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Tribal and Modern Voices in South Indian Kota Society

The Kotas number about two thousand and live on the Nilgiri plateau in South India. Kotas refer to themselves by various terms that implicate indigenous status, including “tribals,” *ādivāsīs*, and “mountain peoples.” Although in some situations Kotas stress their tribal status and in others they emphasize their modernity, most do not consider these to be in opposition. The ways Kotas view themselves today in relation to their forefathers, their spirits of the dead, their gods, and tribal and non-tribal others, are in various ways discernable in Kota song texts and musical styles. Analysis of performance style and texts of Kota mourning songs, devotional songs, and popular styles provides nuanced perspectives on how Kotas position themselves socially and culturally in the contemporary world.

KEYWORDS: Kota—Nilgiris—Tamil—tribal—music—indigeneity—modernity

AS THE articles in this special issue illustrate, the question of what constitutes indigeneity in any part of the world is entangled with issues of who has the right to define and apply the term. To anthropologists, indigeneity is entangled with a technical notion of tribe and a concomitant set of social, political, and cultural structures. To those outside the academy, indigeneity conjures up a range of images associated with a community's long-standing habitation in a place. To the state, indigenous groups are potent symbols of history and place that resonate internationally. Communities themselves vie for recognition as indigenes in the larger political sphere, as well as in small-scale local interactions. This article explores what it means for members of a community to deploy such terms as "tribal," *ādivāsī*, "mountain people," and what the roles of music and sound are when putting forward ideas of indigeneity. The idea that communities can be both traditional and modern is not new (see, for example, RUDOLPH and RUDOLPH 1984), and yet the tendency to present tribalness and modernity as opposing cultural tendencies has not disappeared completely from public discourse. In the following case study of the Kotas of South India, notions of the tribal and the modern are taken as compatible and interactive discursive domains in the Kota world.

The Kotas (Kota: *kōv*) number roughly two thousand and are one of several small-scale communities living in the Nilgiri Hills of South India. They possess their own language (*kōv mānt*) and speak Tamil, Badaga, and other languages as well. An increasing number of Kotas also speak English. Long admired for their musicianship and skills in a variety of crafts, many Kotas now pursue a variety of other occupations in Ooty and nearby or distant cities and towns. Those residing in the village are also part- or full-time agriculturalists. Kotas worship their own "father" gods (*ayñōr*) and "mother" goddess (*amnōr*) in their own religious system and participate in forms of popular Hinduism with their neighbors. In addition to the historical connection the Kota religion shares with the Hinduism of surrounding populations, Kotas have also incorporated deities from surrounding Tamil- and Malayalam-speaking populations into their own pantheons in more recent times. In this process, they have also adopted some of the specific ritual practices associated with contemporary South Indian Hinduism.

Although long-term data on Kota history is sparse, ethnography provides rich insights into what it has meant to be indigenous and modern in this community

in recent times. We shall examine the occasions in which Kotas have stressed tribal aspects of their identity, how the drive to be “modern” or “civilized” (Tamil: *nākarikam*) has challenged Kota interpretations of their so-called traditional practices, and how Kota views on preserving their culture and interacting with others have implicated music and sound. The terms “tribe” and *ādivāsī* are neither Kota nor Tamil, but Kotas use both words interchangeably and alongside a range of terms in Tamil. Kota discourses on tribalness implicate notions of indigeneity but most Kotas would be unfamiliar with the English term “indigenous.”

A brief illustration will serve as an introduction. P. Varadharajan, the first doctor in the Kota community and the son of a prominent musician and a drummer, began narrating his life history for me by describing his 1970s work with the Kattu Nayaka tribal community in a clinic near Kayuni Kappala in the Wynad district of Kerala state. He likened the relationship between Kotas and Kattu Nayakas as one of “two kids of a mother” with their affinity marked by a shared set of musical instruments and drum patterns. “I am a tribal man,” he said, and “human psychology [says that] when we mingle with them we [also become] close with their culture ... [my culture] goes in tune with them, so I mingle with them” (personal communication, 13 January 2001). Dr. Varadharajan was motivated to mingle because of his professional involvement with this constituency: he had reason to “go in tune with them.” The tribal familiarity he invoked is recognizable in a variety of situations among many *ādivāsīs* in India today. One aspect of tribal modernity in India, then, is the recognition of belonging to a larger indigenous collective within and perhaps beyond India. Dr. Varadharajan’s critical discursive move was from “we Kotas” to “we tribal Kotas.” His musical metaphor, more than a mere turn of phrase, captures the widespread sentiment that music and dance carry traces of a community’s ancient past. For many Kotas, music and dance constitute proof of tribal origins that can be read by almost anyone.

To flesh out the implications of these issues, the following addresses three topics: relationality, sound, and song. The first considers ways in which Kotas view tribal and Kota identity as related to one another. It explores how Kotas represent themselves in relation to Hindu and national identities, the impressions of others, and to notions of the past enshrined in rituals and beliefs about the dead. The second concerns the significance of the sounds of musical instruments, vocal sounds used for calling out to one another and to God, sounds attributed to the gods or the ancestors, and issues regarding the very presence or absence of sound. The third section focuses on songs and song style, including the mourning song (*āṭṭi*), collective women’s dance songs, and the wide variety of modern Kota songs. Changing aesthetic and stylistic trends relate in complicated ways to notions of tradition, value, Kotaness, and the claim to indigeneity.

