

Music Instrument
Collection of
World Museum
Vienna: North Africa:
Part II



Timkehets Teffera

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Music Instrument Collection of World Museum Vienna Fieldwork Report: North Africa - Part II

Timkehet Teffera

Continued from North Africa - Part I:

Description

Whereas in North Africa - Part I, different types of aerophones were portrayed, the present discussion focusses on idiophones and membranophones primarily from Egypt and Morocco. A number of written accounts directly referring to the musical instruments presented, have been given due consideration, in order to provide the reader with additional information. These references have been listed in the bibliography, hence for detailed account I advise to take a look at the suggested works.

Concussion idiophones (111.1), Egypt:
shelf no.: 158149a and b; collected in 1976 by Schienerl Peter W.

The instrument is made of identical pair of cymbals that are connected with a cord of twisted plant fibres. The overall diameter of each plate is 19 cm, whereas the dome at the centre is approximately 7.8 cm in diameter.



shelf no.: 163655a and b; collected by Janata A. and Schienerl in 1982 in Egypt; d = 6,4

Description: There are in general three sizes of finger and/or hand cymbals. These instruments are used in many parts of the world and they accompany different events. Hand cymbals also found in the Maghreb regions, i.e. Morocco and Algeria (*nuiqsat*, *karakab*), Tunisia, Lybia (*zel*; *shikshakat*).

They are *krakeb* or *gragab*. Similar sized cymbals are common musical instruments in India, e.g. *manjira*, while the term *tingsha* designates the same instrument in Tibet. Finger cymbals in Turkey are called *zil ziller* (= 'cymbal' or 'bell'). Finger cymbals in Iraq are known by the name *chumparat*. Finger and/or hand cymbals are made of sheets of metal, e.g. bronze, copper and silver. The material and the processing of the metal can greatly determine the sound of the cymbals.

The names of the Egyptian finger cymbals discussed here are, *tura*, *sāgāt* or *sajat*, depend on their size in diameter. Jabès (1983: 34-35; see figure 1) observed *sāgāt* cymbals in Cairo during a possession ceremony called *zar* that is still today practiced in this country. The reverberating sound of the *sāgāt* accompanies functional songs and dances performed on such possession rituals. Jabès (ibid: 36-37; see figure 2) furthermore observed the *sāgāt* used

Abbreviations: l = length; d = diameter; dp = depth; w = width; h = height; sh = sound hole/s

to accompany songs in a Coptic church in Upper Egypt.



Figure 1

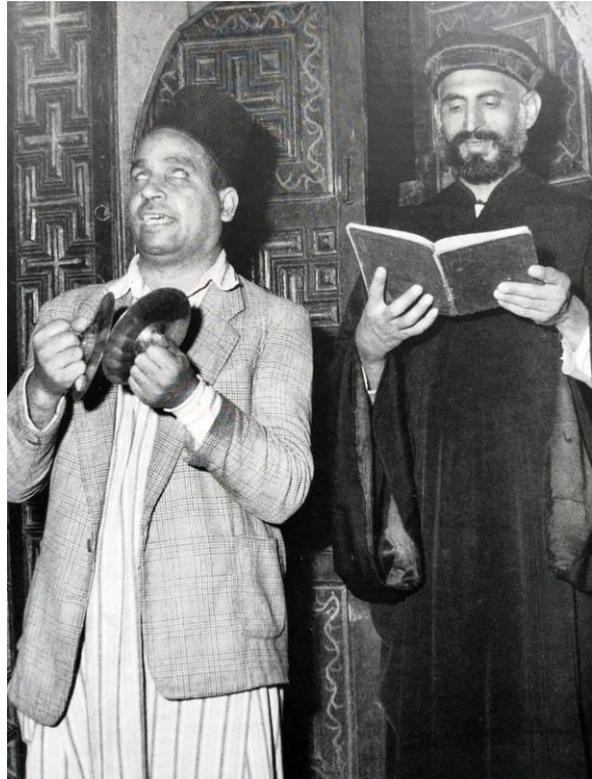


Figure 2

Unlike the Turkish finger cymbals mentioned above, the Egyptian cymbals are unique due to their domes in the centre surrounded with flat rims.

When played, the *sāgāt* set is stroked with one another to produce the required sound. In other cultures, finger cymbals are not beaten. Regarding the playing position of finger cymbals, each cymbal is taken in each hand of the player positioning them between the thumb and index finger accordingly.

