

# History of Gongs

Gongs have been used for thousands of years across Southeast Asia:

Indonesia · China · Vietnam · Myanmar

Traditionally made from **bronze**

## Traditional uses

- Rituals and spiritual ceremonies
- Temples and royal courts
- Marking time, transitions, and important events

## Presence & significance

Gongs were used to:

- mark beginnings and endings
- signal transition
- create a **shared field of sound**

A space that people would gather within

→ early forms of **immersive sound environments**

## Similarities to bowls

Gongs and bowls are both:

- made of metal
- designed to resonate when struck
- not dependent on continuous input

A single strike creates a **field of sound**

The sound:

- blooms
- unfolds
- decays over time

The resonance is just as important as the initial strike

## Marking moments

Both instruments have been used to:

- mark transitions
- hold thresholds
- shape attention

## Gongs and bells

A bell is more **contained in shape**

- the sound is clearer
- more defined
- more tonal

A gong is wide and flat

- the sound spreads outward
- becomes more complex
- more immersive

## Bowls vs Gongs (felt experience)

### Bowls

- thicker metal
- curved inward
- more focused and localised

Sound qualities:

- clearer fundamental tone
- more stability
- a sense of containment

Often felt as:

- grounding
- soothing
- easier to track and follow

## Gongs

- larger surface area
- thinner metal
- flat and expansive

The vibration becomes:

- more diffuse
- more complex

## Multiple overtones

Gongs produce **multiple overtones** interacting at once

This creates:

- less predictability
- a wider spread of sound

## Felt in the body as

- immersive
- expansive
- sometimes disorienting or activating

## Energetic distinction

Bowls tend to **focus energy**

Gongs tend to **expand it**