

Dating Cymbals by Trademark

Part I



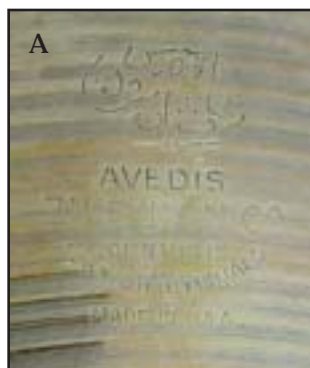
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Recently there's been an increasing amount of interest among drummers who play and collect vintage cymbals in trying to date these instruments through the use of various trademark characteristics. For some time now this subject has also been of particular interest to me as well. Although in this article I will make some mention of time periods, I won't attempt to assign exact dates to the various types of trademarks. This would be virtually impossible to do with complete accuracy. My main purpose will be to present time periods in what I believe to be the correct chronological order with the addition of my opinions on dating cymbals. This I can do with a much greater degree of confidence. In part, my ideas as to the time periods associated with these various trademarks are the basis for what I will present here. Any attempt to associate these trademarks with exact dates would be largely speculative.

I've been able to gather this information from various sources over the years. In making this connection between trademark types and their chronology, I will briefly mention these sources of information beginning with those that I consider to be the most reliable.

On rare occasions I have been able to get what I consider to be the most reliable information through cymbal owners who can recall when a cymbal was originally purchased, or who might have some other first hand knowledge of the date it was purchased. In other cases, cymbals will come with a vintage drum set of known date of manufacture, and sometimes the age of the cymbals can be inferred from them. I consider this method to yield less definitive results than the first one, except in cases where it is known that the cymbals were purchased with the drums. In such cases this second method can often yield an earlier date based on the age of the drums, however it must be noted that there could be a lag time of up to a few years between the actual date of manufacture of a cymbal, and the date it was added to a store's inventory. It must also be kept in mind that variability in remembered dates of purchase can play a factor here, because many of the original owners of these instruments are getting up in years and recollections of dates can not be assumed to be 100% reliable. Despite these obstacles, throughout the years I've used these methods in order to attempt to piece together a framework that I hope will help drummers date their cymbals by trademark characteristics. In this article I will cover the time period of the early 1960's and before. Billy Jeanson previously covered part of this time period in an earlier article on this subject. My article will include some of the time period that was previously covered. Wherever I felt that I had any more information for this overlapping time period, I have added it here.

A I'll start with a typical early 60's trademark. This measures the standard of 1- 3/16" tall. Trademarks of the later 60's were 1-1/2" tall. The characters of the Arabic script were not always consistent. For example, within this script there is a character in the lower right quadrant that resembles a squiggly shaped letter "U". In this trademark there are 3 dots that appear within this character. Compare this with the next earlier trademark that was used in the latter 50's era.



B This is the latter 50's trademark. This trademark looks virtually identical to the previous one, except the three dots aren't present. It's also 1-1/4" tall. It's interesting to note that Zildjian resurrected this trademark again in the early 70's.



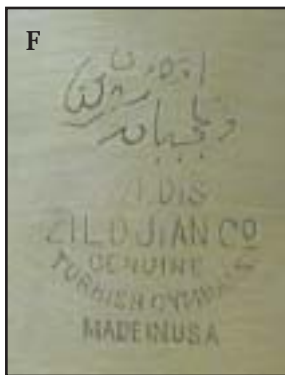
C The next grouping of trademark photos are what I call the “large stamps”. These were a full 1-3/4” tall. In this first example the letters “Zildjian Co.” are hollowed out in block style lettering. This is what I call the **Type I** large stamp.

There was another version of this trademark (not pictured) that differed only in that the words “Zildjian Co.” were not block letters but instead thin lines. This is the one that I call a **Type II** large stamp.

