



DRUMS

DRUMS, large group of percussion instruments.

Structure. Persian drums can be classified in three families, according to structure.

The first group consists of tambourines, or wooden frame drums, of various dimensions. In antiquity they were frequently represented in a variety of contexts, though more such representations survive from western than from eastern Persia; they were beaten with the hand, rather than with sticks. The two principal types are the *daff* and *dāyera*, usually equipped with metallic rings on the interior face, and the more modern *dāyera zangī*, with small metallic disks.

The second group consists of drums with sound boxes covered with skin (or skins), which is struck with the fingers. There are two main types. First are the double-headed drums, cylindrical or barrel-shaped (e.g., the Azeri *naqqāra*, which is played on only one of the drumheads, and the Baluch *doholak*, which is played on both) or hourglass-shaped (the *kūba*, which has disappeared from the Persian cultural sphere, and perhaps the *tabīra*). They are always of wood and were frequently depicted (often being played by monkeys) until the 7th century in Bactria and Tokharistan and in Khotan as early as the 2nd century (Karomatov, Meskeris, and Vyzgo, pp. 89, 151). They seem to have disappeared from those regions after the 14th century and survive now only in Indian cultural areas. Single-headed drums constitute the second type; they have the shape of a goblet, like the Persian *tombak* (or *zarb*) and the Afghan *zīrbaḡālī*,



and are made of wood or pottery. A small drum of this type, made of horn, has been found in kurgan II at Pazyryk (4th century B.C.E.; Karomatov, Meskeris, and Vyzgo, p. 53), but the type was rarely represented in wall paintings.

The third group encompasses those drums, also with sound boxes covered with skin, that are struck with drumsticks, either simple pieces of wood the striking ends of which are curved or covered with cloth. They include double-headed wooden drums (*dohol*, *ṭabl*, *dammām*), which are still played, and single-headed drums (like kettledrums) played singly or in pairs (e.g., the *naqqāra*, *kūs*, and *tās* of the Qāderī dervishes of Kurdistan and the Azeri *qoša naqqāra*) made of metal or pottery and sometimes of turned wood. In Persian miniatures they are depicted in different sizes (e.g., Gray, 1961, p. 43; idem, 1979, p. 230 ill. 134) and are sometimes carried by camels; some appear to be as much as a meter high. Such illustrated drums doubtless correspond to some varieties known from texts (see below). This type was formerly used principally for military and ceremonial purposes, but it is going out of use at present.

Function. Drums used for art music (*bazmī*) are often distinguished from military instruments (*razmī*), though in practice this distinction can become blurred, as when military percussion instruments are played at religious festivals. The names of percussion instruments gathered from texts are very numerous and often difficult to identify with accuracy.

The best-known percussion instruments of the Persian cultural sphere are the double kettledrums (*naqqāra*) of metal or pottery, supposedly invented by the legendary king Hōšang (Farmer, 1937, p. 14); the *kūs* (< Aram. *kūsā*; Farmer, in *A Survey of Persian Art*, p. 2786 and n. 3; the *kūs* is mentioned in the *Šāh-nāma*, e.g., Borūḳīm ed., I, p., 76 vv. 256, 259, p. 91 v. 558), a type of enormous kettledrum often carried in pairs on the backs of camels or elephants (Farmer, 1966, p. 193) and also played in pairs; the *dohol*, a large double-headed drum played with sticks, which is the origin of the large European military drums (Koch, s.v.); the *doholak*, a two-faced, barrel-shaped drum played with the hand; the *senj* (large cymbals); the *kom* (or *konb*), a war drum (Mašḥūn, p. 19), probably of pottery; and a smaller variant called *konbak* (Caron and Savfate, p. 179).

Among rarer instruments were the *tabīra* mentioned in early sources (e.g., *Šāh-nāma*, Borūḳīm ed., p. 92 v. 559), a drum in the shape of an hourglass; the *šandaf*, a kind of *dohol*; the *ṭabl-e bāz*, a drum used for calling falcons; the *jām*,



a large metal kettledrum; and the *gūrġa* or *gūrġā*, a drum larger than the *naqqāra* and made of pottery covered with sheepskin (Farmer, 1966, p. 193; Mašhūn, pp. 18, 22). G. H. Farmer (*Survey of Persian Art*, p. 2799; idem, 1966, p. 193) defined this last instrument, which he called *korka* or *korga*, as a “monster kettledrum” and the symbol of military power under the Il-khanids.

In addition, a number of instruments mentioned in texts cannot yet be defined with certainty or vary considerably. For example, *ṭabl* is currently used as a general term, but in Persia and neighboring lands it also refers to a small two-headed cylindrical drum played with sticks, a smaller version of the *dohol*. Two variants in Baluchistan are the *raḥmānī* and the smaller *keysal* (Rīāḥī, p. 7). Baluch women play the *kunzag*, a clay jar half filled with water. The *kūba* (or *kūma*, according to Mašhūn, p. 21) is a drum shaped like an hourglass and is related to Central Asian drums (Koch, pp. 550-51), but, according to Emām Šūštārī (p. 154), the term *kūba*, derived from *kūftan*, also denoted the stick used to beat the drum. Such drums were also called *fenjān*. The *ṭās*, a small metal drum struck with two sticks, was used by the Qāderī order in Kurdistan (During, 1989, p. 255). The *dammāma* or *dabdaba* was a small double-headed drum from southern Persia, but the *dammāma* has been defined by Farmer (p. 2799) as a kettledrum. The *tombak* was, according to Farmer (1966, p. 193), a small kettledrum that varied in form and may have been the ancestor of the Arab *tabla*; the term seems later to have referred to a chalice-shaped drum of the *zārb* type made of pottery. The *mandal* and the *mohrī* (Mašhūn, p. 21) have not been identified, nor have the *āʾīn-e pīl*, the *darāʾī*, and the *qāšoqak*; the last consists of two or three slightly concave pieces of wood connected by an elastic cord, making a sound somewhat like that of castanets (Joneydī, p. 232).

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