This study is based on ethnographic research on Kota music, ritual, and language that I conducted in the years 1990–1992 and for a total of about a year since then, largely in the village of Kolmel (Tamil: Kollimalai). While ethnomusicological research invariably focuses on more than musical sound, I intended to do open-ended ethnography with the aim of gaining the richest possible understanding of

Kota society. In the mid 1930s, the sociocultural anthropologist David Mandelbaum and linguist Murray B. Emeneau conducted the most extensive research on this community prior to my arrival. Interactions with these scholars and a variety of other visitors to the region figured prominently in Kota decisions regarding cultural preservation and modernization. I was fortunate to be able to consult the fieldnotes and publications of these two scholars (see MANDELBAUM n.d.), and discuss their findings, and the perceived impact of their very presence with my Kota consultants.

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Kotas understand themselves simultaneously as Kota people, as tribals/*ādivāsīs*, and as “modern” or “civilized” citizens of the Indian state. These labels have different implications. The concern with “Kota people” is tightly connected with a sense of intimacy in the village, a focus on unified action, and the idea that intimacy and unity are preconditions for efficacious divinity and village prosperity. Kotas generally invoke the concept of tribe when they reflect on aspects of their relationships with others. Kotas embrace implications of the tribal designation that they find ennobling, such as prowess in the hunt, knowledge of musical and other skills, and possession of powerful deities. They reject negative stereotypes, particularly those that imply they are dirty, immoral, or lacking in general intelligence. A Kota might pit notions of modernity against notions of tribalness or backwardness in criticizing the behavior of a fellow Kota, but this does not constitute a distancing from a tribal identity.

PART I: RELATIONALITY

The late K. Jaychandran, who was forty when I last spoke to him in 1997, grew up in Porgar village (Tamil: Kotagiri), where the forces of local conservatism, upwardly mobile middle-class aspirations, and the effects of reformist Hinduism had generated a measure of internal discontent. His story of personal alienation from his community raises issues of music and emotion in relation to the changing status of tribal peoples.

In his youth, Jaychandran witnessed forms of competition for status and privilege that extended beyond acquisitions of wealth or political leadership to the more quotidian matter of making music. He complained that those who knew ritually significant *kols* (melodies played on the double-reed instrument of the same name) arrogantly refused to share their knowledge and allowed their village-specific repertoire to die with them. To counter this stagnation, Jaychandran spearheaded a revival by learning Kolmel village tunes from his father-in-law, K. Puccan—Dr. Varadharajan’s father. Jaychandran used to record his father-in-law on cassette and practice using the recording for a few days before he had to play. As a State Bank of India employee, he had to move each time he was promoted. His experiences living outside the village heightened his awareness of his own music’s importance.

Jaychandran reflected on his feeling of detachment in relation to his responses to music. He recalled how the sound of funeral tunes (*tāṅv kol*) used to move him to cry when he was a small child but no longer had the same effect. A brief word

on Kota views of emotion will help contextualize this reflection. My primary consultant Duryodhana (R. Kamatn) once explained to me that Kota children are ordinarily capable of weeping only for the deaths of loved ones. As they mature they learn to share the grief of those outside their immediate family. A more emotionally mature Kota develops a “relish for sorrow” (*racanai, duktk*) so deeply intertwined with a desire to hear funeral music that he or she cannot fully experience the sorrow of a funeral without hearing the appropriate melodies. Young children, in other words, respond more directly to the experience of loss; enculturated Kotas experience a mixture of aesthetic pleasure and emotional pain as they listen to funeral music and respond to losses in the community.

Although Jaychandran was precocious in being able to cry upon hearing funeral music when he was young, he could no longer feel such pain when hearing funeral music as an adult. Alienated from his community by living far away, he could no longer participate in Kota emotional life. He perceived himself as losing his Kota identity in social and emotional terms:

[In] those days, we [had] cooperation. Presently we [are] used to mingl[ing] with outside people, and we [have] ... civilization no?... Presently I am a Kota man but I am working at the State Bank of India; I am staying at Coonoor. I don't have any ... attachment in the sense.... I am away from my village. (Richard: Yes). So automatically I slowly become, not like a Kota man. I may think this is civilization, but actually, the real ... love and affection is in the village (21 October 1997).

For Jaychandran, as for many Kotas, to be Kota is to be attached strongly to one's home village—whether or not one actually resides there. Being tribal and modern implicates a wider sphere of interaction. Jaychandran speculated for example that Kotas “mingle” with outsiders in order to emulate them and participate more fully in “civilization.” Although Kotas and other communities compete to be recognized as “tribal,” this competition violated what Jaychandran viewed to be core values of the community:

The Kotas are tribals. (Richard: Yes)... But to become a tribal they are getting some benefit from the government: here the Badaga, they have their benefits, no? They would like to become ... tribal. That is what the Government of India [encourages through its policies]. In Tamil there is a proverb, “*pon, porul, bhūmi*; these three you shouldn't have desire for.” That is gold, women, and land. [Those desires are] there in the Kota community [such that people think] “I have to dominate you!” “No use idiot” [I say] ... we have forgot[ten] everything about our elderly people's words (21 October 1997).