About the use of cymbals in various musical events, Hassan (2008: 776-777) makes the following remarks: “*Small cymbals are used by women dancers, Gypsies, and effeminate men to accompany solo dancing with other string and percussion instruments. Medium-size cymbals (about 10 centimetres in diameter) called tura in Egypt, are played by groups that specialize in religious music. In Oman the same cymbal ring, men or women to accompany the singing and dancing of professional groups play sehal or t̥ṣa (plural, fas). A pair of turas are used in the Bedouin dance ‘ayala of the Gulf region, in which two rows of men sing antiphonally. Large cymbals (15 centimetres in diameter) are often the most popular idiophone in both secular and religious contexts. They are usually played with an ensemble of other instruments that differ according to the country and the occasion.*

At any outdoor festivities, time is structured by the metallic sound of sunuaj. In rural Mesopotamia, in the original war dance alsas, the dancers (who carry shields and are sometimes on horseback) are accompanied by cymbals, a shawm, a large circular drum, and small double kettledrums. Cymbals have an important role in religious ceremonies, accompanying monadic chant and group singing. Large cymbals are used in Oriental Coptic, Chaldean, and Syrian churches; in Shi’a mourning ceremonies in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain; and in the ceremonies of different Sufi orders.”

Concussion idiophones (111,1), Egypt: shelf no.: 197804; collected by Johan Becker in the Nile region, Egypt; the instrument consists of five pairs of cymbals
L = 52 (total length); w = (of the black metal handle) = 3,5; d (each cymbal) = 4,5



Kettledrums (211.11), Egypt: shelf-no.: 181901 and 181902; collected by Jutta Schienerl in Kairo in 2004; d = 8-10; d (membrane) = 13.9 – 14.5
The resonators of both kettledrums are made of metal, while the opening is covered with skin



Kettledrums (211.11), Egypt; shelf-no.: 097803; collected by Hans von Becker in the Nubian region; h = 10; d = 21; the body of the drum is made of a dried out calabash. Its opening is covered with skin that is glued around the rim of the bowl. The rare of the sound resonator is decorated with engraved in geometric patterns with black ink.



2 Kettledrum pairs (211.11), Egypt

shelf-no.: 125520a; collected by Carl Drächler in 1939; h = 4.5; d = 11 – 12; w = 26

shelf-no.: 072560, collected by Lommer in 1905; h = 4; d = 9; w = 22

The resonators of the drums are made of hollowed out wood and the openings are covered with skin (according to Elsner's, a *naqqārāt* he examined in Tunisia was covered with camel skin 1983: 94) that are glued at the rims of the bowls. Both drums including the connection spot consist of one piece of wood. The wooden connecting spot in the centre on the front side, is carved in the head of a crocodile including its eyes that are resembled by means of red fruit seeds (shelf-no. 072560; in case of shelf-no. 125520a the crocodile head is broken). The rare sides of the wooden body of both sound boxes are engraved with flower patterns accompanied by several holes fixed in a circle and additional lines.



Such pair drums are called *naqqarat*, *naqqārāt*, *nāgarāt*, probably the plural form of *naqqara*, a term commonly used for variously sized kettledrums in many Arabic and Muslim cultures. Similar terms are *nagaru*, *naggaro*, *nggara*, *negero*, *negarit*.

Their resonators are not only made of wood, but also of clay or copper. They are played in both worldly and religious music events. In Tunisia, Elsner (1983: 94-95) observed the use of the *naqqārāt* in classical music ensembles. While playing, the drummer sits cross-legged on the floor and beats each drum with a wooden stick (Touma 1975: 123; Conner et. al 2000: 12-13 and 625.637).



(left) *naqqārāt* playing in classical music ensembles (Tunisia); Source: Elsner 1983: 95;
 (right) *Naqqarat* player; Source: Touma 1975: figure 16

Frame drums in general belong to the ancient musical instruments of the world. Their geographic distribution of frame drums refers to Oriental countries including many Muslim countries of the world. According to Doubleday (2006: 109) whose article gives a special emphasis on frame drum in the Middle East, notes the history of these portable hand drums dates back up to the third millennium BCE and adds that it is a typical musical instrument of women. With reference to the historical background of frame drums, she mentions the use of frame drums in ecstatic rights and in ritualistic ceremonies with ancient goddesses and gods dating back up to c.3000 BCE based on as archeological evidences (e.g. wall paintings) as well as written source materials. Accordingly, Sumerian civilization that flourished in Mesopotamia (present day Iraq) during the above mentioned period reveal the fact that frame drums were played by both sex. “*Inanna was an important deity, the goddess of life, death and fertility, and texts describe her bestowing drums to her people at the cultic center, the city of Uruk (Warka in modern Iraq). Frame drums and other instruments were used in her temple ceremonies and processions through the city as well as in mourning ceremonies for the dead*” (ibid). The various rituals of drumming (related with the frame drum) are an ancient technology for directly synchronizing the mind-body complex enabling the drummer increasingly deeper level of awareness.

