

# The Musical Tradition of Wana (Indonesia)

GIORGIO SCALICI

## Abstract

The Wana are a small Indonesian indigenous community made up of about 5,000 people. Like many other indigenous communities around the world, they are experiencing a period of great change and transitions. One of these concerns their traditional music, now increasingly rare and almost forgotten in favor of the pop music played by mobile phones. Between 2011 and 2016, I was able to dedicate part of my fieldwork to collect this musical tradition, paying attention also towards the instruments, through an investigation all around the forest of Morowali on makers, materials used in construction and players. This article offers an account of this particular issue of my field research, not only through the typological description of Wana musical instruments, but also outlining an insight into their construction and use: unique testimonies of a culture now on the verge of oblivion.<sup>1</sup>

*I Wana sono una piccola comunità indigena indonesiana costituita da circa 5000 persone. Come tante altre comunità indigene sparse per il mondo, anche loro stanno vivendo un periodo di grandi cambiamenti e transizioni, riducendo fra l'altro la pratica della propria musica tradizionale entro ambiti sempre più periferici e sporadici, mentre sempre più si va affermando l'ascolto della musica pop riprodotta dai telefonini. Tra il 2011 e il 2016 ho avuto modo di dedicare parte della mia ricerca sul campo alla documentazione di queste tradizioni musicali, con attenzione anche verso gli strumenti, conducendo un'indagine per tutta la foresta di Morowali su costruttori, materiali impiegati nella costruzione e suonatori. Questo articolo ne offre un resoconto, non soltanto attraverso la descrizione tipologica degli strumenti musicali Wana, ma anche delineando i vari aspetti associati alla loro costruzione e uso: testimonianze uniche di una cultura ormai sull'orlo dell'oblio.*

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised, expanded and updated version of a part of the second chapter of the author's PhD dissertation (Scalici 2019b)

## 1. Introduction

The Wana people are an indigenous community living inside the Morowali nature reserve in Sulawesi, Indonesia. Unlike the much more famous Toraja people who live less than 500 km from the Morowali forest, the Wana have been almost ignored by the researches with very few exceptions (Alvard, Atkinson, Grumbles, Kruyt, Lahadji, Riccardi, and Scalici).<sup>2</sup> As a result, the information about their tradition and culture aren't many, especially their traditional music was ignored, and it was never documented and studied before my fieldwork among them. Sadly, Wana people are leisure music is experiencing a period of great crisis; currently traditional music is a matter for a few elders, who still own and use the few musical instruments in circulation. The young are great music lovers but are much more interested in Indonesian popular music. The passion for this music is so strong that they buy mobile phones just to listen to MP3 recordings of it, there being no telecommunications signal in the jungle; the songs are given to them by friends and relatives from outside the forest. Playing the guitar is very common among young people, and they mainly use the instrument to play pop hits and I received many requests for new strings from my trips to Palu. Thus, it seems music is maintaining its importance in Wana society, even though the traditional forms are being replaced by modern mainstream ones. Indeed, after centuries of vitality and presence in the community, Wana traditional music seems to be approaching the end of its time, or to be deeply transformed, and documenting and safeguarding this treasure has been a major motivation for me.

Unfortunately, it has not been easy to approach this tradition. This is not because of a lack of Wana interest in sharing their music with me, but because of the difficulty in finding and reconstructing musical instruments and, ultimately, finding players. Often, people do not dedicate much care towards their instruments; they are, in fact, placed in the corners of their houses or between roof inlets and often abandoned there for years. Usually, an unusable instrument is not replaced (reflecting a widespread idea that what is not needed is also not wanted), effectively reducing the number of specimens and the possibility of their discovery by new generations. During my stay, I found with difficulty only two *geso* (spike fiddle), two *popondo* (chest resonator), and three *tulali* (flute); for the other instruments, I had to find people able to make them. Even if traditional music is disappearing, the strong cultural connection between music and the different conception of seeing/feeling is still strong and crucial to understand Wana rituality and human-spirit relationships (Scalici 2019a) and, as Friedson notes, «music makes translucent the boundary between human and spirit» (1996: 100). Moreover, Porath wisely points out how sounds are a way to physicalizing the invisible: «Their [Sakai] sensorium also allows for the perception of sound to be epistemologically considered as something materially non-physical, rather than only something physical» (2008: 660).<sup>3</sup> As we will see, a few

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<sup>2</sup> This is a complete list of all the authors who have done research among the Wana.

<sup>3</sup> On the fascinating topic of sound and the relationship between hearing and seeing, see Porath 2019.

of these instruments have a direct connection with the invisible world, and they are able to affect material, emotional and spiritual realities with their sounds.

Wana people have a great awareness of the sound quality that an instrument must possess, and the choice of materials is always aimed at achieving the best possible result. Even when forced by the lack of materials, for instance by building resonance boxes from plastic containers, the Wana always try to obtain the desired sound. They are also very careful and critical about the musical instruments built by other people; I encountered some that had been built by people considered not up to the task, and these people were widely criticised for their sloppy work.<sup>4</sup>

Many Wana people have great practical knowledge about music but do not possess a large musical vocabulary; in fact, there are no words for “music” or “rhythm”, while they do clearly distinguish instrumental music (*krambangan*) from that for single voice or for voice and instrumental accompaniment (*linga-linga*), or funeral songs (*kayori*). In addition, words do not distinguish clearly between the intensity and the pitch of a sound; the word *malangan* means both “high-pitched” and “strong/intense”, while the term *rede* is used to indicate a low-pitched and a low intensity sound. Each note is simply called *soo* (sound), thus a note, any note, played on an instrument is called “name of the instrument” *soo*. For example, a note on the flute will be simply called *tulali soo* (flute’s note). The lack of specific names for the different *soo* has practically forced me to use Western terminology to indicate Wana musical intervals and sounds. It is extremely important to note that from the Wana point of view, the timbre is a way more important musical parameter than the melody. In fact, the same melody played by different instruments, or even different versions of the same instruments, is perceived as different. Indo Pino played the same melody for hours on different flutes while explaining to me that they were different music because played on different flutes. The term for something in tune is *matino*, while something out of tune is *ta matino*. *Ta* meaning “no”.