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In 1960, the popular Kota song composer (see example 8) and social outcaste A. K. RANGANATHAN (d. ~1994) published a fanciful history of the Nilgiris under the pseudonym Hill Fox. A few passages in this history further illustrate Kotas stereotypes of themselves. The figure of the “mountain person” begins to resemble

the nomad in DELEUZE and GUATTARI (1997). Rangan's work depicts a battle in 1765, stemming from a supposed attempt by the Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan to make the Kotas swear fealty to him.¹ The Kotas saw the approaching army of Tipu and broadcasted the sounds of their horns for ten miles in all directions. "No other community," Rangan wrote, "knew the Kota mountain people's ways of war." "Kotas do not attack directly," he expanded, "they feign innocence and hide in the bushes, attacking with their weaponry when least expected." Armed with one hundred bows, the Kotas concealed themselves in the vegetation and showered Tipu's army with poison-tipped arrows. The soldiers dropped dead, poisoned as if bitten by scorpions. Then the Kota warriors captured Tipu's war drum.

The account includes two ideas and one physical object that Kotas commonly draw upon in representing themselves as tribal people of the mountains: the idea of the sheer physical power that they once held expressed in part by the spatial expansiveness of the sound of the *kob*; the cleverness of Kotas as fighters; and the war drum.²

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Another common trope presents Kota tribal ways as more compatible with American and European cultures than with those of other Indian peoples. In other words, tribalism transcends the South Indian context and allows Kotas to speculate on their ancient historical relationships with whomever they wish. Duryodhana's father, S. Raman, for instance, was fond of suggesting that the Kotas were descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel. The probable origins of such speculations in the Nilgiris are to be found in early European accounts of the Todas. In the early 1990s, however, Kotas would make such connections on their own accord to emphasize their tribalness, to express affection and compatibility with me as an American, and to imply that something in their nature is forward-looking and modern.

In a conversation with the author in 1991, K. Culin, a ritual leader in Kurgoj village (Tamil: Shollur Kokal), contrasted the restricted lifestyle he was forced to adopt as a ritualist with the freedom of his youth: "I was like a European, wearing 'shirt, coat, boots' ... I even used to shoot. I shot tigers. When people from England came here we went with them like *shikaris* [guides for big game hunting] and we all went around with 'rifle[s]' and 'shotgun[s]'" (Tamil, with English interspersed in single quotes). Although Kotas are now restricted from hunting by state wildlife laws, their desire to hunt persists as a value that Kotas see as differentiating them from peasant Indians and connecting them to the colonial English.

Culin's statement raises the general question of how Kotas associate themselves with and dissociate themselves from local populations, and in so doing, emphasize or deemphasize their tribal exceptionalism. Although intermarriage with outsiders has occurred in the past, Kotas will now excommunicate anyone who marries outside the community and will refuse to recognize the offspring of such marriages as Kota. This emphasis on blood purity extends to some of their animals as well. In reference to what Kotas call the "country cow" (*nāṭāṅ*), Duryodhana was fond of saying that this cow, which is not crossbred with European varieties that produce more milk, is stronger than these mixed breeds, "just like an *ādivāsī*."

Kotas engage in religious practices that involve interactions with non-Kotas in some contexts and prohibit them in others. For many years, when filling out census forms, those belonging to Scheduled Tribes were forced to choose between Christian or Hindu religious affiliations. The census history and contemporary Hindu nationalist propaganda probably contributed to the diviner Sivakumaran's view that he was a Hindu by virtue of the fact that he was an Indian (personal communication 2001). Kota religious practices overlap with Hindu ones in more subjective ways as well. For example, many Kota deities, like local deities elsewhere in India, have been equated with well-known Hindu ones. Many Kotas view the relationship between their deities and those of Hindus in hierarchical terms. While some view the Kota father god *ayñōr* as a form of Siva, others argue that *ayñōr* is superior to Siva because he is formless. Hierarchically related or not, deities taken under the Kota umbrella are segregated. In Kolmel, for instance, Kotas perform music with a distinct accompaniment pattern on the drums for ritual practices associated with imported deities.

Some Kotas resist identifying with Hindus. Duryodhana and his late father, S. Raman, for instance, avoided participating in Kolmel's Rangayñōr festival and emphasized instead the importance of maintaining long-standing historical (*māmūl*) practices, even if these articulated ambivalent aspects of Kota identity.³ The ten-day-long secondary mortuary ceremony called the *varldāv*, one such practice, has been the subject of controversy. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century religious reform movements that affected many parts of India were partially responsible for making some Kotas feel ashamed of bovine sacrifices once associated with this ceremony. They criticized the excessive expenditure of money at the *varldāv* and were uncomfortable with boys and girls openly expressing sexuality to seek potential mates when they attended the ceremony (see WOLF 2000–2001; MANDELBAUM 1954).

