

# Ismaili Band

Contributed by Webmaster

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The word band is borrowed from the French *bande* meaning troop. The synonymous word in Spanish is *banda* adopted from Teutonic form. The term band was used in England to apply to the King's Band of 24 violins at the court of Charles II (1660-1685). The word band represents a broad term that describes a group of musicians performing on wind and percussion instruments. Thousands years ago, when a procession of the Egyptian marched towards the shrine of Serpis, the healing-god, the musicians in the group played reed-pipes, tambourines and drums. The Bible describes, "an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets." In Greece and Rome, trumpeters headed all triumphal processions. In 570 B.C., Servius Tullius introduced bronze trumpet into the Roman army. In the 12th century, the convention of musical notation was accepted; before then all music was played by ear.

King Edward II of England (1327-1377) maintained a band composed chiefly of wind instruments. In 16th century, King Henry VII of England had a band that was highly regarded in its time, containing the instrumentation of 14 trumpets, 10 trombones, 2 viols, 3 rebecs, 1 bagpipe, 4 tambourines and 4 drums. After the 30 years' war from 1618 to 1648, another progressive step occurred in the evolution of the band in Europe. In 1542, King Henry VII sent to Vienna for kettledrums that could be played on horseback after the Hungarian manner of the *fons at origo*, which was originally a Turkish style. Fronsperger writes that, "The German firstly adopted it, then French." Until the middle of 18th century, there was practically no regularly organized band in Europe. In 1763, King Fredrick was reputed for the first time to regulate the kinds and number of instruments used in his bands. At the end of 18th century, the Neapolitanic armies were reported to have equipped with some very efficient bands. The earliest American bands were based on British trends, and even before the American Revolution, there is record of a band led by Josiah Flagg of Boston. In 1775, the Continental Congress in United States authorized the establishment of the Marine Corps, and a band of fifers and drummers as a part of the unit. This marked the beginning of U.S. Marine Band. In 1798, the Congress re-established the Marine Corps, which in turn re-organized a band of drums and fifes. In the year 1800, the band presented its first open-air concert in Washington. In 1810, the Eleventh Militia Regiment organized the first official band in New York, and by 1823, there were five bands in New York. The band of Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore (1829-1892) organized a Grand National Band with the help of army, consisting of 500 bandmen with a number of additional drum and bugle players during the Civil War in March 4, 1864.

The modern band originated in 1789 as a result of French Revolution. It was Bernard Sarrette (1765-1858), who formed the band of the National Guard in Paris. This group of 45 players was immediately in demand for the popular demonstration and public ceremonies. By 1790, this band had 70 players and led to the formation of many military and town bands throughout Europe. The French band tradition reached its zenith in the great Funeral and Triumphal Symphony of Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), a write-up for a band of 208 players for the dedication of the Bastille Column in 1840. In 1838 at Berlin, 1000 wind instruments and 200 drummers were assembled by the organizer of Prussian military music to perform in honour of the Russian Emperor. Wilhelm Wieprecht (1802-1872) was chiefly responsible for organizing the band in 1854 as we see it today. It was through his example that the use of horns and trumpets with valves or keys became universally accepted. Besides, Saxophone and Adolphe Sax (1814-1894) and Theobald Boehm contributed to the development of the modern band and its music. By the middle of 19th century, bands in Europe had become an important part of every country's musical as well as military life. The famous bands were the Royal Horse Guards and the bands of the Grenadier Guards led by Sir Daniel Godfrey (1831-1931), the best-known bandmaster of his time.

The scouts in India advocated the orient bands and introduced it around 1890. The British armies brought best pipers and drummers in India during the first world war (1914-1919) for Indian armed forces, viz. Baloch, Pathan, Punjab, Sikh and Dogra Regiments. This was soon followed by Police and Auxiliary forces, Scouts and other units.

Islamic contribution in the band

Naqqar Khana (drum house), Naqqara Khana (kettledrum house) and Nawba Khana (military band house) are the common names given in Islamic lands to the military band. Early Arabian writers mentioned the tambourine (*duff*) of the matrons and singing girls (*kiyan*) in battles. According to al-Mufazal bin Salama (d. 920), "The *duff* or tambourine was an Arab origin, equating with Hebrew *toph* and Assyrian *adapa*." Tuwais, the first great musician in the days of Islam, played

the duff mura'bbā (square tambourine). The round form of duff with snares was probably ghirbal, so called because it was round like a sieve. The duff became the Persian duff or dap, the Kurdish dafik, the Albanian def and the Spanish adufe. Farmer writes that, "The duff or tambourine was popularized in Europe by the Moors of Spain and was for a long time, known as the tambour de Basque." The surna or reed-pipe was invented by Zunam (d. 791) who was in the Abbasid court during caliph Harun ar-Rashid. He named it Zunami, which found its way into Western Europe, and there corrupted into Zullame. Under the Umayyad, the drum and kettledrum appear to have been introduced into martial music and served as better accomplishments to the reed-pipe (mizmar), then the early Abbasids led Persian reed-pipe (surnay) being adopted in place of the more primitive mizmar. With the Persians, the surnay went with the drum (tabl). Masudi writes that it was Tubal bin Lamak to have invented tabl or drum. The word tabl may be equated with the Assyrian tabbalu and the Egyptian tabn. According to Encyclopaedia of Islam, "The Arabic tabl or the Persian tabir was the parent of the European table, atabal, tabor, tambour etc." "Another early name for this drum" writes H.G. Farmer, "was dabdab or dabdaba. Later it came to be known as the naqqara, a word together with the instrument, which was adopted by Europe as the naqar, nacaire, etc., whilst Persian tenbal became the European timbale and tymbala."