This linguistic approach to their traditional music has created some issues regarding the classification<sup>5</sup> of their musical instruments. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to find a shared concept of instruments classification, this doesn’t mean that certainly Wana people don’t have any, but that if they have one, I wasn’t able to understand and extrapolate from my experience among them. It is possible that the instrument classification was simply given for granted by the Wana, how it happened for many other elements of their culture that they didn’t feel the need to tell me about or to explain to me because they were obvious to them, they were an intrinsic part of their life, and like we don’t feel the need to talk about our breathing when we talk about our day with a friend, because we give it for granted,

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<sup>4</sup> When looking for somebody to make me instruments, I had trouble finding a volunteer, even if the work was paid. All of the instruments that I brought back from the field were all made especially for me, and I paid for them all. Knowing the Wana approach towards replacing objects, I never took an instrument from a Wana owner.

<sup>5</sup> By classification, I mean «a scheme that organizes knowledge about selected entities from a chosen domain, grouping them in one or more steps (stages of subdivision) into sets of classes» (Kartomi 1990: 16).

they didn't feel the need to explain to me some elements of their life because they were how they were *dari pertama* (from the first time. From the beginning of time). In other words, they simply are and everybody should know about them because they have always existed and will always exist. For this, no explanation is due.<sup>6</sup> A possible classification of them according to the Wana would be too fragmented and not very practical for the reader. A division by material would be almost pointless because the Wana never even mention such categorization and too often their instruments are made of makeshift tools, such as plastic bowls instead of coconut, fishing rod instead of horsehair or *enau* bark instead of skin. It could be possible to put all the flutes, *tutali*, in the same family, but at the same time, the *tulai* and the *popondo* (single-stringed baton zither) are usually presented as a couple due to their link to courtship and gender. But this division would leave out all the other instruments that do not have a direct connection with the invisible world of emotion and spirits or to a specific gender. We saw before how the Wana value the timbre over the melody, but classify their musical instrument based on their timbre would also be difficult because even two models of the same instruments are considered to produce different music because they have a different timbre and it would be impossible to divide them in groups. Due to the lack of a better, or an indigenous, way to organize their musical instruments, I have decided to use the classical Sachs and Hornbostel (1914) system of classification (idiophones, membranophones, chordophones and aerophones), widely familiar to the academics, and to indicate, when present, the relationship between different instruments.

Now I will present all the instruments of Wana tradition and some of their traditional songs. The reader is kindly invited to visit <<http://giorgioscalici.eu>> to take advantage of the possibility of not only being able to see the instruments, but also being able to listen to them and learn how they are made. I am actively working on this cultural archive to allow both Wana and not Wana an easy access to a precious but endangered heritage. While preservation often brings its challenges, including the imposition of a predetermined criteria (Churchill 2006; de Jong 2007; Joy 2011), it is an important task that must have at its core the point of view and the desires of the community. Indeed, the Wana deeply believe in sharing what they have, they even arrived to invite all the unemployed Italians to go live in their land because there is enough land for everybody, so they are both glad and proud to share their knowledge to everybody who is eager to learn from them.

## 2. Idiophones

*Yori* – An idioglot, mouth harp, with a case made to carry it safely while travelling (Fig. 1, [Video 1](#)).<sup>7</sup> Similar instruments, even with the container, are present among the Hmong of

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<sup>6</sup> For a wider discussion about this part of Wana culture and its effects on my fieldwork, I suggest looking at Scalici 2019b.

<sup>7</sup> All the drawings in this article were made by Santo D'Alia, a friend and artist whom I thank for the wonderful work.

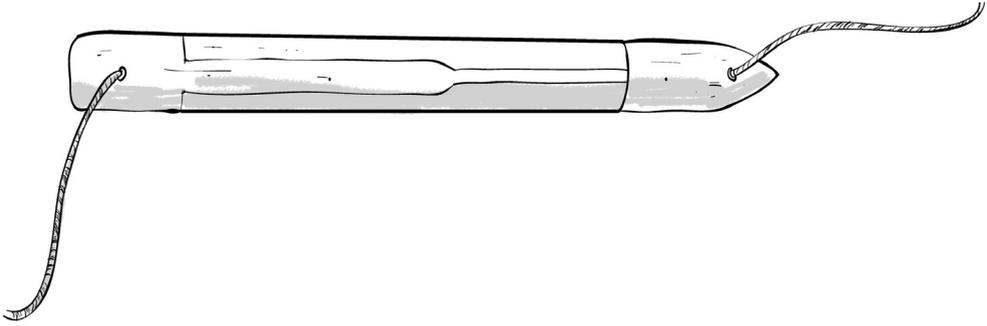


FIGURE 1. A *yori*.