Kota awareness of their traditional practices in the unflattering light of modern Indian morality has given rise to an aspect of what Michael Herzfeld terms “cultural intimacy” (HERZFELD 2004, 3), a sense of communal solidarity that is built around “rueful self recognition.” When I attended a *varldāv* in Kurgōj in November of 1997, the villagers welcomed my presence and my videocamera at all moments except during the buffalo sacrifice, which they performed quietly and out of public view. K. Mundn, the headman (*gotgārñ*) at the time, who could not converse in English, nevertheless used the English word “shame” to refer to his community's unwillingness to let this part of the ceremony be seen publicly—it was once a flashy highlight of the ceremony, involving competitions to subdue the buffaloes and a repertoire of musical pieces used to lure the buffaloes away from the herd. Some tunes were even composed for individual buffaloes.

The pride and sense of “common sociality” (HERZFELD 2004, 3) that Kotas hold with reference to their distinction from (some) Hindus also condemns them to repeat, remember, or actively suppress associated activities by which some are embarrassed. Some songs reinforce cultural intimacy by condemning such embarrassing activities. David Mandelbaum's principal informant Sulli, for instance, composed a song to lobby against sacrificing cows and buffaloes. Expressing less

humanitarian motives, Dr. Varadharajan argued against reversion to the traditional practice of wearing the hair long for the annual ten-day “God Ceremony.”⁴ He felt his long hair would compromise the hygiene of the operating theater and people would think, “Oh, this dirty man is from the *ādivāsī* community; segregate him.”

Summary

Jaychandran and others define Kotaness in terms of an affectionate, communal sense of interiority that is threatened by “mingling” with non-Kotas. “Scheduled Tribe” is a designation given to the Kotas by the government that carries certain widespread stereotypical meanings, one of which, a “sense of equality and unity,” is undermined by the very tendency of members of such communities to dominate others in competing for tribal status. Kotas, as tribals, have possessed the strength and cunning to protect what they view as their sovereignty in the region. Oral narratives localize events in regional history by including descriptions of musical instruments and these instruments feed into representations of Kotas as strong and victorious. Some Kota “tribal” characteristics not only distinguish Kotas from their neighbors, but also connect them with Europeans and Americans, whom they view as free from hierarchical caste restrictions. In the Indian context, Kotas derive a sense of power from their isolation in some respects, while in other respects they choose to include themselves in the religious practices of their neighbors. Awareness of Kota cultural practices that appear backward in light of Westernization, Hindu reformism, and participation in the modern, collective Indian workforce, has given rise to “cultural intimacy”—matters of cultural embarrassment that both constitute forms of sociality and perpetuate the central socio-religious impulse to resolve disagreement.

PART II: SOUNDS

A king once lived in Vedkal, near Ticgar village (Tamil: Trichigady), and his beautiful young daughter wished to marry a Kota boy. Her father, who objected forcefully, hatched a plan to wipe out the offending Kota population entirely. He invited the whole village of Ticgar to a musical feast (*pargū*)—pregnant women, mothers of newborn babies, elderly people, the whole lot. As the Kotas prepared to leave, they set the brass horn (*kob*) and the double-reed *koḷ* out in front of their houses. Because the Kotas of that time possessed *catym* (spiritual power stemming from being pure and true), their instruments could speak. In Kota they warned, “Don’t go! It’s dangerous.” Not heeding their instruments’ advice, the villagers attended the feast and were all poisoned. [The recounter of this tale, V. Mathi, went on to explain how the village of Ticgar became repopulated through the agency of the Todas, with whom the Kotas were on good terms at the time.]

In exploring tribal and modern voices in Kota society, it is worth considering contexts in which Kotas emphasize the presence or absence of certain kinds of sounds. The term Kotas use for voice, *dayṇ* (Sanskrit: *dhvani*, sound, sound of instruments, voice, and so on) refers both to vocal sounds (for example *dayṇ*

kordāko, “[my] voice is hoarse”) and to the musical voice of instruments such as the *kol*.

The capacity of musical instruments to have *mānt*—language, especially the Kota language—is expressed in key moments that highlight not only the affinity of Kota indigenous music with their language, but also the efficacy of living faithfully and honestly, with *catym* (Sanskrit: *satyam*, “virtue”). If the Kotas possess *catym*, which is founded on social unity, their prayers may be answered and the community may have opportunities to communicate with the gods and spirits of the dead (*ānāṭōrs*). Sivan, from Menar village (Tamil: Kunda Kotagiri), claimed to have heard the sounds of the spirits of the dead beckoning the dying man Kadvayl Tekn with the words, “We are good, come without fear” (*ām olēmē aynjādy vā*). He heard these words as a verbally articulated message contained within the sound of musical instruments playing funeral tunes.

Kotas view themselves as modern in relation to a collectively understood period in the past in which the community possessed more *catym*. In living memory, women called *pēnpacōls* (“spirit-grabbed-woman”) possessed the *catym* to channel the words of the *ānāṭōrs*. They either chanted the words to a “tune” (*rāgam*) or sang songs that became some of today’s *āṭṭ* repertoire. In example I, Sivan attempts to reproduce the sounds of *pēnpacōls* that he heard in his youth.