By the 10th century, several types of kettledrums were in use in martial array. The tabl al-markab or mounted drum which was quite identical with the dabdab and the naqqara, and the great kettledrum called kus. These were used in pairs and were carried on either side of a horse or camel's neck. Ibn Khaldun mentions, "Upto the 10th century, the naqqara khana or tabl khana, which in Buwahids time, comprised kettledrums, drums, trumpets, horns and reed-pipes; was part of the insignia of the caliph." The Buwahid Amir Muiz al-Dawla (d. 967) sought from the caliph al-Muti (d. 974) the privilege of the naqqara khana, but was refused. Yet in 966, this caliph permitted a general to sound like kettledrum during a campaign. It is said however that the first prince to obtain these coveted musical honour was the Buwahid Amir Adud al-Dawla (d. 983). He was granted the naqqara khana by caliph al-Tai in 979. In the year 1000, under the caliph al-Kadir, a minister was allowed to beat a drum, and in 1017, the Buwahid Sultan al-Dawla was granted similar honour. In Yamen in the 9th century, the ruler al-Mansur bin Hasan had 30 drums. Sa'id al-Ahwal (d. 1089) of Banu Najah had countless horns and drums. In Oman during the 14th century, the sultan had reed-pipes, horns, trumpets and drums at his gate. At the beginning of 11th century, the people of Malaga in Spain are reported to be keen on playing the ud (lute), tunbur (pandore), mizmar (reed-pipe), etc.

According to Tabakat-i Nasiri (London, 1881), "The Fatimids of Egypt dispensed musical honours upon subject rulers on every march on the same lines as the caliph of Baghdad." When Imam al-Muzz marched into Syria, he had 500 horns (abwak) sounding. The music was adopted by quite a large military band at the Fatimid palace. Nasir Khusaro visited Cairo, and describes the Fatimid military band comprised of horn (buk), reed-pipe (surna), two kinds of drums (tabl and duhul), kettledrums (kus) and eymbal (kasa). Zahirī writes, "The band of Sultan Baybar I (d. 1277) comprised of 40 great kettledrums, 4 drums, 4 reed-pipes and 20 trumpets." Ibn Taghribirdi says, "Under Kalaun (d. 1290), a vizir had a tabl khana and we read similar privilege in 1418." In India, the naqqara khana of Mughal emperor Akbar (d. 1602) had been mentioned by Abul Fazal in his Ain-i Akbari, which was made up of the monster kettledrum called kuwarga or kurga (about 18 pairs), the kettledrum or naqqara (about 20 pairs), the drum or duhul (4), the reed-pipe or surna (9), the large trumpet or karna (4 or more), the trumpet or nafir, the horn or singh (2) and cymbals or singh (3 pairs).

The Turks made prominent contribution in the military band. When Ottoman I, the founder of Ottoman dynasty became a prince in 1289, he was invested with a drum, flag and tuk. Orkhan (d. 1360) was first to introduce the drum. Murad IV (d. 1640) introduced large trumpet or karma. Military music was regularly organized during this period, and Turkish bands comprised the large reed-pipe or kaba zurna (2), the small reed-pipe or jura zurna (3), the flute or nai (1), the big drum or kaba duhul (1), the simple drum (3), the kettledrum or kus (1), the kettledrum or naqqara (2), the cymbal or zill (one large and two small pairs) and the jingling Johnny or caghana (2). Sultan's military band had 62 players under the commander, or band-master, known as mir mehtar table wa-alam, which was instrumental with reed-pipe (16), the trumpet (11), the drum (16), the kettledrum (8), the great kettledrum (4) and the cymbal (7 pairs).

More definite was the Turkish influence on European military music in early 18th century. The credit of having inaugurated this belongs to Poland and was due to full Turkish military band, which Augustus II (d. 1733), the King of Poland received from Constantinople. Russia was the next to acquire the Turkish technique, when in 1725, the Empress Anne (d. 1740) sent a mission to Turkey to form one of these bands. Austria followed in 1741, when Chevalier von der Trenck marched into Vienna preceded by a Turkish band. France adopted it about the same time, and when the famous Marshal Count de Saxe (d. 1750) had this Turkish music during the Austrian Succession War of 1741. Great excitement was created in Europe when around 1750, a whole Muslim family of new percussion instruments was introduced by traveling bands from Turkey. Composers were soon busy writing the Turkish music with parts for tambourines, cymbals, triangles, bass drums and other clanging and beating instruments. According to Encyclopaedia of Islam, "The percussion

instruments in the modern military bands of Europe were adopted from Turkey in the 18th century, and when adopted in orchestral (string band) music, they were for a long time called, Turkish Music." It is also recorded that Fredrick II (d. 1786), the King of Prussia, had a band of Turkish music, which he commanded to perform before Ahmed Effendi, the Turkish Ambassador at Berlin in 1760.

Fortescus writes in History of the British Army (London, 1899) that, "In almost every Islamic land today, the march of Western Civilization has brought Western ideas of the military band. Brass and reed instruments of European manufacture and of equal temperament are gradually suiting the old conception of the naqqar khana. Yet in the middle ages, it was Europe that borrowed it from the Muslims."

In Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, the Ismailis had to spend large sum on local bands on the occasions of jubilation, marriages and festivities. The first Ismaili Band therefore came into existence in 1926 with the efforts of H.H. The Aga Khan Volunteer Corps in Bombay, and then spread in other cities.

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