Vietnam, *dan moi* (Ó Briain 2018), the Lahu people of China and Thailand, *ata* (Fairfield 2018), or among many communities in the Philippines (Maceda 1998), just to name a few. The instrument is made from the palm of the *enau* tree; from the plant, they obtain a thin rectangle in which the *gila* (lamina) is obtained and this acts as a vibrating body. Small holes are made on the sides of the instruments, through which two thin chords of bark are passed and fixed. These strings are used both to hold the instrument (with the left hand) and to make the blade vibrate (when the other is pulled with the right hand).

The rhythmic pulling of the string causes the vibration of the foil, and consequently the emission of the sound. The case, called the *tonga yori*, has a tubular shape and is made of bamboo. Once the *yori* is stored in its case, strings are tied around the outside to secure it and to allow it to be safely transported. Apa Sudin once told me: «We played this when we did not have the guitar».

Although in the past this instrument was very widespread, the use of the *yori* now seems to have completely disappeared. Because of bad eyesight, the man who made the instrument for me had to be helped by his son, who had never seen the instrument before (this happened in 2011). As might be expected, the long period of obscurity for this instrument also meant that I could not find any skilled players. People I interviewed knew how to make the instrument sound, but they did not have the knowledge to play whole melodies.

*Tulalo* – It is a friction idiophone (Fig. 2, [Video 2](#)). A bamboo tube is partially carved, so as to obtain from the tube two long tongues of cane, joined at the handle (*konkonya*), which maintains the natural cylindricality. Two *soru* (small holes) are made in it on the opposite side of the handle. The sound is produced by the hitting of one of the two tongues on the palm of the free hand; the supporting hand acts on the holes, in order to modulate the heights of the sound produced.

My informants told me that the instrument was exclusively used to provide accompaniment to the other instruments. This instrument has almost disappeared and is no longer used.



FIGURE 2. A *tulalo*.

*Ngonngi* – The gongs, or in the Wana language *ngonngi*, are a “recent”<sup>8</sup> introduction into the religious and musical practices of this culture.<sup>9</sup> «In many cultures, gong ensemble music in ritual is seen as the actual medium through which the human and spiritual worlds merge» (Pugh-Kitingan 2012: 149). An essential element in a *momago*,<sup>10</sup> the main shamanic ritual, is the ensemble of ritual instruments: two gongs, one big and one small, and a wooden drum. A similar situation has been observed for the rituals of the Taman of Borneo, where the ritual music is played with drums, gongs and bowls (Bernstein 1997: 89). «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; village chief 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 Grumblies, who had purchased the gong in Bali.<sup>11</sup> The large gong in Taronggo village seems to have been present in the jungle for at least 40 years» (Scalici 2019b: 132). In earlier times the *tetebua*, or its variant *tamburu*, was used during the *momago*. The gongs, that are also considered a community’s good, are usually guarded by a shaman or village chief. Female shaman Indo Pino used to keep the gongs of the Marisa area when she was alive.

### 3. Membranophones

*Ganda* – This name indicates an hourglass drum, about 50 cm high, with double membrane; on one side, with a diameter of about 18 cm, *biawak*<sup>12</sup> or snakeskin is stretched out, while the other membrane, also about 18 cm in diameter, is made of deerskin or couscous (Fig. 3).<sup>13</sup>

For the *momago*, the *ganda* is hung from the ceiling between the two gongs and played by two people positioned on either side of the drum. The reptile skin is struck with a bamboo strip knotted at the end, while the mammal skin is struck with two wooden drumsticks.

<sup>8</sup> I theorize the gongs arrived with the help of the transmigration program, thus during the XX century. The transmigration program, *transmigrasi* in Indonesian, was an initiative of the Dutch colonial government, and currently of the Indonesian government, to move people from densely populated areas, mainly Java and Bali, to less populous areas of the archipelago (Elmhirst 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Gong chimes are extremely common in the musical world of the Southeast Asia, and can be found in different forms in Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma and Vietnam (Heins 2001).

<sup>10</sup> For videos and photos of the rituals, please visit <[www.giorgioscalici.eu/momago/](http://www.giorgioscalici.eu/momago/)>

<sup>11</sup> I met Dr. Groumblies in 2011 during our first fieldwork among the Wana.

<sup>12</sup> Reptile belonging to the family of monitor lizards which also includes Komodo dragons.

<sup>13</sup> Mammal of the marsupial family of the order diprotodont. They are commonly called possums.

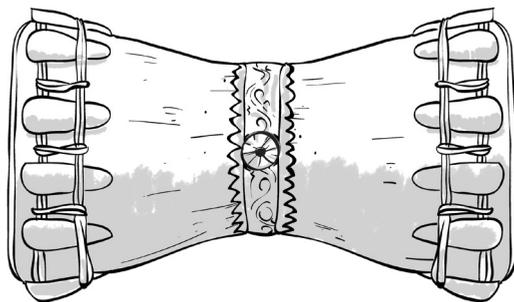


FIGURE 3. The side of a *ganda*.

In the central part there is a decoration and a small hole, less than a centimetre in diameter, used to improve the sound of the instrument.

A dry corn grain is inserted inside the instrument. It is usually put inside the drums to increase the sound produced; it is reasonable to hypothesize an apotropaic function of this small detail. As Combarieu observes, musical instruments place in the magician's hands «des parcelles de tous les règnes de la nature: ils sont faits de roseau ou de bambou, de coques de certains fruits, de métal, de bois dur, de pierre (sonore), de peaux d'animaux, de carapaces, d'os, de cornes évidées, de soies, de rafia tordu, de crins, de boyaux...; ils constituent un résumé du cosmos»<sup>14</sup> (Combarieu 1909: 260-261). Just as wood represents the plants of the forest, animal skin represents animals in their entirety, oviparous and mammals, and corn represents the cultural world of the village. Dried corn is also used as a unit of measurement to indicate the amount of the fine that must be paid in the event of not completely lawful marriages and was used, in the past, also for a variant of the *kayori* (funeral) in which grains were placed inside a coconut and shaken. A grain of corn was placed inside a small rattle, called *diodio*, which was tied to the warriors' machetes to attract women.