*Āṭṭ*s may concern events leading to a person’s death, contain reminiscences on experiences with lost loved ones, and recount fearful stories. Although *āṭṭ*s are gradually falling out of favor, one constant over more than sixty years is their fragmentary text. In 1938 Mandelbaum’s female informant Pucgin explained (via an interpreter), “This [*āṭṭ*] is generally sung when we go to bed, when young women are together at night. First the story is told, and then the song is sung at the proper point. If the song is sung first it can’t be properly understood, so we tell the story first” (MANDELBAUM n.d; WOLF 1997, 37).

In addition to communicating through *pēnpacōls*, according to singer Pa. Mathi, *ānāṭōrs* also appeared to Kotas in dreams and taught them *āṭṭ*s. Now, anyone can compose an *āṭṭ* for an emotionally moving event. In practical terms, some *āṭṭ*s draw inspiration from the melodies and formulaic exclamations of mourners over the dead during a funeral. All of these sources are said to have provided the basis for instrumental music performed at funerals as well. These include the musical sounds of the *ānāṭōrs* that are said to be audible from Menar, the village closest to the Kota land of the dead. The *āṭṭ*, then, carries an aura of essential Kotaness, even if, in practical terms, it is disappearing as a performance form.

A parallel but more limited discourse surrounds some of the sounds associated with the gods; the *tērkārn* speaks in something of a chant from which *kol* players at one time created “god tunes” (*devr kol*). However, there is no tradition of singing songs taught by the gods; rather, one sings and dances in honor of the gods. The only context with which I am familiar in which people are said to hear the sounds of the gods is when noises issue from the rafters of a Kota house. Kotas say “*Devr eyrgo*,” literally, “God descends” (WOLF 1997, 189).⁵

The sounds of particular instruments and vocal utterances bear in different ways on how Kotas view themselves, their neighbors, their gods, and the *ānāṭors*. In addition to the earlier-mentioned *kob* and *ērdabaṭk*, two other instruments, the *pījl* (Jew's harp) and the *bugīr* (a bamboo trumpet) were once common domestic instruments played by women and men respectively and are said to be played by the departing soul (*āyv*, also the word for steam) at the time the corpse is consumed by flames during a funeral. Both instruments, now fallen into disuse, are very soft and their sounds characterized by thick, breathy timbres, not incompatible with those of instruments and voices that are in many cultures associated with spirits' voices or shamans.

Several kinds of verbal utterance, including the drawn out call to God, "ōly" and a chant of mutual encouragement called *edykd* (lit. "jumping") signal heightened emotional moments. The text of *edykd* is most commonly "a hau kau." At the end of ritual segments, men chant "a hau kau" while lifting their legs high and stepping in a circle or executing other choreographed sets of collective movements. A number of communities in the Nilgiris share this chant genre but it does not appear to extend beyond the Nilgiris.⁶ Kotas recognize an especially close affinity with the cognate Toda form, which uses more text.⁷ Kota women do not perform *edykd*, but from time to time they will punctuate their singing and dancing with a different expression of exuberance and a call to the gods, "Ō ... kūī" (see example 5 below).

Discourse on what is Kota or local in sonic terms extends beyond evaluation of these *māmūl* forms to embrace film songs. Songs from Tamil and Hindi cinema have served as models for Kota songs since at least the 1940s or 1950s and Kotas use recorded film songs in some ritual contexts as well. For example, in 2001 Duryodhana's mother R. Mathi pointed out that the women we saw mourning at a *varldāv* were playing recordings of film songs to entertain both themselves and the spirits of the dead. Although Tamil cinema music has made cultural inroads, some Kotas remain uncomfortable with this condition and consider cinema music light or unimportant. At the conclusion of the God Ceremony in Kolmel one year, a "song day" devoted to play and women's songs, Kotas were dancing and acting out skits to the accompaniment of film music. As a young man watched me film this, he wanted me to know that this was not part of their "culture" (Tamil: *kalāccāram*).

The very presence or absence of sound may be understood as significant in certain contexts. When Kotas conduct themselves in the proximity of their gods in a domestic setting, for example, they actively refrain from making noise. By contrast, Kotas use the sounds of music to attract and entertain God during the God Ceremony.⁸ The following excerpt from the life history of singer and storyteller S. Cindamani describes a different kind of sonic absence, one in which the subject is rendered unable to hear. In her narration to me and Duryodhana, Cindamani described going with her girlfriends to a *varldāv* to meet young men from other villages. Her conservative village mates and elders were shocked by her audacity in whistling at a cool young man named Jambakamatn. As she described it in Kota, "They were dumbstruck. 'What young girl would whistle at a man? What nerve she has!' They said. Bembir Rangan [an older, male, fellow villager] came chasing me and I hid in one house."

