

TABLA AND ITS ANCESTORS

Pakawaj (sometimes “pakhawaj”)

Of ancient origin, it is a double-ended drum played by right and left hands with separate patterns in “*bols*,” mnemonic names for the strokes. Double-ended drums are often simply identified by the generic term “*mridanga*,” not to be confused with the mridangam of Carnatic classical traditions. The pakawaj is commonly said to be in “inverted-hourglass shape,” and has a huge literature of compositions and styles.

No strong contrast between open (*khula*) and closed (*banda* or *mundi*) sounds

Theka is less important

Tals have more complex *kriya* (hand gestures), often with 4 or more divisions

Improvised *parans*, which have a rolling, theme-and-variations, format

Fixed compositions include *gats*, *tukras*, *tihais*

Drummer echoes and shadows the rhythms of the soloist (*dhrupadiya* or dancer)

Folk drums

Dhol, dholak, dholki, nal, dak, khol, naqqara, etc.

Hand and stick drums

Of regional importance and often players are virtuosos

4 and 6 beat rhythms predominate, occasionally 5 and 7

“Dooop-dooop” modulates of the bass patterns are common

Ostinatos prevail, and there are few “standard” thekas

Tabla

Versatility allows the importing of traditions from all the above drumming styles

Emerges as the drum of choice of the late 18th-century, although it may have earlier ancestors. The name is probably of mid-eastern origin.

Contrasts open and closed sounds and frequently plays them in modal rhythms – reminiscent of certain Mid-eastern drumming, as played on the dumbek and certain frame drums

Theka is important, and divisions of 2-6 are common, with symmetry of patterns around a midpoint, which is often khali

Fix compositions include *gats*, *tukras*, *chalans*, *tihais* (chakradars)

Theme and variations: *peshkars*, *kaidas*, *relas*, *laggis*