

Basic Detail Report



Tambura

Date

1900-1925 ca.

Description

Tanjore-style instrument used in Carnatic music. Body of jackwood with ivory and bone trim. Four strings plucked individually to create a drone. Materials: Jackwood body, bone nut, bone decoration, steel and copper strings, wood bridge, brass tailpiece, steel screws. Body: two main parts. The shell (kayi, kudam) is hemispherical and hollowed from a single piece of wood, incised with 24 "ribs" imitating the calabash gourd. The hollow neck (dandi) has straight sides rounded at the back and tapering slightly towards the top. The pegbox is integral to the neck, with a flat squared top. Four pegs, one peg on both the left and right side and two pegs in the front. The shell is covered by a round, thin, flat wooden sound table. Bone inlay around the neck and shell joint. The sound table has three inlaid bone designs: two "eyes" and a tear-drop-shaped and blossom design. The eyes are located on either side of the bridge and are circular with a 24 petal flower design. Eyes have three surrounding carved rings, the 1st - plain, 2nd - braided, 3rd - plain. Small holes are carved around the perimeter of the third ring. Under the strings, before the bridge is a tear drop-shaped inlay of a lotus blossom. Pegs: Pegs on the right and left sides are carved in the shape of a blossom and with bone trim and inlaid bone blossom on both sides. The peg on the left has a protruding bone knob at the end of the peg. These pegs appear to be original to the instrument because of their matching wood and similar inlay. The pegs on the front of the neck are much simpler. The shape is plain, with no inlay. The upper peg has a protruding bone knob, but in a more round shape than the peg on the left. The wood is slightly darker than the other two pegs. The shape of the two pegs differs slightly. Bridge: The bridge is a deep, bench-shaped piece of wood in the centre of the table. Ebony table and legs with a raised back lip. Legs are arched with a heart-shape under the table. Set on two lighter colored wood Squares, possibly used to raise height of bridge. Neck: rounded back with flat board. No frets. Raised bone nut with bone collar around neck. 39 cm from nut is a bone inlay of an eight petal flower; design is 60.7 mm long and 24 mm wide. 87 mm from inlay are the initials RM, inscribed in small circles. Neck joins body with a bone ring

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and wood plate. Strings: Four strings: three of steel, one of brass. The strings pass through small holes in the bone nut and then down the neck. After passing over the bridge each string passes through a bead. Outer strings have a red bead, inner strings a white bead. (Beads raise the string away from the body - a later addition - at one point strings were flush with body - indentations are visible where strings rubbed against body.) Strings are tied to holes in the tail piece. Tail piece: Circular brass with open middle. Circle bent back at the sound board with five holes. Strings are tied to four of the holes. Two layers of green fabric glued to the open circle in the tail piece. Tail piece is attached to body with six evenly placed iron screws. Decorative trim: Bone trim around entire length of instrument. Trim on sound board and neck is inscribed with two lines. Trim on the body is scalloped-shaped with small circles.

Dimensions

Body length: 1340 mm String sounding length: 1000 mm Belly length: 320 mm; depth: 280 mm Bridge length: 61 mm; width: 40 mm; height: 32 mm Nut length: 57 mm; width: 2 mm; height: 15 mm