

KIANGSA

derived from the narrative by
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Long, long ago, in Sachanga, which lies below Masigi, there was an *anito* who played the *kiangsa* (gong) in the forest during the nights of the full moon. The sound that issued forth from his *kiangsa* was uncanny for it was like a wail that echoed throughout the land. This *anito* struck a chord of fear among the Isachanga. None of them had the courage to seek out the source of the sound.

In Fiallig, where some villagers from Masigi have come to settle, news of the *anito* who beat his magical gong was also widespread. It was thus that a daring young warrior from Fiallig resolved to seek out the source of the perturbing sound.

He decided to consult the *ichiw*, an oracle, before he carried out his plan. The *ichiw* yielded a favorable omen; thus, the next day, he gathered what he would need for the journey and bade his companions in Fiallig goodbye. He told them that he would venture to Sachanga to seek out the *anito* with the enchanted *kiangsa* that wails.

When he arrived in Sachanga, he introduced himself to the residents. "I come in peace, my brethren," he said. "I am a grandson of Arong who came from Masigi. I seek out the *anito* with the magical *kiangsa* that you speak of."

"Are you not afraid of what you shall see?" asked the Isachanga. "We are afraid of the *anito* because every time he plays, someone dies."

"I am not afraid. Please show me the way," he urged.

“Wait,” answered the Isachanga. “We must bide time until the full moon. When the moon comes to resemble a big rock, the *anito* will come out to play his music. The wailing of his *kiangsa* resounds all the way to our village, but we can never pinpoint exactly where it comes from.”

They agreed to wait. A month passed and the Isachanga decided that the time was near. “It shall be soon, as the moon is beginning to resemble a big rock,” they said. “Perhaps, tomorrow, the next day or the third day from now.”

“At what time does the *anito* usually play?” the warrior eagerly asked.

“The music can be heard around midnight,” replied the Isachanga.

“How long does the music last?”

“The *anito* plays for quite a while. Let us listen carefully for the sound you await. Once we hear it, you must gather your gear and set off for the journey. What is it that you intend to do?” asked the Isachanga.

“I just want to see what the *anito* looks like.”

After waiting for two more days, the sound of the magical *kiangsa* was heard. It was midnight. The moon was full.

“I must go now,” the man said. He took along with him some flint stones, his spear and his bolo.

“That is a truly beautiful sound that the *anito* is playing,” he said to himself. He listened to the music and followed it to its source. There, he found the *anito* seated atop an enormous, ancient pine tree.

The man slowly inched closer to get a better view of the *anito*. He was amazed at the length of the back portion of the *anito's* breechcloth. It reached all the way to the ground at the base of the tree atop which the *anito* was seated. He hatched his plan.

Slowly and stealthily, he approached, unnoticed by the *anito*. He touched the breechcloth that trailed all the way to the ground. Its fabric was so thin that it would burn easily. He thought of a plan. He would start a fire using the flint stone and set the breechcloth aflame. When the flames reach the *anito* where he sat, these would scorch his buttocks, and the *anito* would then be forced to drop the *kiangsa*.

As he rubbed the flint stone to start a fire, sparks quickly leaped onto the breechcloth. The flames quickly burst out and trailed up along the fabric. The young warrior was delighted to see that the *anito* remained oblivious and went on playing.

When the heat reached the *anito's* buttocks the *anito* shouted, "Ouch! Ouch!" The *kiangsa* slipped from his hand and fell to the ground. The *anito* ran away, continuously shouting in pain from the burns he sustained. "Ouch!" he screamed. "Even the *anito* shouts out in pain," the warrior thought. The young warrior picked up the *kiangsa* that had fallen, and hurriedly ran in the opposite direction.

When he returned to Sachanga, he brought the magical *kiangsa* to the *ator*. "Here, I was able to get the *kiangsa*. I will head home tomorrow," he said to the *Isachanga*.

"That is good. Well, make a sound with it. See if it plays," said the *Isachanga*.

The young warrior played the *kiangsa*. They were all amazed at the beauty of the sound that emanated from it. It resonated with sonorous clarity. "The *Ifiallig* have proven

themselves to be very brave. The *kiangsa* chose you to possess it. Take your trophy home with you," praised the Isachanga.

When the young warrior took the *kiangsa* back to Fiallig, he cried in triumph, "Here, I have possession of the magical *kiangsa*! The *kiangsa* of the *anito* in Sachanga!" He immediately played the *kiangsa* and the Ifiallig fell silent. Even those working in the rice terraces stopped to listen. They could not believe their ears.

"There is a *kiangsa* wailing. Come, let us go home to see it," they said. When they got to the village and saw the magical *kiangsa*, they were delighted by its beauty. They prepared a feast to celebrate their victory.

The Ifiallig took care of the magical *kiangsa* for many years. When the Spaniards came, the village of Kiang was conquered. The Spaniards also reached the village of Esappo. Because the Ifiallig were brave and strong, they could not be defeated by the Esappo. So the Esappo allied themselves with the Spaniards whom they accompanied to Fiallig. When they reached Allemong, they camped out there.

"You cannot conquer the Ifiallig because our urine reek!" the Ifiallig boasted. They battled the Esappo. But they did not expect that the Spaniards would have guns. When the Spaniards fired shots, the Ifiallig were surprised. From where they hid, they could see the branches and trees break into pieces.

The Ifiallig decided to flee from their village. They retreated believing that the Spaniards were not ordinary creatures. According to Lakay Challoy, it was then that the Spaniards set Fiallig on fire and the Esappo gained possession of the magical *kiangsa*.

When the Esappo took home the *kiangsa*, they celebrated their victory over the Ifiallig. They tried to play it. An entire family attempted to play the *kiangsa*, but the father could extract no sound from it. The father was puzzled and passed the *kiangsa* on to his son. Still, it made no sound. It was passed on to his brother but the *kiangsa* remained silent.

After some time, the *kiangsa* broke, and no one ever succeeded in making it play. The news spread that the family who tried to play the magical *kiangsa* died. For the magical *kiangsa* had chosen the Ifiallig and it was only they who could make it wail.