Jambakamatn would subsequently pursue, marry, and horribly abuse her. Cindamani described a loss of motor control and aural sensory capability when she took steps to commit suicide:

I thought, “Let me die in a ‘waterfall.’” At six in the evening, in the rain, I ran off straight through to the waterfall. It was so dark that only objects nearby were visible. Going, going, going, straight through to Arkandy, where truly, with God as my witness, I saw my mother’s corpse and bier come before my eyes. Then the bier disappeared and somehow I ended up at our vow-offering place, where, like in a movie, I saw many many hill guava fruits. During this time the village people were looking all over the world for me. Then Raj’s mother Mathi and Cat Eyes [nickname for her husband] went to the grassy area in the center of the village and prostrated to God saying, “Wherever she is, keep her in your place, God!” Then they brought various offerings from their houses and kept them there. Then my leg, I couldn’t even move it like that, couldn’t even move it like that. Then your [Duryodhana’s] uncle ... came along... I was standing there, in the place where offerings are given to God. This way and that way I tried to move my leg but I couldn’t. I was like a stone tree, without thought. Cries from the village didn’t reach my ears [that is, they were audible but she could not hear them]... [Your uncle] decided to find out who was up there. Until then it was as if my foot was nailed to the ground; then as soon as he touched me my body took human form again.

The cinematic drama of this account, which Cindamani alluded to in the body of her narrative, placed Cindamani in a kind of limbo—drawn to the land of the dead by a vision of her mother, anchored to the ground in a “god’s place,” and rendered unable to hear, feel, speak, or move. Only the touch of Duryodhana’s uncle brought her back to reality.

Summary

The significance of sounds with respect to Kota views of themselves as relatively *māmūl* or *nākarikam* (traditional or modern), as connected to the gods and those who have died, and as related to other Nilgiri peoples, depends on when and where sound is made or avoided, and on the characteristics of the sounds themselves. The concept of *dayn* encompasses the sounds of the human voice and musical instruments, sonic forces that join together when instruments speak in the Kota language. The capability of instruments to have language is tied to Kota morality, *catym*, and to context: instruments give voice to ancestors when they beckon the dying. The gods and the *ānāṭors*, through human agencies, are understood to have transmitted musical pieces and styles that lie at the core of what constitutes tradition for Kotas today. Put another way, such supernaturally-channeled sounds represent Kota “tribal voices.” The relationship between speaking and singing in these communications also emphasizes how the symbolic weight of one’s native language is tied to one’s native music. For this reason, Kotas attach special value to the *āṭ!* genre, even though it has fallen from fashion.

Musical instruments have the power not only to speak, but also to index Kota physical and moral strength. Both songs and instruments serve as conduits for communication between Kotas and their deities. Vocal expressions such as “ōly” and “a hau kau” link Kotas with their own deities and “a hau kau,” as a performance form, instantiates both Kota similarity to and difference from other Nilgiri communities. All these forms of musical significance are products of Kota reflections upon themselves in relation to various kinds of others and to the past. Anxiety over tradition vis-à-vis film song arises from similar sorts of reflection.

PART III: SONG

The two primary genres of Kota song correspond to death-related and God-related activities respectively: the *ātḷ* or *dukt pāt* (song of sadness) and the *devr pāt* (god song) or *naṛajāyne pāt*. One Kota man branded any song other than these “false” or “artificial” (Tamil: *poḷ*). This view, which dismisses women’s creativity and creates a static picture of what constitutes Kota culture, represents one end of a spectrum of Kota views on culture and creativity. Although not explicitly a statement about tribalness or indigeneity, this man’s view needs to be understood in the national context in which Kotas, like other Scheduled Tribes, are implicitly rewarded for carrying forth and celebrating ancient customs, especially in the arts. This context would seem to provide additional motivation for some Kotas to differentiate authentic song genres and pieces from inauthentic ones—that is, tribal songs from modern songs. Many kinds of Kota songs do not, however, fit squarely within either of these categories. Some songs are narrowly functional, as in those used for putting babies to sleep (*jo jo pāt, tālāt*); many are just for fun (*tamāc pāt*); and, as alluded to earlier, many are based directly on film songs (see example 9 below).

I now examine aspects of musical style relevant to notions of Kotaness, tribalness, and modernity in order to make the following points: (1) stylistic features of the *ātḷ* have given way to styles of rendition consistent with the smooth, crooning style of Tamil cinema; (2) alliteration, assonance, consonance, and paronomasia, as well as the specifically Tamil poetic techniques of *mōnai* (repetition of the line’s initial vowel or consonant in some other line), and *etukai* (the second vowel or consonant repeated in another line), together create rhythmic interest and, as in many poetic traditions, set up potential semantic parallels in Kota songs. Some modern Kota songs also retain the syllabic configurations of their film song models; (3) a moralizing tone appears in both old and new songs. “Modern” Kota modes of engagement with their “culture” (*kalāccāram*) transform this moralizing tone and generate “cultural intimacy” (HERZFELD 2004, 3); and (4) different genres beckon different kinds of responses. Idiosyncratic songs invite or require little active response during the performance. Such changing relationships in performance are relevant to aspects of modern subjectivity that emphasize the individual.

Each song will be considered in order, beginning with example 2 (example 1, considered earlier, was Sivan’s imitation of the chant style of a *pēnpacōl*). The complete set of texts and an explanation of some of the special characters used in the

transliterations are in the appendix. Recordings of all the songs are available at: <https://soundcloud.com/richardwolf-1/tracks> and at <http://richardkwolf.com/audio-visual/>.