Like the shamans, the drum is also a common good and it hasn't a single owner because the *momago* tends above all to reaffirm the *kasintuwu* (mutual support) (Atkinson 1989: 26) and the importance of living inside a community.

The Wana also told me about the *kratu* (the war drum), but I never saw one. It is tall and narrow, with a single membrane made of *rusa* (deerskin) on the upper and wider side of the drum while the other side was open, similar to the Filipino *dabakan*. Possibly derived from the container used to beat the rice. The *kratu* was used for the *tongkepuno tau tau* (war call). According to the tales, it seems that a mythical *kratu* is kept in one of the caves surrounding Uewaju but has been turned into stone in the mythical time. It

<sup>14</sup> «Particles of the whole natural kingdom: reed or bamboo, shell of some fruits, metal, hard wood, stone (sonorous), animal skins, carapace, bones, horns hollows, silk, woven raffia, horsehair, guts; the instruments constitute a synthesis of the cosmos» (translation by the author).

was also used to accompany the *mamose*,<sup>15</sup> a war dance dating back to when the Wana were head-hunters.

#### 4. Chordophones

*Popondo* – This is a single-stringed baton zither, equipped with a bamboo connection element to the coconut rigid resonator. This does not act as a bridge. The string is tensioned by a sagittal peg and runs on the narrowest side of the rectangle fitting on the sides of the support (Fig. 4, [Video 3](#)), of which the tuning seems to vary between a quartertone below and a quartertone above  $F_3$ . With one hand, the player strikes the string with their fingertips, while the fingers of the other hand are used to modulate the sound. 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. In the past, the string was made from the *enau*, the same tree from which the *yori* is made. This kind of instrument is extremely ancient and widely present in the Southeast Asia. We can still find Bar zither player among the Khmer of Cambodia, *kse diev* (Sam-Ang 2008), and Vietnam (Nguyễn 2008).

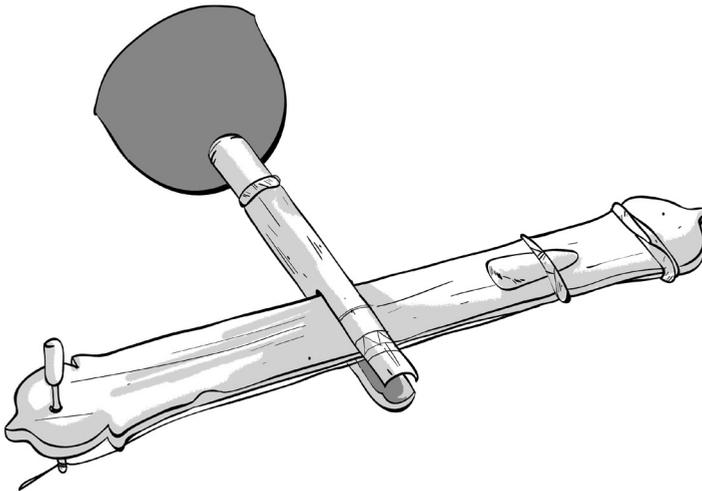


FIGURE 4. A *popondo*.

As in many other Wana musical compositions, melodies played on this instrument are limited in range to the interval of a fourth (F-B)<sup>16</sup> and, like many other Wana composi-

<sup>15</sup> For videos and photos of the *mamose*, please visit <[www.giorgioscalici.eu/mamose/](http://www.giorgioscalici.eu/mamose/)>

<sup>16</sup> Considering the lack, in Wana language, of names used to indicate the different notes, due to the major attention given to the timbre of a note, I have decided to use the Western terminology to indicate the tuning of the Wana instruments. Obviously, the reader must keep in mind that indications are not

tions, the player alternates linear melodic intervals and repeated notes (the initial F and the final G). Similar melodic structures can be also found in their songs. The melodies of this instrument are very repetitive and, again, the timbre is the main feature of this instrument; in fact, it has a particularly evanescent sound.

A masculine counterpart of the *tulali* (flute), these two instruments are present in the origin myth of death and in courtship practices. Also, like the flutes, it can be decorated with the same geometric patterns that are meant to attract the attention of the opposite sex. In fact, these are the only two decorated instruments in the Wana tradition, and their uniqueness again points to a powerful love call. As Apa Ingus told me: «There is a woman in Taronggo who, caught in jealousy, has burned her husband's *popondo*». Indo Pino added: «When a man plays the *popondo* under a woman's house, she will know what the man wants to drink or eat».

Atkinson discusses how these instruments are connected to the world of spirits: «It is not uncommon for one who is skilled at playing a musical instrument such as flute or stringed chest resonator to play haunting and plaintive songs to attract hidden beings» (Atkinson 1989: 54). There are strong connections between Wana music and the non-visible; ritual instruments recall the spirits, the *balo pombongo* evokes war, while the *tulali* and the *popondo* call up love.

