


Talking Drums – A Study

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Abstract

Membranophones are one of the main divisions of Musical Instruments. They are further classified by many features. One such feature is shape and structure. Hour Glass Drums comes under this one. These are the ancient drums seen from early Times. They are called as Talking Drums in West Africa. In Talking drum pitch can be regulated according to the tone and prosody of human speech. Most of the talking drums sound like a human humming depending on the way they are played As they can change the pitch lower or higher it may be used for Music also. But there are many such Drums seen all over the World with similar shape, structure, mode of construction, playing techniques and so on. So they may also be called as Talking drums

Keywords: Talking Drums, Hour Glass Drums, Damaru, Membranophones, Animal Skin, Drum heads

Introduction

The Membrano phones are the earliest since the rhythmic impulses might have been more primitive than melodic ones. Secondly it is obvious that it takes less inventiveness to cover a cooking pot with a skin than to construct a chordo phone. Drum is a Musical Instrument in which the sound is produced by the vibration of a stretched membrane, thus it is classified as a membrano phone with in the category of percussion instruments. Basically a drum is either a tube or bowl of wood, metal or pottery (Shell) covered at one or both ends by a membrane (head) which is usually struck by hand or stick. Friction Drums, a class apart are sounded by rubbing. Tubular Drums assumes many shapes like Globet, Hour Glass, and Barrel etc. According to shape drums are classified as Barrel, conical, Cylindrical, long vessel and Hourglass shaped

Hour Glass Drums

They are a sub category of membrano phones, characterized by an hour glass shape. They are also known as waisted Drums. The Drum heads are attached by laces which may be squeezed during performance to alter the pitch. This also includes pellet Drums such as Damaru with similar dimensions, purposes and playing methods. Hour Glass Drum can modify tension of the membrane by means of a mechanical process and consequently the pitch of the notes in order to make a melody. The most common principle consists of a lacing system passing alternately through the edges of each membrane. By pressing the ties with more or less force, the musician varies the tension of the skins and consequently the pitch of the sound. In our country the sacred association of the Damaru with Lord Shiva is familiar. The drum connotes the primeval of Nadha, the origin of creation. It also stands for all sounds and revelation. The Damaru has the same religious significance as veena of Godess Saraswathi and the Flute of Krishna. It is the Drum of divine Dancer Shiva. The primordial vibration of creation was the sound of the Damaru.

From this originated all the sound of speech and music. Historically the Damaru and its variations like Dakka and Dindima are found mentioned in Amarakosa (5th century) Mahasutasoma Jataka Ashtadhyayi (7th century), Sangam literature (3rd BC to 3rd AD) Thevaram hymns (6th to 9th AD) shows references about Damaru. The word Damaru referred to small hour glass membrano phone. Some of the names by which this class mentioned are Damru, Damarugam, Thudi, Kudukuppai, Budubudukke, and Budubudukalu. Obviously they are Onomatopoeic.

Hour Glass Drums - World Wide

This Hour Glass Drums exists in most of the regions of the World.

- Bata Drum - (Cuba, West Africa)
- Damaru - (India)
- Dekki - (Srilanka)
- Dhad Sarangi - (India & Pakistan)
- Galgo - (Korea)
- Idakka - (India)
- Udukkai - (S.India)
- Urumi - (S. India)
- Janggu - (Korea)
- Jugu - (China)
- Kakko - (Japan)
- Ootsuzumi - (Japan)
- Kundu - (Papua - New Guinea)
- Udakki - (Srilanka)
- Talking Drum - (Dundun, Kalangu, Donno or tama – (West Africa)

Talking Drum (Africa)



Talking drum is an hour glass shaped drum from West Africa where pitch can be regulated to music of the tone and prosody of human speech. It has two drum heads connected by leather tension chords which allow the player to change the pitch of the drum by squeezing the chords between their arm and

body. A skilled player is able to play whole phrases. Most talking drums sound like a human humming depending on the way they are played. In India Idakka is not used to mimic speech but to mimic vocal music. They are referred to as talking drums because they are able to be tuned to mimic the sound of human speech in terms of tone and accent such as emotions. Other names of Talking drums in West Africa are Dondo, Odondo, Tamanin, Lunna, Donno, Mibaggu, Baggel, Kalanju, Dankarki, Doodo, Tama, Tamma, Dundun, Gangan.

