Sound Symbolism in Turkish Music

Shinji Ido
Department of Japanese & Korean Studies
University of Sydney

This paper analyses the acoustic-phonetics of the solmization — syllabic representation of musical sounds — for membranophones used for representing rhythmic cycles in Turkish music. (A membranophone produces sound by means of vibrating (a) membrane(s). Drums are membranophones.)

Turkish music is known for its utilisation of a large number of rhythmic cycles, each of which is represented as a combination of specific syllables such as *düm*, *tek*, *te*, *ke*, *tek*, and *kâ*. These syllables are stringed in different orders to represent various rhythmic cycles. For example, a rhythmic cycle called *Evfer* is represented in syllables as *düm teke düm tek tek*, while its *veleveleli*, or elaborated, version is represented as *düm teke tekkâ düme düm tek tek*.

The present paper analyses *düm* and *tek*, which are the most basic syllables in this set of syllables (and bi-syllables), from acoustic and linguistic points of view. It attempts to substantiate the sound-symbolic nature of the *düm-tek* syllables by identifying in them a principle that is typically observed in the acoustics of sound-symbolic syllables. The principle, which researchers from various disciplines (Ohala 1983, 1984, 1994, Hiyane et al 1998, Hughes 2000) have studied, is correspondence between the F_2 values of vowels and the central frequencies or F_0 values of the sounds that the vowels represent.

This paper also discusses the Mevlevî order of Sufism (based in Konya, Turkey) and its ritual music, where *kudüm*, a membranophone with which the *düm-tek* syllables are particularly strongly associated, occupies an important place.

References
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