Kotas tend to vocalize the sounds of released consonants when singing songs in their language; these released consonants are indicated with superscript letters in some of the transliterations below. Consonant clusters that are idiomatic to Kota speech (for example in the story in example 3) are generally separated by vowels when sung. The exception is when several syllables need to be fitted into a narrow melodic mold; see, for instance, the word *kaṛṭkōme* in example 3, line 4.

Example 2: “Ennave, ayo mōḷe,” sung by V. Mathi, 8 February 1992 (see page 83)

Example 2 exhibits many stereotypical features of the *āṭṭ!* (see WOLF 1997; 2006): each line or section begins with a marked inhalation, and the singer then sings the vowel “a” briefly, possibly interrupting it with a glottal articulation. One complete iteration of the melody is sung on the syllables la, li, and le; the final vowel is then extended to the end of the singer’s breath and cut off with a distinct glottal stop. Often the extended vowel precedes the stop with a brief burst of vocal energy. Kotas consider this a Kota way of treating melody in contradistinction to that of the Badaga. Pa Mathi sings a Badaga song in example 11 in which phrases are separated by vocalizations on the syllable *ē* or *ō*.

The initial text of example 2 addresses the deceased in conventional terms of endearment and with standardized exclamations of grievance (“ayo!”). This is followed by piecemeal references to the circumstances of the deceased’s death and inclusion of a placename, rhetorical questions (“what to do?”), metaphors for the deceased and for death, and words of blame directed toward the deceased. The expression *māntkēḷad*, meaning “without heeding someone’s words” (literally, “without having heard language”), is one of several formulas that can be placed almost anywhere in an *āṭṭ!*. Melodically this mainly strophic song comprises four balanced musical phrases. The tune changes, however, toward the end of the song.

A widower nicknamed Mukvayperin composed this song in memory of his only child, Madi, who had gone to collect firewood with some friends. At a place called Crow’s Nest Boulder she died, or was killed by magic—sorcery is often implied in these songs. The lovely Madi was said to have resembled the daughter of a wealthy Badaga man named Jogi and, like her, did not need to lift a finger to work. “Work” is what is meant by the phrases, “cross the threshold” and “cross the yard.” “Jogi’s daughter” is used as a metaphor for Madi in the song and “rolling over like a stone” refers to dying. The composer’s seemingly modern impulse to highlight his daughter’s right to leisure—or at least to escape exposure to the public eye—via reference to the economically dominant Badaga community, is in no way supported by the singer’s performance style, which is, according to current Kota aesthetic sensibilities, old fashioned. (There is no telling how the composer originally sang the song.)

The most prevalent kinds of sound repetition in this example are alliteration, consonance, and assonance; the long vowel *ā* in the position of the second letter

in the line that begins “kāk^avay^a,”⁹ and in the same position in two phrases of the next line, contributes to what is called the *etukai* technique in Tamil. The repetition of the word *vāl* in that line, accomplishing both *etukai* and alliteration, serves the poetic function of connecting the deceased to the Badaga’s daughter. A parallel structure does the same with the word *kēr* four lines later.

Example 3: “Decmāyngē,” sung by Penij, 8 August 1992 (see Appendix, pages 84 and 85)

Example 3 is an *āṭṭi* followed by the singer’s telling of the associated narrative. Story-telling possesses its own musical qualities and sets into play a number of rhythms of response. Something is stated, listeners acknowledge by saying “a a,” the statement is repeated, and then the story continues. The *āṭṭi* itself, being fragmentary, invites questions— if the story is unfamiliar, a listener might ask questions about it, and if a word is unfamiliar (because it is archaic), the listener might ask for clarification.

This version of the story leaves out, at first, an explanation of the first substantive line of the song: “koṭālōṛ kūr ... koṭācōṛ kūrādī” (“gather/join with male friends ... don’t gather with female friends”). The textual appeal of this line rests, in part, on the repetition of a similar configuration of consonants (in voiced and unvoiced forms) and vowels. This phrase alone is enough to evoke this song and story.

The beauty of the deceased in this song, as in example 2, is presented as an attribute relevant to her demise. The father (also single, possibly a widower) goes out of town and leaves his daughter alone, warning her not to hang out with jealous Kota girls. When her friends invite her to go to bathe in the *pevāy* (channel), she resists at first but eventually gives way. One nasty girl offers to pick lice from Decmāyngē’s hair and then accuses her of sleeping with a non-Kota by saying, “The stench of a new man reeks.” Decmāyngē was so humiliated, even though she is said to have had no such affair, that she returned home, bolted herself in her home, prepared her body in the manner of a corpse, and consumed poison. The song implicitly moralizes, as most *āṭṭis* do, about not following the advice of parents (or others), and more specifically about the evils of jealousy. The fact that having had sexual relations with a non-Kota could create such distress speaks to the strong sense that the community is a closed one (at least with regard to Kota women).

