

# The analysis of Ethiopian traditional music instrument through indigenous knowledge (kirar, masinko, begena, kebero and washint/flute)

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## Abstract:

This article aims to explore and analytics about Ethiopian traditional music instrument through indigenous knowledge (kirar, masinko, Begena, kebero and washint/flute). The researcher would have observation and referring the difference documentations. Kirar, and masinko are mostly have purposeful for local music including washint, the others which is Kebero, Begena have use full in the majority time for church purpose. Ethiopia has extended culture, art and indigenous knowledge related to original own music. Their studies have qualitative research design that has descriptive methodology to more exploring the traditional music's free statement descriptions. Its researcher mainly has providing the descriptive information about the Ethiopian traditional music instrument as analytical finding out.

**Key words;** Kirar, Masinqo, Kebero, Washint, Begena, Traditional, Music, Instrument

## 1. Introduction

Folk music includes both traditional music and the genre that evolved from it during the 20th century folk revival. The term originated in the 19th century but is often applied to music that is older than that. Some types of folk music are also called world music. "Traditional folk music" has been defined in several ways: as music transmitted orally, music with unknown composers, or music performed by custom over a long period of time. It has been contrasted with commercial and classical styles.

Starting in the mid-20th century a new form of popular folk music evolved from traditional folk music. This process and period is called the (second) folk revival and reached a zenith/highpoint in the 1960s. This form of music is sometimes called contemporary folk music or folk revival music to distinguish it from earlier folk forms.

Smaller comparable revivals have occurred elsewhere in the world at other times, but the term folk music has typically not been applied to the new music created during those revivals. This type of folk music also includes merging genres such as folk rock, folk metal, electric folk, and others. While contemporary folk music is a genre generally distinct from traditional folk music, in English it shares the same name, and it often shares the same performers and venues as traditional folk music. Even individual songs may be a blend of the two.

Ethiopian music uses a distinct modal system that is pentatonic, with characteristically long intervals between some notes. As with many other aspects of Ethiopian culture and tradition, tastes in music and lyrics are strongly linked with those in neighboring Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan. The music of the highlands uses a fundamental modal system called *qenet*, of which there are four main modes *tezeta*, *bati*, *ambassel*, and *anchihoy*. Three additional modes are variations on the above *tezeta* minor, *bati* major, and *bati* minor. Some songs take the name of their *qenet*, such as *tizita*, a song of reminiscence.

When played on traditional instruments, these modes are generally not tempered (that is, the pitches may deviate slightly from the Western-tempered tuning system), but when played on Western instruments such as pianos and guitars, they are played using the Western-tempered tuning system. Music in the Ethiopian highlands is generally

monophonic or heterophony in certain southern areas, some music is polyphonic. Dorze polyphonic singing (*edho*) may employ up to five parts; Majangir, four parts.

Ethiopia has a long and at times tormented history. With that it has an equally long and fascinating history of arts and culture. To write about Ethiopia's traditional music in one article such as this may not do justice to everyone nor reveal the complete and true picture of the situation. This text should thus simply serve as a launch pad for further study for anyone who would like to venture deeper into the country's traditional music instrument.

The music of Ethiopia is a reflection of all the historical and social episodes, such as the patriotic campaigns that various warlords or chiefs had to launch. The music is about war as well as patriotism, songs of victory, songs that incite support for a certain movement. And it's also about love, with wonderful melodies and poetic lyrics.

The Orthodox Tewahido Christian church spirituality of Ethiopians is expressed in the form of music. All these types of tunes and melodies are prepared and performed using various traditional instruments. In the follow part will be discussing the brief character of information about Ethiopian folk music traditional instrument. But in this study have concerned the only the five instrument which is kirar, masinko, begena, kebero and washint.

