

Shekere

This article is about the musical instrument. For the musical genre, see Sekere.

The **shekere** is an instrument from West Africa consisting of a dried gourd with beads woven into a net covering the gourd. Throughout the continent there are similar gourd/bead or gourd/seed percussion instruments. Some are the lilolo, axatse (Ghana), and chequere. It is predominantly called *shekere* in Nigeria. The Agbe is a gourd drum with cowrie shells and is usually strung with white cotton thread. The Axatse is a small gourd, held by the neck and percussed between hand and leg. In Liberia, the net has a long "tail" through which the beads are manipulated.



Gourd shekere from Africa with seeds in the net.

The shekere is made from vine gourds that grow on the ground. The shape of the gourd determines the sound of the instrument. A shekere is made by drying the gourd for several months then removing the pulp and seeds. After it is scrubbed, skillful bead work is added as well as colour.

The instrument is used for folkloric as well as some of the popular music. In performance it is shaken and/or hit against the hands.

In Cuba the **chekeré** (always spelt thus) is also known as *aggué* (abwe) or simply *guiro* (a word that means 'gourd'). It is a large, hollow gourd (~50cm long) almost surrounded by a network of cords to which many coloured beads are attached. It is of African origin, and is widely used in Afro-Cuban sacred and popular music. It may be twisted, shaken or slapped to produce a subtle variety of effects; musically, it is much more flexible than maracas.^[1] ^[2]

In Brazil, it is called a **xequerê**. It consists of a gourd (*cabaça*) cut in the middle and then wrapped in a net in which beads or small plastic balls are threaded. The afoxé is a similar, smaller instrument.

External links

- "Shekere instructional video"^[3]
- Build Your Own or Buy a Custom Sekere^[4]

References

- [1] Orovio, Helio 2004. *Cuban music from A to Z*. p52
- [2] Ortiz, Fernando 1952. *Los instrumentos de la musica Afrocubana*. 5 volumes, La Habana, vol 2, p124.
- [3] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YerES5koG6s>
- [4] <http://sekere.com/>

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