

ROOTS OF RHYTHM - CHAPTER 8: THE NAQQĀRA FROM TURKEY

Instrument:

Naqqāra, military
kettledrums

Country:

Turkey



Flag:

Red has been prominent in Turkish flags for 700 years. The star and crescent are Muslim symbols. The star was added by the Christian Emperor Constantine for the Virgin Mary, and the Ottoman Turks retained it in 1493. The flag has been used since 1844 and became official in 1936.



Size and Population:

Turkey has an area of 300,948 square miles, slightly larger than Texas, and has a coastline of 2,211 miles. It has an estimated population of 68,893,918 as of July 2004.

Geography and Climate:

Turkey lies both in Europe and in Asia. The southeastern tip of Europe is Thrace, the site of Turkey's largest city, Istanbul. To the east is the rest of Turkey, a large mountainous peninsula called Anatolia or Asia Minor, an area with several large cities including the capital Ankara. This land has rich farmland but much of it is rocky and barren. Turkey borders Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Three seas border the nation: the northern Black Sea, the western Aegean Sea, and the southern Mediterranean Sea. The Straits, three important bodies of water that have played a major role in Turkish history, separate Thrace from Anatolia. The western valleys are fertile areas for growing barley, corn, wheat, and olives but a narrow strip along the Mediterranean Sea requires irrigation for grain, fruits, and cotton. The eastern plateau has high mountains extending to Turkey's border. The Pontic Mountains in the north have few roads and railroads crossing them. The southern Taurus Mountains cut off most of the Mediterranean Sea from the central plateau region. The Mesopotamian lowlands, bordered by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the southeast, are excellent farming areas.

Turkey's climate varies greatly across the country. The coasts have rainy winters and dry summers. The Aegean Sea coast can get temperatures above 90° F. while northern Turkey has mild summers and very cold winters with temperatures as low as -40° F. Rainfall ranges from 20

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inches along the western Aegean Sea to more than 100 inches near the Black Sea in the north. There is little rainfall on the western plateau making it difficult for farmers.

Background and History:

Turkey is one of seventeen Middle Eastern countries that are interconnected by history, religion, and culture. Asian and European peoples have ruled what is now Turkey since ancient times. In the 1300s, Muslim Turks called the Ottomans began building a strong empire that controlled much of the Middle East, southeastern Europe and northern Africa. This meant that Islamic law controlled Turkish life for almost 1,000 years.

The earliest known people of Turkey, the Hittites, ruled Anatolia around 1500 B.C. They were conquered by the Romans in 63 B.C. After his conversion to Christianity in 330 A.D., Constantine the Great moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, what is now Istanbul. In 1071 A.D., the Seljuk Turks conquered most of Anatolia (now central Turkey), and almost three hundred years later the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople, which marked the historical beginnings of the Ottoman Empire (1326-1922). The Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453, ending the Byzantine Empire. The Ottoman Empire reached its peak in the 1500s, ruling much of the Middle East as well as parts of northern Africa and southeastern Europe.

A series of military defeats between 1783 and 1914 gradually reduced the territory of the Ottomans, and as an ally of Germany, Turkey lost much of its remaining land after WWI. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (a title meaning “father of the Turks”) set up the Republic of Turkey and began a nationwide modernization effort that included doing away with many Islamic traditions. Turkey joined the United Nations in 1945 and soon afterward the U.S. gave aid for Turkey’s resistance to Soviet expansion. After a military coup in 1960, free elections followed a year later. Turkey intervened militarily on the island of Cyprus in 1974 to protect Turkish Cypriots and prevent a Greek takeover. There was a second military takeover in Turkey in 1980 and again a return to civilian control in 1983.

Relations between Turkey and Greece have improved over the past several years. In 1984, a Kurdish separatist group initiated attacks in southeast Turkey, often using terrorist tactics to try to attain its goal of an independent Kurdistan. Turkey is now in a period of economic growth.

Culture:

Nearly all of the Turkish people are Muslims, followers of Islam. However, in the 1920s the government discouraged or forbade people from practicing Ottoman traditions of the past, particularly those customs associated with Islam. Turkish people are 80 percent Turkish and 20 percent Kurdish, an Islamic group living in southeast Turkey. The population is 99.8 percent Muslim with the remainder composed of Christians and Jews. The official language is Turkish, but Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian and Greek are also spoken. As a developing country, over half of the workers are farmers but since the 1940s the economy has become more industrialized. About half of present-day Turks live in the cities and half live on farms. Houses range from thatched roof homes to those built with cement blocks for the middle class. Turks are famous for their *shish kebab* (shish kah-bob), meat and vegetables cooked on a stick. A favorite sport is wrestling while covered in olive oil. Students are required to attend school until age 15, and 70 percent of

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people over the age of 15 can read and write. One of Turkey's major artistic contributions is in architecture, particularly its great domed Byzantine cathedrals and Islamic mosques.

The musical focus of this lesson is the *naqqāra* (nah-cah-rah), two small kettledrums used in one of the most influential types of music from Turkey's past, the Janissary (jan-uh-sehr-ee) or *Mehter* (mek-tair) military band. In Turkish military terms a Janissary is a highly trained professional soldier forming the core of the sultan's guard, first established in the 1300s. This group originally consisted of slaves and prisoners of war, but even as disciplined soldiers they were considered slaves of the sultan, a Muslim monarch in Turkey.