*Tetebua* – This is a four strings bamboo zither (Fig. 5, [Video 4](#)), like those present throughout Southeast Asia, including in Malaysia (Roseman 2008: 318) and Vietnam (Nguyễn 2008: 300). Before the arrival of the gongs, this was the shamanic instrument par excellence, and its use in shamanic rituals can still be found among the Temiar (Roseman 1993: 131). The connection between the bamboo zither and the gong can be found in many other Southeast Asian populations such as the Jarai of Vietnam: «The sophisticated Jarai version (gong) is played polyphonically to imitate the gong ensembles» (Nguyễn 2008: 300) and the Philippines (Canave-Dioquino *et al.* 2008: 433). Among the Wana people, the instrument is more closely linked to drums; in fact, Wana people talk about the *tetebua* as a drum, and they use the word *tamburu* to refer to a slightly different version of this instrument. Apa Ede told me: «With a big bamboo it sounds like a drum».

The instrument is made of bamboo, preferably a short and wide piece that is conducive to obtaining a strong and deep sound, although I saw a variety of shapes and sizes ranging from 30 to 100 cm in length. On the bamboo there are four strings that are raised by placing small bridges under them. Between two of these strings a hole is made that is covered by a bamboo lamella. This lamella has its ends carved into the shape of a beak so that it can be hooked onto the two strings that support it. When struck, the lamella emits the same note as the two strings to which it is attached.

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absolutes, and they are warmly invited to listen to the tuning of each musical instruments on the website: [<www.giorgioscalici.eu/music/>](http://www.giorgioscalici.eu/music/)

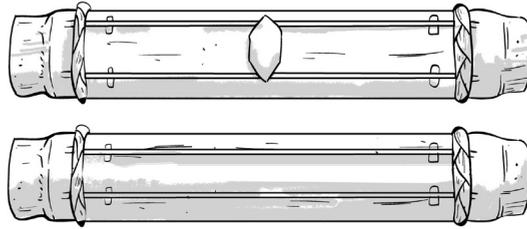


FIGURE 5. A *tetebua*, showing the four strings and the central lamella.

A side hole is engraved to improve the sound, but it is also used to store the sticks when the instrument is not being played. These sticks are the *votu*, which is made of bamboo and used to play the two lower strings, and the *tumbai*, which is made of wood and used to beat the central lamella and the two strings to which it is attached. The instrument can be played by two people at the same time, each with two sticks, and it can also be played with the fingers in a *pizzicato* style.

In the northern area of Morowali, there is a variation called *tamburu*, which has the two strings on which the lamella is fixed replaced by a single large band made from the bamboo itself. The repertoire of this instrument is much more varied and broader compared to those of the other instruments, even if the melodies are composed of only two notes.

This instrument is tuned to reproduce two notes:  $C_3$  (the lamella and the two strings attached to it) and  $F_3$  (the other two strings). It is possible that this two-note tuning is due to its ancient shamanic function, it offered the rhythmic entrainment that «increases emotional excitement, and may facilitate the experience of a different self» (Becker 2004: 147).

*Geso* – This is a single-string spike fiddle (Fig. 6, [Video 5](#)), generally tuned a quarter of a tone under  $C_3$  and almost certainly of Arabic derivation. Many other stringed instruments in the Indo-Malaysian area, such as the *rebab*, are said to have been introduced in Malaysia with Islamization (cf. Schaeffner 1978: 247). It consists of a coconut resonance box, covered with lizard (*kenbosu*) or snakeskin. The wood of the *ba-a* tree is used for the handle, and much attention is paid to the personalisation of this part of the instrument. A similar instrument is known as *tro* among the Khmer of Cambodia (Sam-Ang 2008) and as *erhu* in China (Thrasher 2000), but spike fiddles are present in the entire Asian Continent.

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 long time ago, the bow's strings were derived from the mane of a horse (*jaran*). A fundamental accessory for the *geso* is the dammar gum that is passed on the string of the bow to increase friction.

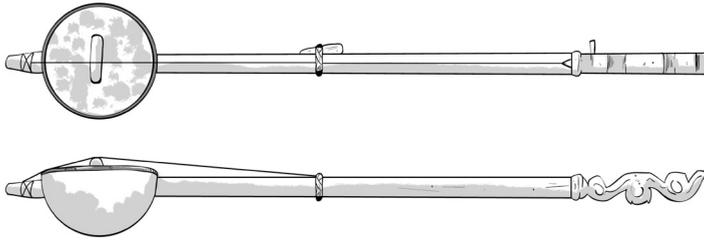


FIGURE 6. The side and the front of a *geso*.

This instrument is used, in particular, to accompany the singing of the player. Unlike many Wana musical expressions, the songs for voice and *geso* seem to demonstrate greater inventiveness and freedom. The melodic range of these songs exceeds the limit of the interval of a fourth. Usually, the same note opens the first and the third line, while another note begins the second and fourth line as well as closing all of the lines and so serving as a tonal reference point for the whole piece. The instrumental music and the voice follow the same melodic structure, but it is performed by the instrument at an octave above the voice. The instrumental music dominates the text and not vice versa; in fact, Wana music adapts, through vocalic additions, a potentially infinite number of texts to a finite number of instrumental bases.

## 5. Aerophones

*Balo Pombongo* – This instrument is a war horn made of bamboo. The distal end of the bamboo cane is cut off; the proximal one is instead closed by the natural knot of the cane. On the side, a *woro* (large hole) is made to act as an embouchure (Fig. 7, [Video 6](#)).

The instrument was not usually played outside of its war functions for fear of recalling war and other misfortunes. Wana people believe that the sound of something can recall whatever it signifies, so the act of playing war music outside of war times can bring about war.