D Finally, there’s the third version, which is like the **Type II** in that it has the same thin lettering in “Zildjian Co.” but lacks the 3 dots that I discussed earlier. This is the one that I call the **Type III** large stamp.

E Moving back to the next older era brings us to the trademark that I call the **Transitional** stamp. This was used in the late 40’s to early 50’s era. Notice that the “Z” in Zildjian and the “Co.” are impressed on the edges of the trademark more deeply than in the middle portion. In this example it’s much more deeply impressed in the area on the lower right, but also on the left to some extent as well. Similarly, the extreme left and right portions of the Arabic script are also more deeply impressed than the middle part. This trademark is also slightly smaller than the earlier ones. These measure 1-1/8”.

F The trend continues towards smaller trademarks as we consider this one. This is the trademark that was used in the early to mid 40’s period. This one is exactly 1” tall. It also lacks the 3 dots of the **Transitional** stamp, but has a unique difference. This difference is found in the Arabic script below the large character discussed earlier that resembles a squiggly “U”. In all the earlier trademarks that were presented here, there were always 2 dots and 2 dashes below this character. Now there are just 3 dots. The lettering font is also slightly different. It’s interesting to note that the top and bottom portions of the trademark were stamped separately, just as the old Istanbul K. trademarks. As a result, there is no typical height for this trademark. It can vary between 1” and 1-1/4”.

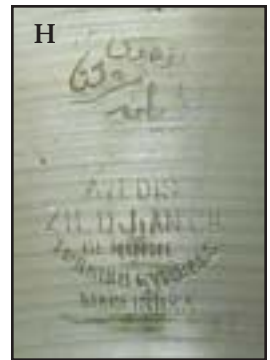


G There’s something else that’s worth noting that often appears to be associated with this trademark. It is the presence of something I call a “comma”. Examples of this are shown in this picture of three of these early 40’s trademarks:



There is an extra comma in each of these trademarks, but they are all located in different places within the trademark. This comma is a small and seemingly inconspicuous addition, but after seeing it several times I had to conclude that this comma had a real meaning and purpose. Whatever it was, the true significance was known only to the Zildjian people of that time. I could only speculate on why it might be there. I did consider that this might perhaps have been a method of keeping track of which artisan hammered a certain cymbal. Consider the possibility that each individual artisan who hammered these cymbals might have had his own trademark die with the location of the comma or its absence as his identifier. That way quality control checks could be made with the hammerer known. It’s just an idea, and I’m afraid the answer will never really be known for sure. In the group picture of these 3, in the first picture on the left, the comma can be found in the lower right quadrant between a dot and a larger comma that are normally found in the trademark. In the middle photo, it’s found below and towards the right, and finally in the example on the right it can be found dead center in the middle of the trademark. There are some examples that do not have this comma, but it’s also possible that the absence of the comma could have been used as an identifier as well.

H And finally here’s the oldest trademark that I have to offer. My guess is that it’s from around the late 1930’s. The Arabic script on this trademark has an almost engraved look to it. This one is 1-1/8” tall, but as with the previous trademarks, height was subject to variability. The 3 dots that were referred to in the earlier trademark seem to present themselves as 3 short dashes. This particular example came from an almost never used 16” crash cymbal and had a signature behind the bell, much like an old K. Zildjian.



Hopefully this will assist you in getting a feel for how old some of your own cymbals might be. Other factors can sometimes enter in the dating of these old cymbals, because as I mentioned earlier, the late 50’s trademark was used again in the early 70’s. So how do you tell these two apart? The early 70’s cymbals were hammered on the topside of the cymbal. A cymbal with that same trademark that has the hammering on the reverse side is identified as late 50’s vintage. This change in hammering technique was made around the early 60’s.

In my experience, noting trademark characteristics has proven to be an invaluable tool in determining the chronological age of cymbals, assisting in their classification, and also as an aid in determining their rarity. I hope that this also helps to shed some light on a subject that has not been well covered in other recently published works on cymbals.