Over many centuries the Ottoman Turks expanded their empire through military conquest, and as they did, percussion music was an important part of those battles. Percussion was important for three reasons: it inspired soldiers to win, it signified the importance of the leaders, and it frightened the enemy. This military music was performed as a sign of majesty, splendor, and power even though the music itself evolved from humble carnival music. The dignity and sacred nature of the state are expressed in the hitting of the drum. Composers of this type of music carefully used these instruments for this desired effect. During a war the ruler was housed in a large tent and the ruler's two large kettledrums or *kös* (coss) stood in front of his tent. The *kös* are a larger version of the original *naqqāra* kettledrums. The Janissary or *Mehter* band played under the ruler's standard or emblem, and the two were always used together.

The *Mehter* band began in 1299 when Osman Gazi was given a *tabl* or *davul* as a symbol of his new high rank of *bey* or lord. The *Mehter* band played when the ruler left the tent, and the *kös* played special beats to demonstrate the ruler's power (called "beating the *nevbet*"), especially to cause fear in the enemy. The *kös* would signal the soldiers when to attack or halt. If the *Mehter* was destroyed the battle could more easily be lost. During peace the drums and *Mehter* were used to help spread news and announcements on behalf of the state. The largest and most important *Mehter*, the Sultan's *Mehter* Band or "Tabl ü alem-I hassa" would have nine of each instrument (see Music: Instruments & Rhythm section below); later up to sixteen might be used. Aside from the ruler, other important people in the government might have their own *Mehter* band and these groups would be found in many provinces in the country.

As Ottoman expansion moved into southeastern Europe, the power and effect of *Mehter* music made a tremendous impression on European composers. The German Christoph Gluck (1714-87), the Austrian Wolfgang Mozart (1756-91) and the German Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) were impressed by these bands and incorporated this music and these instruments into their compositions. As a result of this influence, many of the wind and percussion instruments found today in the modern marching band and concert orchestra came from the Turkish Janissary bands. Today's drum majors likely originated with the *Mehter* conductor. The long association of kettledrums with trumpets can be heard today in the theme music for the Olympic Games.

Janissaries lasted for hundreds of years but were dissolved in 1826 when they threatened the sultan's authority. Reestablished in 1914, the Royal *Mehter* Band, called the *Mehterhane-I Hakani*, was attached to the Imperial Military Museum. The band was abolished again in 1935 until 1952 when it was reformed as an institution of historical importance at the Istanbul Military Museum. Today this band performs several times a week and at special official ceremonies. It

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reminds the Turkish people and visitors about the significance and history of the Ottoman Empire.

Music: Instruments & Rhythms

Instruments: The *Mehter* band might have six long trumpets or *borus* (bo-ruz), ten long oboes or *zurnas* (zur-nahs), six pairs of cymbals or *zils* (zilz), eight large cylindrical drums or *davuls* (duh-vuls), several pairs of large kettledrums or *kös*, and eight sets of small kettledrums or *naqqāra*. Whether marching or mounted on horseback, this ensemble projected a wall of sound that could be heard far into the distance. Percussion instruments used in the *Mehter* band are shown below in the Resources section.

The Arabic *naqqāra* has many names including *nakkare*, *naghara*, and *naker*; today it is commonly referred to as *küdü*m in Turkey. Its forms vary as well, but the instrument mainly consists of two small bowl-shaped kettledrums made of metal, wood, or clay with skin heads that are laced on to the drums. The two drums are slightly different sizes, under a foot in diameter, often have gut snares, and are tied together and attached to the player's waist or held at the left side against the body. A stick inserted through the lacing on the drum increases tension on the head. *Naqqāra* are usually played with small cloth-covered beaters. The *kös* are a large version of the *naqqāra* made of copper, covered with decorative cloth, and struck with large sticks. A version of the *naqqāra* called *nakers* reached Europe by the 1200s and was used in many types of music. Because of this, the Arabic *naqqāra* are considered the predecessors of the modern European timpani. The *naqqāra* likely originated in Syria as a portable set of drums with nomadic tribes.

Rhythms: There are many Middle Eastern rhythms but this lesson will focus on two distinct Arabic rhythms played by a *Mehter* band: one has eight fast counts and the other has nine slow counts. When referring to rhythms in the Middle East, the three basic strokes on a drum help with the rhythm. The stroke “dum” stands for a low sound and “tak” for a high sound; two fast high strokes would be “taka,” either two hits by the same hand or a combination of right and left. The musicians march to a distinctive rhythm--after three beats they turn to the right and left, followed by these words in Arabic: “Rahim Allah, Kerim Allah” (Merciful God, Gracious God).