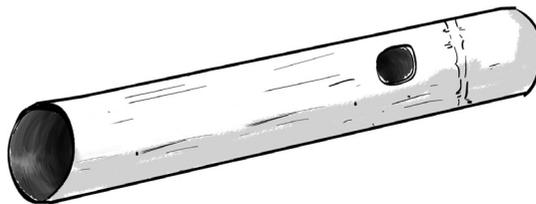


FIGURE 7. A *balo pombongo*.

*Tulali* – This is a bamboo ring flute with three finger holes and a mouth opening (*pagoma*, Fig. 8) similar to that of the Thai flute *khlui* (Miller, Sam-ang 1995), or the *suling* of Sunda (van Zanten 1994). It is considered a purely feminine instrument and it



FIGURE 8. Detail of a *tulali*'s mouth opening.

is closely connected to life and death; in fact, the instrument appears in the myth surrounding the funeral ritual along with its masculine counterpart, the *popondo* (Video 7). It is also considered a powerful instrument of love, and it was mentioned to me several times that: «When you play the *tulali* men come to you». Indo Pino, a powerful female shaman, told me that: «Once I was playing the *tulali* in my house, my husband came, and he already knew what to do».

As Sachs notes, «Owing to its tubular shape, it represents the penis» (Sachs 1962: 95). This connection between flutes and sex is present in many cultures, although usually the flute is considered a masculine and not a feminine instrument, the flute seems to have charming powers everywhere. «Among American Indians, the flute belongs greatly to lovers and love [...] Among the Sioux, young men in love learn the flute so they may woo their girls in the proper way» (Sachs 1962: 95). Likewise, the Temiar of Malaysia use the instrument in courtship (Roseman 2008: 320).

Use of the *tulali* is disappearing among Wana people; only a few old women still know how to build and play it, but most no longer have the breath to play it fluently. However, one particular melody for this instrument seems to be well known. In fact, Indo Pino, who was considered the best Wana flute player, mainly played that melody, although she told me that she played different music when played it on different flutes. This indicates that for the Wana is the timbre the musical element which gives the sense of diversity instead of the melody. *Tulali* can be decorated with *rando* (decorations) of geometric patterns. After engraving, they are coloured white with a powder derived from molluscs (Fig. 9).



FIGURE 9. A *tulali* with typical decorations.

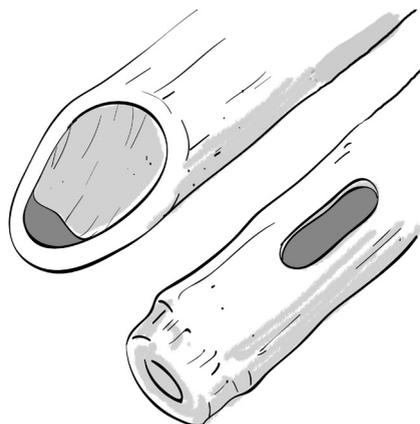


FIGURE 10. Detail of a *poloi* and *lolove*'s mouth opening.

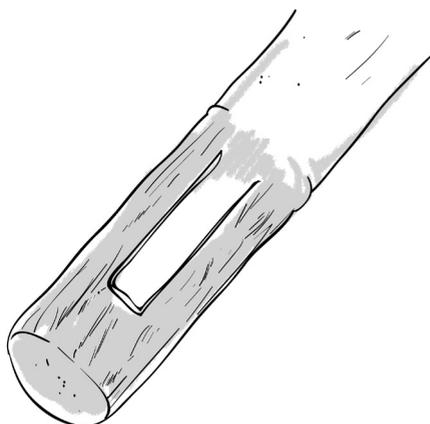


FIGURE 11. Detail of a *kukua*'s mouth opening.

Two other flutes and a clarinet are considered part of the same family as the *tulali*: the *lolove* (a three-hole spout flute that is played with the nose), the *poloi* (a three-hole transverse flute) and the *kukua* (a three-hole idioglot clarinet) (Figs. 10 and 11, [Video 8](#)).

The fact that I spent four months of my fieldwork before I learned of their existence indicates these instruments have as good as disappeared. There are very few people who still know how to make these instruments, and those that were made for me were almost completely unplayable, except for one *kukua*. Even with a well-constructed instrument, it was an even greater obstacle to find anyone still capable of playing it.

## 6. *Linga linga*

In the end, we have Wana songs. These songs, called *linga-linga*, are improvised on a fixed structure of four lines (*togonjaya*) that must all end with the same vowel. I once asked why a song must be four lines long and this is the answer I got: three would be too short and five too long

The shape of these songs seems to have an Islamic influence, since the structure is very similar to that of the Malaysian *pantun*, which is of Arab derivation. The latter is a very common strophic form in the Indo-Malaysian area, formed by a rhymed quatrain (Matusky, Chopyak 2008: 234-235). It seems that the documented example of *pantun* closest to that of the Wana area comes from the Bugis people: «After a day spent working at sea or in the fields, some Buginese and the Makassarese like to spend their evenings singing quatrains (*pantun*), sometimes improvising humorously in reply to each other's contributions. These performances are accompanied by a local zither (*kacapi*)» (Kartomi 2008: 403). *Pantun* is usually of eight syllables (Matusky, Chopyak 2008: 242), and with some exceptions it seems that it also follows this poetic structure in the Wana context. If

on one side, this poetic form gives some limitation in terms of length, on the other side the subject of these songs is extremely free and can range from love to mythology. Even if there are some songs who became widely known by many Wana or are often performed by some players, there is always space for new songs created and sung on the spot. In the past, they were used for marriage requests; in a continuous improvisation, the girl's suitor and parents argued about the possibility of a marriage.