Significance of Talking Drums

The Talking Drums are various types of Drums that by imitating the rhythm and the rise and fall of words in languages are used as communication devices in olden days. The same above can also imitate the music which has risen and fall of tones and rhymes.

Bata Drum (CUBA and NIGERIA)



The Bata Drum is a double headed drum shaped like an Hour Glass with one end larger than the other. This is a percussion Instrument is still used for its original religious purpose and also used in NIGERIA. These Drums are played to create poly rhythmic Compositions. In CUBA, the Bata consists of a set of 3 tapered cylinders of various sizes. The largest one is the mother Drum. In Nigeria there are five sizes of Bata which can be played either by hand or using a leather play strap.

Galgo: (Korean Drum)



This has an Hour Glass shaped wooden body and two drum Heads of identical Diameter similar to Janggu, the Galgo is filled with a sound adjusting funnel that is different from Janggu. The Galgo uses thinner Drum skins and is struck with Two Bamboo sticks. The pitch of the Drum can be controlled on both sides rather than only one pitch per side for the Janggu.. Galgo is also seen in the National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts and also seen as a part of the Traditional Band of the Republic of Korean Army.

Janggu: (Korean Drum)



It is the most representative Drum in traditional Korean Music Consists of an Hour Glass shaped with 2 heads made from animal skin. The two heads produce sounds of different pitch and timbre. It is said that it is originated from Idakka an Indian Instrument introduced to Korea from India. The Two skin heads are lapped onto metal hoops placed over the open ends of the body and secured by rope counter loops. The Left head covered with thick cow hide, horsehide or deer skin to produce deep and low tones. The right side covered with either dog skin or horse hide skin to produce higher tones. The two bamboo sticks are used for beating.

Jiegu (Chinese Drum)



Jiegu the Chinese drum adopted from the Central Asian Region of Kucha during the Tang Dynasty. This is the ancient Chinese drum from which the Galgo is derived. The Japanese Kakko is also

derived from Jiegu the Jiegu Chinese Drum is Hour Glass shaped and are played with 2 wooden sticks. The Leather on both sides is thin and the size is the same and it is played with sticks in both hands.

Kakko (Japanese Drum)



It is a Japanese hourglass Double headed Drum. They are usually laid sideways on stands and are played on both drum heads with stick. The skin of the heads are first stretched over metal hoops before they are placed on the body tying them to each other and tightening them making them taut.

Kundu: (Papua New Guinea)



Kundu is an Hour Glass shaped drum. The size of a Kundu Drum Varies. A small finger Drum might measure 30cm while a large drum may measure 200 cm It is made of Carved wood with a Lizard skin drum head. There are carvings on the body like open mouthed crocodiles, human faces, dancers and so on.

**Hour Glass Drum of India
Damaru**



This is the most common Hour Glass Drum in India. It has a resonator which is anywhere from 4-10 inches in Length and 3-8 inches in Diameter. The resonator is usually either metallic or wooden. There are two Drum heads on each side of the resonator which are laced together with cord. Near the Centre of the lacing are 2 loose knotted cords. The knots on each end strike both heads to produce a rattling sound. This is affected by rotating the Drum rapidly in alternating directions. The pitch is bent by squeezing the lacing. The other representatives of Damaru are Udakkai, hurduk, Idakka and dhad.2)

Dhak



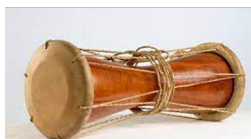
The word Dhak refers to both an Hour Glass Drum and ritualistic Drum in Mina village of Udaipur District in Southern Rajasthan specifically used in Amba Devi Dhak ritual. The Dhak is played with hands instead of knotted chords. The Dhad is very popular in the Sikh bardic tradition. The Dhak is a Tribal Hour Glassm Drum of Southern Rajasthan.

Davandai



Davandai is still used in some temples of Tamilnadu. It is an Hour Glass shaped small Drum of Brass, hooked parchment is stretched over both the faces. Held on the Left hand and is struck by a thin wooden stick by the Right hand. Used in religious, temple festivals. It is used in Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple for daily pooja.

Timila



It is a type of hour glass drum. It is suspended with a rope from the Left shoulder and the upper part is played with both hands. It is used in Kerala.