The two rhythms presented in this lesson, *Ayub* (eye-yoob) and *Karsilama* (car-see-lah-mah), are two important types of Turkish beats. *Ayub* is a fast eight-beat count with an alternating “dum” and “tak,” but the “tak” after the first count is slightly delayed. So instead of playing the sounds “dum...tak...dum...tak,” the *Ayub* rhythm is “dum.....tak dum...tak.” The repeated “dum” sound gives the rhythm a trance quality, which is why it is used by the whirling dervishes, a Muslim religious sect in Turkey. The second rhythm, *Karsilama*, means “face to face,” a reference to its use in dance. Its slow nine-count rhythm has double time or “taka” hits on most of the “tak” strokes as follows: “dum...taka...dum...taka...dum...taka...dum...tak...taka.”

Listen & Play Along: *Use *Roots of Rhythm* CD Notes to support this section.

Note to teachers: if instruments are not readily available, consider having students make their own (a general activity for making drums can be found in the Roots of Rhythm: Introduction section, and a specific naqqāra-making activity can be found in the Resources area of this section) or encourage them to improvise - using everyday items such as buckets, containers,

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phone books, desk tops, etc., as instruments. Rhythms can also be created with body percussion including hand clapping, foot tapping, finger snapping, etc.

Listen to Track 65 of the Roots of Rhythm Companion CD to hear the sound of the naqqāra in Mehter music. Listen to Track 66 for the Karsilama rhythm. Now it's time to play along. If you don't have these instruments, see the Resources section for instructions on how to make your own naqqāra, or use instruments from the music classroom as substitutes. For example, use bongos for the naqqāra, two tom toms, large and small, for the kös, small "rhythm instrument" cymbals for the zils, and a medium tom-tom for the davul. Find a thin twig to hit the left side of the davul for the "smack" sound.

Listen to Track 67-76 of the Roots of Rhythm Companion CD and play along with the rhythms. Say the "dum" and "tak" sounds along with the Ayub rhythms on the CD. If you can say it, you can play it. Have others say or clap the various rhythmic parts with you, as students do in Turkey. Now add the double "taka" hits as you try the Karsilama rhythm.

Listen to the CD again, read the notation and play the *Ayub* and *Karsilama* rhythms provided in the Resources section below. Try the accented rhythms in bold first.

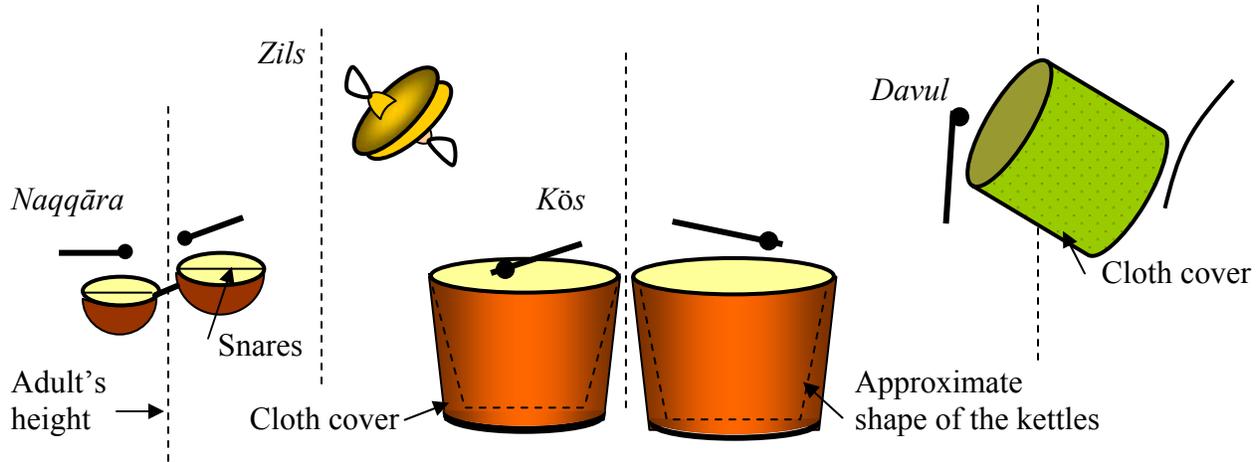
Naqqāra:



Photograph by Craig Woodson.

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Resources: The *Mehter Percussion Section with Naqqāra Rhythms*



Mehter Percussion Ensemble Rhythms: Ayub and Karsilama

Ayub

Count	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	dum.....tak				dum.....tak.....			
<i>Naqqāra</i>	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L
<i>Davul</i>	R		L	L	R	L	L	
<i>Zils</i>	X				X			
<i>Kös</i>	L				R			

Notes:
L = **bold** for accent
R = low “dum” sound
 L (no underline) = high

Karsilama

Count	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	dum	taka	dum	taka	dum	taka	dum	tak	taka
<i>Naqqāra</i>	R		R		R		R	L	
<i>Davul</i>	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	
<i>Zils</i>	X		X		X		X		
<i>Kös</i>	L		R		L		L		

Notes:
 || = 2 fast hits

Making Your Own Naqqāra: Make your own *naqqāra* with two different sizes of flower pots (Ex. 6” and 7” diameters), packaging tape, two chopsticks, scissors and sandpaper. Follow the steps shown in the Introduction section of this guide, but first sand the top rim of each pot. Add a protective wad of tape before joining the two drums together with a double wrap of tape around both drums.

