



Singing Bowls, a little history

Eastern countries are regarded as the motherland of meditation therapy with Tibetan singing bowls often taking center stage. Almost every yoga studio, gym or ashram has at least 1 singing bowl around. Although the origin and original purpose are still shrouded in mystery, it is well known that these bowls were used in alms collection, storage of food, temple donations, water sprinkling and ceremonies for a long time. The use of bowls for meditation and sound is more a western introduction that the east took forward in the pursuit of business

The history of singing bowls dates back to over 3000 years ago and experts mostly agree that were crafted in Nepal and Northern India. However, in ancient times bowls seem to have travelled all over from Iran, Afghanistan to Cambodia and Thailand, hence even today bowls from Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Iran, Bhutan (to mention a few) tend to surface. This signifies the cross culture mixing that took place centuries ago. Variations in the bowls signify the importance of its acoustic properties. In Thailand bowls were used mostly for water sprinkling, in Japan for donations in temples, where large bowls signified a wealthier temple. Till today singing bowls in Japanese temples hold a strong presence with one in every temple, though donations boxes are used for money rather than the bowl. *(The bowls are now only used to sound the start of prayer)*

Despite being called Tibetan Singing Bowls, experts in the field mostly agree that there was a small likelihood of them being manufactured in Tibet or for that matter made by monks. Monks never spent time hand beating bowls and Tibet, for those who have travelled up there will know that carrying heavy bowls up and down 14,000 feet elevation isn't that great an idea. Tibetans were not known to be specialist in handicraft, for this they called upon their skilled neighbors in Nepal (the Newari). In fact, the text that some antique bowls have inscribed on them are Nepali and not some mystical mantra, but rather the owner's name/family name. Tibetans were more politicians, scholars, monks, warriors, who were focused more on business/ trade. So, the term Tibetan is really a name, but not the country of origin. It may come as a surprise to many that almost no antique singing bowls have ever been found in Tibet, and just a few were ever manufactured there. These bowls need copper and tin to be made (and wood to make charcoal for the furnace), Tibet does not have reserves of tin. Despite all the intriguing stories you may hear on artisans being handed down the ancient skill of making these bowls and some being made from 7 planetary metals or linked to the frequency of your chakras.... This is often a marketing gimmick and sometimes fueled by not ill intentional fraud, but misinformed people with the right intentions to help...

