ως γέφυρα μεταξύ διαφορετικών σφαιρών

Giorgio Scalici

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μεταξύ των Ουάνα [Wana], των κατοίκων του Μορωγουάλι [Morowali] που βρίσκεται στο Κεντρικό Σουλαουέσι [Sulawesi] [σ.τ.μ. που είναι ένα από τα μεγαλύτερα νησιά της Ινδονησίας], η μουσική χρησιμεύει ως σύνδεση μεταξύ του ανθρώπινου κόσμου και του κρυμμένου κόσμου των πνευμάτων και του συναισθήματος. Για τον λόγο αυτό, η μουσική κατέχει κεντρικό ρόλο κατά τη διάρκεια του *μομάγκο* [momago], του βασικού θεραπευτικού τελετουργικού των Ουάνα. Η μουσική δίνει τη δυνατότητα στους σαμάνους να αντλήσουν δύναμη από τη μυθική εποχή. Ερευνώντας το *μομάγκο* θα διευκρινίσω τον ρόλο και τη σημασία της μουσικής στην τελετουργία των Ουάνα. Κατά τη διάρκεια του τελετουργικού, η μουσική χρησιμεύει ως τελετουργικός δείκτης και, μέσα από τη σχέση της με τον κρυμμένο κόσμο, καλεί τα πνεύματα, μεταμορφώνει τον κοινό χρόνο σε μυθικό/τελετουργικό και βοηθά τους σαμάνους να εισέλθουν σε έκσταση. Επιπλέον, η μουσική συμβάλλει στην παιχνιδιάρικη ατμόσφαιρα που χαρακτηρίζει τα τελετουργικά των Ουάνα και που επιτρέπει την επούλωση του ασθενούς και της κοινότητας μέσω συναισθηματικής κάθαρσης. Για να διερευνήσει τον ρόλο της μουσικής σε αυτό το σαμανικό τελετουργικό, το άρθρο αυτό θα αναλύσει τη δομή και τον στόχο του *μομάγκο*, ενός τελετουργικού στο οποίο οι σαμάνοι και η μουσική ενώνουν τις δυνάμεις τους στην προσπάθειά τους να βρουν την ψυχή του ασθενούς και να σώσουν τη ζωή του.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ

σαμανισμός, τελετουργία, μουσική