Given the critical situation the Wana culture is going through, I decided to collect as many Wana songs as I could hear or collect, so that this art form does not disappear without leaving traces. It is fascinating to notice how in Wana songs humans are usually replaced by plants or birds. Besides the existence of seven mythical birds, giant chickens, and the theoretical link between the shamanic dance, *motaro*, and the movements of the chickens,<sup>17</sup> the Wana culture currently does not seem deeply linked to these animals. On the contrary, plants are still one of the main sources of medicine and nutrition, and play an important role in all Wana rituals, especially the *molawo* in which a betel nut represents the patient himself.<sup>18</sup>

Om Suma even composed a song about me:

U'ngka nja Italia  
 Jelah re Indonesia  
 Ratah re tana Marisa  
 Damam pali linga-linga

[From Italy / He came to Indonesia / In the village of Marisa / To look for songs]

Sometimes in the singing, vowels are added for decorative purposes. In this case, vowels have been placed in parentheses.

(E) *Togou* rapa Potaro  
 Matela Kayaku-yaku  
 (E)Huja matombo larau  
 Dana sambenyi nakamu

[*Togou* is on the top of Mount Potaro / There is a storm and I am waiting to go /It rains intensely in the sky / Sure, it started a night ago]

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<sup>17</sup> During my fieldwork, I've met a woman who was a rare kind of shaman, called a *walia muansang*, who breathe from their armpits while dancing the *motaro*, because «they are like fish that breathe from their gills». If fish-shamans exist, it is highly possible that the common shamans were chicken-shamans and henceforth the resemblance between their dance and the chickens. Sadly, this theory hasn't been yet supported or negated by the Wana.

<sup>18</sup> Moreover, according to Wana mythology, one of the people of mythical time saw a tree fall and not get up again. In that moment, he understood that humans could die, and he started to cry. From then on, people that lay down dead did not get up again.

*Tongsi*, a bird, sings a song of love (a marriage proposal) to a woman who says “no” because when he goes to another village he will forget about her, like the snake that follows the sun and never stops in a single place. This is a well-known song:

*Tongsi* re bumbu paseku  
 Bunganya motendelero  
 Totamo kono kuendo  
*Nagama* tolulu eo

[*Tongsi* in on the roof / Sings about his flower / That he can't remember / The snake follows the sun]

Here the narrator is a woman. *Siora* is the name of a bird but here it represents the man she loved returning from a long journey. She goes to meet him but he has a new family already. The last sentence is a wish for a long life. *Anemioko* means “to fly” but in the song it acquires the meaning of “to return”:

*Anemioko* Tongsi Siora  
 Pane dayau kuloa  
 Re ija sombo-sombonya  
 Tuvu jamaradenosa

[The bird *Siora* has already returned / I went to see / The nest was already there / Long life]

There is an elderly man in Tentena, if he will have a daughter, I will be engaged. *Kaju jawa* is a allegory for old people. In Wana songs, often plants or birds represent people:

*Kaju jawa* di Tentena  
 Masai mokapatinya  
 Ane movua vansenya  
 Akumo *kasi* pandenya

[Javanese wood is in Tentena / He has been an old man for some time / If a fruit is born from its branch / I will have a fiancée]

Again, *Togou* is the name of a bird, but in this song it indicates a person:

(E) *Togou* rapa Potaro  
 Matela Kayaku-yaku  
 (E)Huja matombo larau  
 Dana sambenya nakamu

*Togou* is on the top of Mount Potaro / There is a storm and he is waiting / It rains heavily in the sky / Surely it already passed one night

*Motiti*, a bird, plays the *tumalo*, another name for the *tulali*, while waiting for the heat to cool down:

(E)Mapoi eo ri rato  
Taku kuran (i)mansabo  
(E)Motiti yundo *Tumalo*  
Re lenke *roda pembayo*

[The sun is hot in the valley / It is impossible to work / *Motiti* plays the flute / In the shadow of the round mirror]

*Dunggolah*, is a bird but here represents a person, is resting on the *Langgutoya*, a mountain near the Marisa village.

Masiasi *Modunggolah*  
Matimbang *ganta sog*a  
(A)Tumanyu kaora-ora  
(A)Ndatelenko *Langgotoya*

[*Dunggolah* is tired / The resin backpack is heavy / He cries alone / On the top of the *Langgutoya* mountain]

*Keli, Tonsi and Dunggolah*, three birds, are resting during their journey to the village of *Laanggotoya*:

*Keli Ton(g)si Dunggolah*  
Yore *tana Simboka*  
Ta mosia jenaoa  
Mangalie *Laanggotoya*

[*Keli, Tonsi and Dungola* / They sleep in the *Simboka* village / At least to have fun / (They want) to go and see *Laanggotoya*]

A song about *Jojo*, a nickname for Giorgio, and his fieldwork among the Wana.

I Jojo ungka re kota  
Jela ri tana Kandonga  
Sianya jelama ngola  
Ia dajela sikola

Linga-linga tau Wana  
Oninya koro magaya  
Ukinya ta re nasala  
Nu-ika palindo n-daya

Vuri eo tapelinja  
Repo timpanu sarita  
Ta re mata mangangkita  
Bara jerampa sarita

Taku vai korouli  
Mojaya rilengkemburi

Rasiane naumuri  
Dakulempo rajamuni

Longko pausikomai  
Mangampali adi-adi  
Nanu ungka rekgadi  
Ri oyo lino pasi uang

[Jojo from his hometown / He came to the village of *Kandongga* / He comes to stay for his book / He comes to school with us // The Wana chants / Their voice is very beautiful / Performed without errors / Made to entertain the heart // Morning and evening we walk / Telling stories / Without a eye seeing us / Maybe they are just stories // I'm scared / I walk in the dark of the night / Maybe it will rain a lot / I want to go back // You have come a long way / To look for the ancient stories / Which come from the first born / Between the earth and the sky]

The following songs have all mythological themes.