With reference to the use of frame drums in ancient Egypt, Doubleday suggests that it was widely used by women “*In the Egyptian New Kingdom dynasties (ca. 1570-947 BCE) female musical troupes (khener) directed by women used rectangular and round frame drums in temple rituals and funerary ceremonies, along with other instrument. Women played frame drums in the important set festival to renew the pharaoh’s kingship.*” Doubleday furthermore mentions ancient birth rituals accompanied by groups of female frame drum players.

In the collection of the World Museum Vienna, **single-skin frame drums (211.311)** have been observed from Egypt and Morocco

Frame drum Egypt: shelf-no.: 092163; collected by Sofie Deutsch, 1917; h = 5.8; d = 21.9

Frame drum Morocco: shelf-no.: 016962; collection Miramar, 1883; h = 7.6; d = 21

The frames of both instruments are made of wood and covered with skin one side. In the case of the Egyptian instrument, the skin is attached with the frame by means of glue. At four spots, two movable, thin metal discs are inserted in a vertically extending rod. A transverse board (carved out of from the round frame) is placed between two discs. The wooden frame is decorated with zigzag patterns forming several triangles. In each triangle is small piece of stone (probably marble) is glued on the surface.



Touma (1975: 119) mentions *riqq* is a single-frame frame drum with diameters of 20 centimetres consisting of up to 10 pairs (altogether 20 discs) of movable discs with each pair mounted in the five symmetrically carved double rods that are fixed in the frame. The *riqq* is held in the left hand between the thumb and the other fingers. It is positioned in a way that the other fingers can beat the edge of the stretched membrane. The right hand beats both edge and centre of the membrane hence, producing high and low sounds (*dum-tak*). The frame of the *riqq* is often decorated with various mosaic platelets made of nacre, bone, horn or coloured woods. The membrane of a valuable and very precious *riqq*, especially that used by professional musician, is made of fish skin, whereas for ordinary *riqq*s that are among others played by laymen or less experienced musicians, goatskin is often used.



Professional Egyptian *riqq*s covered with fish skin and decorated with colourful mosaic, platelets;

Source:

<https://www.ethnicmusical.com/shop/professional-egyptian-riq-gawharet-el-fan-33-hammered-cymbals-black/>

For the purpose of comparison, a similar single-headed frame drum that is also widely used in the Middle East and in many Arabic and Islamic cultures of the world, is called *duff* (*duf, def, daf, dap or deff, daff, tār, mazhar*), which has often a relatively larger diameter of the membrane (up to 30 cm or more). Compared to the *riqq*, the *duff* generally has a rather smaller frame height. The symmetrically attached pair of discs are limited to 5 (making it analogous to a large tambourine), compared to up to 10 pairs used for the *riqq*. The membrane of the best quality of the *duff* drum is fish skin, but other skin types are also used, such as goat, cow, and horse. In the interior of the drum, metal ringlets are attached, which produce percussive sound when the instrument is beaten and shaken (see also Jabes 1983: 72-73). According to Elsner's observations (1983: 91), frame drums (*tār*) – along with other

Abbreviations: l = length; d = diameter; dp = depth; w = width; h = height; sh = sound hole/s

musical instruments - are primarily used to accentuate the rhythmic flow in classical music practices throughout North Africa cultures.



(left) *Darabukka* and *riqq* playing positions; (right) *riqq* player, Source: Touma 1975: figures 13, 14 and 15



(left) *duff* frame drum from Persia with decorated frame; source: <https://www.persiana-shop.com/products/persian-daf-bendir>; (right) *duff* frame drum with ringlets; source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daf>

Single-headed goblet drums (211.261): Goblet drums in general are common musical instruments in many parts of the world. The drums to be presented below are used in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe.

With regard to the North African traditional musical instrument collection housed in the World Museum Vienna, a large variety of goblet drums are represented. Different collectors collected at different times, regions and the instruments. Prior to presenting each instrument

Abbreviations: l = length; d = diameter; dp = depth; w = width; h = height; sh = sound hole/s

of the collection, it might be of importance to make some general remarks.

Goblet drums found in different regions and cultures of the world are known under a variety of terms such as *darbūkah*, *darbuka*, *darbukka*, *darbouka*, *derbouka*, *darabukka*, *darabucca*, *durbakke*, *dirbakki*, *tarabuka*, *tarabaki*, *debuka*, *doumbek*, *dumbec*, *dumbeg*, *dumbelek*, *dumbak*, *tabla*, *tablah*, *toumperleki* and *zerbaghali*. Goblet drums belong to the ancient music instruments originating in the Middle East.