## 2. Traditional instruments

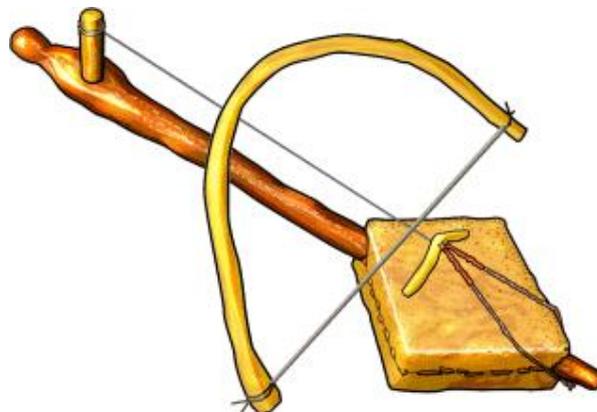
The most well-known Ethiopian instruments are the *krar* (ክረር) and the *masinqo* (ማሲንቆ). But, since everyone and their second cousin is probably already familiar with these, we're going to mix things up a little bit and introduce some of the lesser-known instruments first. (If you are not familiar with *krar* and *masinqo*, don't worry, I will also introduce them in due time.

Ethiopian traditional music is best expressed with its musical instruments, besides the contribution of the renowned vocalists. The most characteristic and widely used instruments are the *masinko*, the *krar*, and in the church mostly useful *washint*, *begena*, *kebero*, and the *tom-tom*. All are instruments originated by Ethiopian in Ethiopia. No adaptation and free from any of modification.

So let's discuss one by one the different types of Ethiopian traditional music instrument.

### A. Masinko (ማሲንቆ)

The *masinko* is a single-stringed instrument that is used in many parts of the country in Ethiopia by several people, including the Amara, the Tigreans and Oromo. The *masinko* as it is a kind of fiddle made from the tail of horses and a piece of hide. It is relatively easy to make and is played by rubbing a bow made of a string against the fiddle. People in the Ethiopian highland areas learn to play the *masinko* at a very early age, particularly in the north around Gondar. Verses are typically created by the vocalist and player of the instrument or as is the tradition, the audience suggests poems or lyrics and the vocalist just repeats them word for word.



The *masinko* is one of the most popular traditional music instruments used throughout Ethiopia and one of the fixtures in Ethiopian music and culture. Although it looks simple, the *masinko* can, in the hands of an expert musician, produce a wide variety of melodies.



It is often played by wandering singers, as well as professional musicians, particularly at traditional restaurants even local and local bars called 'Bunna Bet'. The singer is known in the word 'Azmari', it is derived from the Geez word 'Zemmari', which means “one who sings”.

The masinqo is a well-known instrument throughout popularly central and northern Ethiopia, and you hear it frequently in Amhara and Oromo music. It is a one-stringed fiddle and is the instrument of choice for the *azmari*, solo singers who often work in bars and are exceptionally talented at improvising lyrics and melody on-the-spot. It is also a core instrument of cultural bands that work in government theatre houses and cultural restaurants. Things to note in the recording: extensive use of ornamentation, the masinqo doubling the vocal melody when he sings, lack of equal-tempered tuning, and use of harmonics. This aesthetics are quite typical of music in these regions.

Therefore masinqo have a construction of designed as the square or diamond shaped resonator is made of four small wooden boards glued together, then covered with a stretched parchment or rawhide. The single string is typically made of horse hair, and passes over a bridge. The instrument is tuned by means of a large tuning peg to fit the range of the singer's voice. It may be bowed by either the right or left hand, and the non-bow hand sits lightly on top of the upper part of the string.

## B. Krar (ክራር)

The krar a bowl-lyre with 5-6 strings is another well-known instrument in both Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea. The krar is also a core member of the cultural band and is an instrument of many variations. The electric krar is now standard fare in many urban settings, as well as the bass krar (which sounds much like an electric bass.) Playing technique also varies. However, in urban settings, when I see players utilizing instead a variety of strumming techniques, muting strings with their fingers in order to obtain a defined melody. Also, some people are starting to add strings to the krar.



Clearly, it is a bit difficult to discuss the “standard” krar and its playing technique with so many variants proliferating in Ethiopia at the moment. Generally, however, it is played with the left hand, and it is tuned pentatonic (and must be retuned if the player is switching to a different kignit/rhythms) If the krar has 6 strings, the remaining string is tuned in an octave to the tonic note which is that in tizita rhythm, it would be C D E G A C.