Hudukku

It is like a Damaru but much larger in size. Its two faces are both made of Leather and are held together by strong rope. It is suspended with a rope from the Left shoulder and played with the right hand. Seen in Gharwal areas of Uttarkhand in Himalayas.

Udukku

It is about 1 foot long with a middle part narrow and the sides are broad like an Hour glass drum . It is made of either wood or mud. It is held in Left hand and played with the right hand. Used limitedly to Folk- Songs of Tamilnadu.

Urumi



Urumi is a double headed hour glass shaped drum form Tamil nadu of South India. The two skin heads are attached to a single hollow often intricately carved wooden shell. The preferred wood is Jack wood. Both Left and Right heads are made from cow hide that is stretched around a thin metal ring. The Outer circumference of each head is perforated with approximately 7 to 8 holes. The two heads are held in tension by a continuous rope that is woven around the drum in a “V” shaped pattern. Additional small coils of string or metal are tied around each pair of ropes near left head. These coils can be slide horizontally along the length of the drum increasing or decreasing the tension between the heads as necessary. The Urumi is slung with a cloth strap across the shoulder and played by the drummer horizontally. It is played entirely with sticks in a standing or walking position. This is most often performed in 2 types of ensembles 1) Urumimelam 2) Naiyandi Melam. In Folk Dances like Devaraattam, Poikkaal Kudirai, (Dummy Horse Dance) Peacock Dance, Tiger Dance, Kaavadi Aattam it is played.

Udukkai

Udukkai is a member of Membranophonic instruments of India And Nepal. It is used in Folk Music and Rituals. The Drums are of an ancient design of hour glass drums similar to the northern Damaru and Southern Idakka. The shape is similar to other Indian Hour Glass drums having a small snare stretched over one side.



They are played with bare hands and the pitch may be altered by squeezing the lacing in the middle. It is made up of Brass or Wood and is very portable.

Hudukka

Hudukka is used in Kerala. It is 40cm in Length 18 Cm in Diameter. The Body is carved from wood. Cow or Goat membrane are glued to a thick ring in vegetable fiber pierced with 6 holes through which a cotton tension cord passes. This Drum is suspended by means of a strap from Left shoulder. The right hand strikes the skin while left hand ensures the variation in tensions by tightening the central part of the rope.

Idakka



It is an hour glass drum from Kerala. This is a handy percussion instrument very similar to Damaru of tamilnadu. While Damaru is played by rattling the knotted cords against the resonators, the Idakka is played with sticks. It is an accompaniment for the dances Mohiniattam and Kathakali. I It is made up if Jack wood with one and a half feet length. 4 inches in circumference in middle and 6 inches on sides' The right and left heads fixed on the trunk are larger

in diameter. Lacing is used to hold the heads to the trunk. Only one head is used for playing.

Other Names used

Hurki (UP) Takorderu (Rajasthan) Daklu (Gujarat) Guruki (Maharashtra) Udukkai, Idakka (Kerala) Udukkai, Davandai. (Tamilnadu). All the above Indian and Foreign Instruments shows similar structure and playing methods.

Sculptures

Drum of Angkor Wat in Cambodia



Angkor Wat is a temple complex in **Cambodia**. At the Angkorian period drums are carried on the shoulder or as a shoulder strap around the neck. This can be viewed in the northern gallery of Angkor wat at National Museum of Cambodia. This is an Hour Glass drum of 7th century.

Ancient Variety of Idakka seen in Belur Karanataka which belongs to 13th Century. It is an hour glass drum from Kerala. This is a handy percussion instrument very similar to Damaru of Tamilnadu. While Damaru is played by rattling the knotted cords against the resonators, the Idakka is played with sticks.

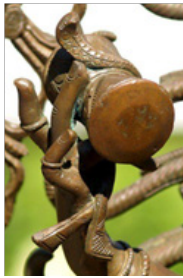
Idakka seen in Belur Karanataka



Damaru in Nataraja Statue

Nataraja sculptures are seen in Ellora and Elephanta caves of Maharashtra which belongs to 5th to 9th century. But only in 11th Century Nataraja statues are made during Chola dynasty 9th to 13th century. This Nataraja bronze statue is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Damaru in Nataraja Statue



The Dancing sculpture of Nataraja of Kailash Temple at Ellora caves in this picture shows Damaru in his left hand. The dancing Nataraja is found with 10 hands with five on each side. The left side middle hand is carrying damaru.