Darbūkahs are made of hard wood, clay or metal (aluminium, copper) and the membrane can be of fish skin, but animal skins may also be stretched across the top. Professional instrument makers who have their own material preferences based on longstanding experience make the instrument. Choice of materials (resonator and membrane) and method of construction also play an important role in the quality of the sound. Methods applied to cover the opening of the resonator with membrane and to fix it vary accordingly from place to place. Hence, the skin are glued, nailed or tightened with cords in various lacing patterns. Despite the facts that the overall shape of *darbūkah* drums is goblet, two main variations are observed regarding the shape of the drumhead. We may distinguish between Egyptian and Turkish goblet drums. The first type reveals a rounded edge at the head, whereas in the case of the Turkish drum, the head is exposed and its edge is harder. This difference in shape plays a vital role in the sound production as well as in the playing technique.



Regarding the playing method of the *darbūkah*, the drummer may stand or sit. While seated the drum often rests on the thigh of the player's, who holds the drum tight under his arm. This position allows him to have both hands free to beat the stretched membrane. The hand, on the side where the drum is resting on the drummer's thigh, beats the edge of the stretched membrane's thus producing a higher tone (*tak/tek*), whereas the other hand is free to beat the center of the membrane hence, producing a strong and low tone (*dum*). Furthermore, the playing positions and techniques vary from place to place (see also Elsner 1983: 92-93, Touma 1972: 122).

**Photo *darbūkah* playing position;
Source: Touma 1975: figure 25**

An alternative playing position is placing the drum between the player's legs, which allows both hands to be free to beat the stretched membrane at the respected spots accordingly. Similarly, the frame drum discussed earlier, two types of tones (low- and high-pitched tones commonly termed as *dum* and *tak/tek*) are produced, while playing the *darbūkah*. In many parts of the world, the surface of the *darbūkah* drums is painted in abundant types of motifs representing the culture and tradition of the respective community or country. Other types of decorations are colourful mosaic designs (e.g. with tortoise shell or mother of pearl).

The *darbūkah* accompanies different traditional and classical music events with songs and dances (see details in Conner et al 2000: 12-13; Morris et. al 2000: 832-834; Dick et. al 2000: 903-905; Montagu et.al 2000: 55-57). In the following, specimen examined in the North African music instrument collection of the World Museum Vienna, are presented:



Single-headed goblet drums (211.261), Egypt: shelf-no.: 167441, collected by David Morton in 1985; drum body is made of clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin; drumhead covered with skin that is punched at the edges in regular gap and tensioned with leather cords against a ring/belt (belt-tensioning), lacing pattern = Y: exterior wall of the drum is painted colourfully; h = 36; d = 23



Single-headed goblet drum (211.261), Egypt: shelf-no.: 009633, collected 1879; material: clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin attached with glue; h = 44; d = 14.7



Single-headed goblet drum (211.261), Morocco: shelf-no.: 086818, collected by Graf Michael Bukowky in 1910; material: clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin attached with glue; drum body is painted with colourful and decorative motives; h = 29.2; d = 13.9



Single-headed goblet drum (211.261), Morocco: shelf-no.: 083826, collected by Graf Michael Bukowky in 1910; material: clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin attached with glue; drum body is painted with colourful and decorative motives; h = 26.4; d = 13



Single-headed goblet drum (211.261), Morocco: shelf-no.: 155207, collected by Peter W. Schienrl in 1974; drum body is made of clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin attached with glue; the edge of the membrane is additionally decorated with a rose coloured fibres; the drum body is painted in light bluish and golden colours; h = 26.4; d = 13



Single-headed goblet drum (211.261), Morocco: shelf-no.: 086809, collected by Graf Michael Bukowky in 1910; drum body is made of clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin attached with glue; drum body including stretched membrane are colourfully painted; h = 18.4; d = 12.5





Single-headed goblet drum (211.261), Morocco: shelf-no.: 155343, collected by Gerhard Walter Schuster in 1974; drum body is made of clay/ceramic; top is covered with skin attached with glue; drum body is colourfully painted; h = 33; d = 18



Kettledrums (211.11), Morocco, shelf no. 155342 collected by Gerhard Walter Schuster in 1974.