Tau bungku pasi tau Wana  
Tau bangai tau balanda  
Tau Santoto tau Wana  
Ni kan singkenta vaya

Lawi tamo dakusongka  
Tau nagela sikola  
Sin sorimo kami mantoka  
Uyang kajela i siola

Nee to kodi raya  
Santuai santukaka  
Vetu ane simpa rata  
Joe mpalemu kurunga

Ungka n-nja raya suruga  
Jela re vawo dunia  
Repolipunu manusia  
Siaja tampa n-serita

Lipu mami tau Wana  
N-ndaa n-ndati tundan-tana<sup>19</sup>  
U-nka renu Pueala  
Uyun nkatudunu manusia

I *Poloisong*<sup>20</sup> namai

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<sup>19</sup> Mythological mountain at the centre of Wana land. According to Wana mythology is the first land created by their god.

<sup>20</sup> Wana trickster and protagonist of many mythological stories.

Ungka dati ara yangi  
 uda re wavontasi  
 Mampandeu tau lagi

[The Bungku and the Wana / The Bangai and the Dutch / Tau Santoto is a Wana / They are originally brothers // We will no longer exist / Like people who go to school/All our guests/ Before they were brothers // Don't be discouraged / We are brothers / So if we meet / we shake hands // From heaven / He came to earth/among humans / It is not a story // Our Wana Territory / It is on the *Tundantana* / That from the creator *Pue*<sup>21</sup> / First, it was placed among men // has arrived / from the sky / Down on the sea / To educate many people]

## 7. Last notes

For the sake of honesty and completeness, I have to inform that I found other two instruments among the Wana but I did not include them in this article because they do not seem to be part of Wana musical tradition and identity.

The first is the *gambus*,<sup>22</sup> a lute of clear Arabic influence. *Gambus*, or *qanbūs*, is the name of a short-necked lute from Yemen (Schuyler 1991) extremely similar to the one I saw among the Wana. I have no idea how this instrument was in Apa Rau, Marisa's chief, possession but it was the only one I ever saw and Apa Rau was the only *gambus* player I ever met. Nonetheless, I personally loved to listen to Apa Rau playing his *gambus* and I have recorded it.

The other instrument is called *juk*: an ukulele with four strings. It isn't very common among the Wana but present as a kind of "emergency" musical instrument when no guitar is available. I am aware of the existence and presence in the South-East Asia of ukulele models called "Jimi Juk300c" and a "Jimi Juk2320". It is highly possible that the *juk* I found among the Wana is a reproduction of a ukulele saw outside the jungle or brought it from outside. Even if these two instruments are not very common and, at the moment, aren't part of Wana identity and culture, it is impossible to know what will happen in the future and I think it is better to present to academics and Wana the most complete list of the musical instruments the Wana make and play.

## Multimedia Contents

### Videos

The videos attached to this article are based on fieldwork carried out by myself in different villages inside the Morowali Natural Reserve during my fieldworks in 2011 and 2016. Videos from 2011 have been recorded with a SONY MINI-DV camcorder, while in 2016 I have used a JVC Everio GZ-E-10 camcorder borrowed from the University of Durham. Audio

<sup>21</sup> Wana god.

<sup>22</sup> For videos, photos, and songs played on the *gambus*, please visit <[www.giorgioscalici.eu/gambus/](http://www.giorgioscalici.eu/gambus/)>.

and music were recorded with a ZOOM H4n audio recorder, both in 2011 and 2016, while photos were shot with a Nikon COOLPIX S620 in 2011 and with an Olympus STYLUS Tough TG-4 in 2016.

Online, <[www.giorgioscalici.eu/fieldwork/](http://www.giorgioscalici.eu/fieldwork/)>, it is possible to find all the videos from 2011 (low quality) and 2016 (HD), the making of all musical instruments, playlist of Wana music, photos, rituals, and much more.

1. ***Yori*** [0:41]. Fieldwork: Marisa Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2011. Performer: Apa Sudin (*yori*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
2. ***Tulalo*** [2:36]. Fieldwork: Marisa Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2011. Performer: Apa Sudin (*tulalo*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
3. ***Popondo*** [0:20]. Fieldwork: Kayu Poli Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2011. Performer: Apa Ingus (*popondo*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
4. ***Tetebua*** [12:27]. Fieldwork: Marisa Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2016. Performer: Apa Rau (*tetebua*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
5. ***Geso*** [16:02]. Fieldwork: Marisa Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2016. Performer: Apa Rau (*geso*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
6. ***Balo pombongo*** [4:54]. Fieldwork: Marisa Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2011. Performer: Apa Sudin (*balo pombongo*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
7. ***Tulali*** [1:34]. Fieldwork: Tarongo Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2011. Performer: Indo n'Tibe (*tulali*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.
8. ***Kukua*** [1:46]. Fieldwork: Marisa Village (Morowali, Sulawesi, Indonesia), 2011. Performer: Apa Rau (*kukua*). Research and shootings: Giorgio Scalici.



Multimedia contents are available  
via QR code

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