Dancing Sculpture of Nataraja at Ellora Caves



Hour Glass Drums and Indian Literature

The Hourglass drum is seen in India from Sangam Period that is 300BC to 100AD. The different names seen for this drums are Damaru, Damarugam, Idakkai, Idukki, Udukkai, Urumi, Thavandai, Timailai, Thudi and so on.

Thudi in Sangam Period

- Tholkappium speaks about the Instrument Thudi for Desert one of the five major lands. In Ettuthogai and Patthupattu of sangam literature it is mentioned in many places
- Thudiihutthadu - (Agam - 89 - 14)
- Valvaikadunthudiparai - (Agam - 159 - 9)
- Thudiadikkayandalai - (kalithogai - 11 - 8)
- Vankankadunthudi - (Puram 170 - 6)
- Thudieriyum - (Puram 287 - 1)
- Thudi cheer nadattha - (Paripadal - 22 - 42)
- Parandezhuthudipada - (Paripadal - 7 - 2)

- Thudiadianna - (Porunaratrupadai - 125)
- Kadunthudi - (Perumpanatrupadai - 124)
- Thudikkananna - (Malaipadukadam - 458)
- Thudikkanthuniyal - (Madurai kanji - 320)

Thudi in Thevaram: (from 6th to 9th Century)

- Thudigalodumuzhavam (1 - 28 - 256)
- Karanguthudimuzhangum (4 - 2 - 14)
- Thudiudaivedar (4 - 50 - 486)
- Thudikondakaiyum (4 - 81 - 786)
- Thudiyaatthudiyinmuzhakkam (6 - 15 - 155)
- Thudikondar (6 - 96 - 941)

Thudi in Others

- Maruvumthudiyadan - 2798 - Thirumandiram
- Silambukaikolthudi. 1398 - Thirumandiram
- Visiyuruthudigal - 19 - 3 - Aanayarpuranam - periyapuranam
- Sillaraithudiyum - 5 - 3 - Kannarpuranam - periyapuranam
- Thudiyudaisenai - 1971 - Kambaramayanam
- Sendai thudimurasodu - 119 - Thiruvilaiyadalpuranam
- Kaithudiyin - 1726 - Thiruvilaiyadalpuranam

Damarugam in Literature

- Karathinil Damarugam - 7 - 1 - 1 - Sundararthevaram
- Damarugamaagili - 1398 - Thirumandiram
- Thamaraikaiyildamarugam - 1403 - Thirumandiram
- Damaruga Osaiyum - 2317 - Thirumandiram
- Angidamarugamakkumalai - 2780 - Thirumandiram
- Mathalamkaradigaidamaru - 11 - 1 - 9 - Karaikalammaiyar
- Sengaidamarugamthadirsadi - 23 - Thirupugal
- Damarugamveenaigalponga - 2616 - Thirupugal

Udukkai in Literature

- Ulariyaudukkaiyum - Udayanankadai 1 - 72 - 76
- Thanduudukkaiithaalam - Thevaram - 1 - 65 - 10
- Thararariririri Idakkaiyum Udukkaiyum - Thirupugl - 1002
- Thimilaiudukkudanmurasu - Thirupugl - 523
- Udukkaiberigaitthavirkuzham - Thirupugl - 412
- Udukkaiberimuzhangida - Thirupugl - 655

Conclusion

The name Talking drum seen only in South Africa. But there are similar drums with respect to shape, structure, mode of construction, production of sound and playing methods. On the contrary they may also be called as Talking drums. They are found all over the world like India, Japan China, Africa, Srilanka, Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Cuba, New guinea, so on. They are one of the Ancient drums which are seen from Sangam period in India (Before AD). They are hour glass drums with two heads, by squeezing the threads in the narrow region the tone can be altered for mimicry that is for talking. Some times sticks are used to produce sound. We can observe different types of animal parchments in these drums.

- India - Goat skin, Calf skin, deer skin, Cow skin
- Japan - Horse hide, Cat hide
- New guinea - Lizard hide
- Korea - Dog hide, horse hide, deer hide. Cow hide

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