In Morocco, this pair drums is probably called *tbilat*, *tikallalin* or *tamtam* and shows striking similarities with drums known as *bongo* (see also Blades/Holland 2000: 857-858) The *tbilat* consists of two single-headed kettledrums of different sizes. The drum bodies, in this very case, made of clay/ceramic. The resonators are joined horizontally together. Both drums are of similar height, but their diameters considerably differ, namely with 14 and 21.5 centimetres. The heads are covered with goatskin that is punched in regular gaps and tensioned with leather cords against a ring/belt (belt tensioning in X pattern) around the lower parts of both drums. The body of both drums is painted with colourful patterns. When played, the *tbilat* is placed between the drummer's legs, who beats the stretched membrane with both hands.



Double-headed cylindrical drums (211.212.1), Egypt and Morocco

shelf-no. 158150 collected by Peter W. Schienerl in 1976 in Egypt; h = 34,5; d = 29.3

shelf-no 143821, collected by Norbert Mylius in 1963 in Morocco, h = 28.5; d = 30.5

Sound resonator = hollowed out wood; top and bottom opening covered with skin (often of various

thickness, e.g. cow skin and sheepskin) tensioned with thin leather cords run in Y-lacing pattern. The drum is played with a pair of sticks.

Throughout the Arabic and Islamic world, this drum type is generically called *ṭabl* or as Kubica suggests the plural form is *ṭabala*, a term that may be traced back to the Babylonian-Assyrian root word *ṭabbalu* meaning drum (Kubica 1983: 126-127).



Bongo drums Morocco¹

Alternative designations are *al ṭabl* or *al-kabir* (= ‘the big drum’). This drum appears in different sizes, whereas its name also varies regionally.

In his book „Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream“ Abraham/Shryock (2000: 566-567) narrates about a large double-headed drum named *ṭabl baladi* as a result of his observations made on a traditional and ‘modern’ wedding ceremony in terms of culture and music. Referring to traditional music instruments, he writes the following: “...if, present, special musicians, such as players of the *ṭabl baladi*, the *mazhar*, and the *mizmar*, will parade through the crowd, infecting it with the spirit of celebration. The instruments, the lard double-headed bass drum (the *ṭabl baladi*), the loud and large tambourine (the *mazhar*), and the sharp, loud double reed oboe (the *mizmar*) have been associated with weddings and celebrations since the time of the Prophet Muhammad.” Mention must be made that the term *ṭabl baladi* is also applied for ensembles that are made up of two large and one small shawms, a pair of kettledrums including the cylindrical and double-headed cylindrical drum.

¹ Source: https://www.1stdibs.com/furniture/more-furniture-collectibles/collectibles-curiosities/musical-instruments/vintage-set-of-two-moroccan-double-ceramic-bongo-style-tbilat-drums/id-f_5713153/



Double-headed cylindrical drum, Egypt; shelf-no. 158150 collected by Peter W. Schienerl



double-headed cylindrical drum, Morocco; shelf-no 143821; wooden body; membranes tensioned with cords made of plant fibres; belt-lacing; instrument played with a pair of wooden sticks

According to Kubica (1983: 126) such ensembles are also called *mizmar baladi* in Egypt, whereas in Tunisia and Algeria they are called *ṭbal* or *ṭbel* (ibid). In Morocco on the other hand, the *ṭabl* is played in accompaniment of the bagpipe *gaita* likewise in Algeria. Furthermore, alternative terms of the large cylindrical double-drum, which is according to him of Sudanese origin. The black Africans who migrated to countries such as Algeria and Libya call this instrument *dendūn* or *gengū*. In Morocco, this drum is given the name *ṭbal gnāwī*. These designations should be taken into consideration from their cultural and historical contexts and backgrounds (ibid; see also pp. 100-101). As the photo shows, the two musicians play *dendūn* drums, which they hang over their shoulders. In most cases both sides of the stretched membranes are played with sticks. Whereas one side of the membrane produces a low sound and accordingly beaten with a relatively thick wooden mallet, the other side of the membrane produces a higher pitch hence, beaten with a thinner mallet.



***dendūn* players holding large drums; Source: Kubica 1983: 127**



***Davul* and *zurna* players performing music during a Turkish wedding
Photo: T. Teffera, Berlin 2004**

Dendūn drums play a very important role for the migrant musicians from Sudan who reside in Algeria ever since. These migrant communities have been and still today are passing the playing tradition from one generation to the next. *Dendūn* are played on various musical occasions, festivals and ritual ceremonies on which many people participate. In Turkey, the *ṭbal* is called *davul*. In 2004, I attended a Turkish wedding in Berlin, where I observed musicians playing the *zurna* oboe that was accompanied by the *davul*. With their music, they accompanied group dance that was executed by the wedding guests and the bridal party. In the photo shown (above) the *davul* player holds a thick stick in his right hand and the thinner stick in his left hand.

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