### C. **Begena (በገ ና)**

Known as the Harp of King David, this instrument has 10 strings and a distinctive buzzing sound created by the string vibrating against the instrument body. This instrument is almost exclusively associated with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and is used for personal meditation and prayer. These songs are known as *mezmur*, an Amharic language term used specifically for religious music as opposed to *zefen*, which refers to secular music.

The *begena* or Ethiopian harp is an instrument mostly used for as I mention the below spiritual purposes. Among the most popular players of this instrument is some of priests in church. Spiritual hymns are mainly heard during fasting periods for Orthodox Christians when people express their devotion to God.

When all ten strings are plucked, one method of tuning the begena is to tune each pair of strings to one of the pitches in a pentatonic scale. When using five of the strings, only the first, fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth strings are tuned and plucked to give sound. Finally, while playing the begena using six strings, the left hand plucks strings one, three, four, six, eight, and ten starting from the left side when facing the instrument.

The pointing finger plucks strings three and four while the other fingers are in charge of controlling one string each. The remaining strings are used for the finger rests or stops after the strings have been plucked, allowing the plucked string to vibrate. The begena may also be played using a system called *girf*, wherein a plectrum made of horn or wood is used to pluck the ten strings of the begena

The begena is characterized by a very specific buzzing sound, due to U-shaped leather pieces placed between each string and the bridge. The thong for each string is adjusted up or down along the bridge so that the string, when plucked, repeatedly vibrates against the edge of the bridge.



#### D. Washint (ዋሽንት)

The washint is an end-blown flute originally used by the Amhara and tigray people in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Traditionally, Amharic musicians would pass on their oral history through song accompanied by the washint as well as the kirar that I have mentioned in the below, a six stringer lyre, and the masinqo a one string fiddle. The washint can be constructed using wood, bamboo, or other cane. A variety exists in different lengths and relative finger hole placement, and a performer might use several different flutes over the course of a performance to accommodate different song types. It generally has four finger-holes, which allows the player to create a pentatonic scale



The *washint* or the flute is another widely used traditional musical instrument. It is typically played by Ethiopian shepherds while herding cattle. The bamboo flute usually has four to six holes. Ethiopian youth learn to play this instrument at a very early age.

#### E. Kebero (ክበሮ)

The Ethiopian drum or *kebero* is used to accompany the traditional tunes that Ethiopians play. The drum enriches most songs, which would be not as interesting to listen to without the drum beat. The double-headed *kebero* drum is also used in the traditional music of Eritrea and Sudan. A piece of animal hide is stretched over each end of the instrument, thus forming a membranous phone.



A large version of the *kebero* is also used in Ethiopian Orthodox Christian liturgical music, while smaller versions are used in secular celebrations. A special kind of drum referred to as *tom-tom* is used in the south-western part of the country, in Gambella Region. The beating of drums in general is very characteristic of the fast songs played in the south of the country, in different place. It's a double-headed, conical hand drum used in the traditional music of Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia. A piece of animal hide is stretched over each end of the instrument, thus forming a membranous phone. A large version of the kebero is also used in Ethiopian Orthodox Christian liturgical music, while smaller versions are used in secular celebrations.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, as the discussion part of this article the researcher has analysis the informative expletory about Ethiopian traditional music instrument through indigenes knowledge. The popular or of history and culture of Ethiopia have domination by orthodox Christianity. Because of that in this research finding stated most of Ethiopian traditional music has strong relation with Christianity spiritual. Ethiopia contains many distinct cultures. The most populous is that of the Christian Amhara around the capital plateau, but there are other Christian, Jewish and Muslim people, some of them remote and virtually unknown.

Masinqo instrument Sung verses of poetry are a common feature in Amara. The poetry's basic formats together with the ambiguities in phrasing have something in common with poetic forms in Yemen and serve principally to attract interest. The words they use may often have a double meaning perhaps one that is stated overtly, the other a hidden meaning. Kebero, Kirar, Masinko, Washint are mostly used music and Christianity harmony song. But begena have the only holy tool of Christianity for praying and think thank for God. The researcher has a culture of those all are instruments, especially washint have a local kid music instrument.

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