Example 4: “Elizabeth,” sung by R. Mathi (see Appendix, page 86)

Example 4 is the *āṭṭi* Duryodhana’s mother R. Mathi composed for her second child, Elizabeth. Some features of this piece’s text are found in other *āṭṭis*. Negative constructions are prevalent: “the house is without anyone”; your brother is “without seeing [his] little sister,” and so on. It contains reminiscences of happy times with the deceased and addresses the deceased with terms of endearment (“queen”). Mathi had never sung the song to anyone before recording it for me and I have encountered other Kota women with private songs as well. One could argue that self-isolated singing, inasmuch as it involves avoiding or evading possible listeners, is itself a kind of social context. The extent to which this form of isolation might be a symptom of a modern condition must remain

an open question for now. The song also indexes aspects of Kota modernity in more obvious ways. The name Elizabeth is noteworthy, for instance: Kotas have been adopting English, Russian, and “national” names for their children for decades—for example, “George,” “Stalin,” and “Gandhi”—so this instance of naming indexes a trend. Strikingly modern in the Kota context also is the gentle and smooth singing style. It lacks the characteristic vocalizations on “a,” the breathy inhalations, and the glottal stops that were prevalent in the traditional, archaic styles represented in examples 2 and 3. While these latter are musical stylizations of sorrowful sounds, they are not necessarily connected with the emotion of the singer. In Mathi’s case, she gradually moved herself to tears through her performance even though her singing did not manifest the stereotyped signs of mournfulness.

Some of the textual commonplaces in this song are also found in other “modern” songs. The imperative, “Listen!” (“ōriḍugo”), while not typical of *āṭṭis*, is used in other songs to address the whole Kota community. Songs tell members of the community not to shirk their responsibilities, for instance; or in example 7, childless women are directed to appeal to God to relieve their curses of barrenness. The song’s mode of address, while appropriate for a child, eschews the usual opening formula whereby the deceased is petitioned with expressions of sorrow (“Ayo!”) and rhetorical questions (“What to do? What to say?”). Both mourning songs and modern, Tamil-influenced god songs commonly refer to individuals bereft of a loved one, or of spiritual fulfillment, as “orphans.” Mathi cleverly reworked this device, calling the child’s one shirt, left to be washed, an orphan. Several *āṭṭi* markers are absent: the child is not admonished for not listening and there is no story of the circumstances of the child’s demise.

Example 5: “Narjāyṇe” (sa: video of women singing together in Kolmel village; sb: sung by Pa. Mathi; see Appendix, page 87)

Example 5 is a prototypical “god song” and, like others in its class, includes a refrain. Usually a small number of older or more knowledgeable women will lead with each line of text and the other women will repeat that line to the extent they are able. All the women keep the energy flowing by participating in the refrain.

The word *narjāyṇe* was explained to me as the sound of anklets jingling while women dance. Such self referentiality is characteristic of many Kota god songs/dances and their cognate form in other parts of Tamil Nadu, *kummi*. Self-awareness in this genre probably should not be mistaken for a kind of folkloric staging of the traditional. Many people, however, do not agree that the word *narjāyṇe* has a specific referent. Sivan from Menar village likened it to a mantra and considered it to mean something like *mangalam* (auspicious ending), in that such songs are sung at the ends of ritual segments.

The song itself is playful and fragmentary, poking fun at members of the village and gently expressing a moral tone. It emphasizes opposites—in this excerpt, a woman is described as wearing a stylish men’s cloak. The implicit context is the “dance day” of the God Ceremony, for which all Kotas in the village don

new clothes. Paronomasia is found in the line “*tāḍe moge, naṛajāyṇe, taḍegārā, naṛajāyṇe,*” among others. Here, the word *tāḍe*—with its long “a” vowel and an alveolar “d”—acts as an adjective meaning “[the one who] says ‘give.’” The word *taḍe*—with its short “a” vowel and retroflex “d”—means “pillar.” In both this and the next line, the tendency of men and boys to be needy and demanding of women is lampooned. At the same time, those same boys are given positive tribal attributes: “strong as a pillar” and “good at hunting.”

The end of this excerpt includes the expression of exuberance alluded to above and can be heard on the videotaped example (5a) from 1992. A song like this is supposed to bring together all the women in the village stepping in synchrony and singing antiphonally. It also engages all who are present by displaying a spectacle for the gods.

Men will sometimes play a percussion instrument to help regulate the rhythm and even dress up to dance as a woman. Women, for their part, interact with men through the messages of the song—laughing at or admonishing them. On the “song day” in 2001 several women were criticizing those women who, spoiled by modern conveniences (*vacdī*), were too lazy to sing. The middle-aged woman Kargeyn said, “Shall we only sing songs that take the men down [a few notches]? I say we sing songs that take women down too!” (“*gaṇmoggū! maṭmkī erykr pācbo? pemmoggū! maṭmkī pemmoggū!n erykr pārm aydēnde.*”)

A second recording of this song, sung by Pa. Mathi, provides a controlled comparison of vocal styles (see example 5b). Pa. Mathi, the oldest woman in Kolmel when she died in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century (she estimated her age as between 60 and 80 in 1991), performed in the same archaic style as V. Mathi, Penij, and others of her generation. While some aspects of that style carry over from genre to genre, such as full-throatedness and the tendency to sing strongly until the breath runs out, less emphasis is placed on glottal articulations and glide-ins with vocalizations on “a”; uninterrupted musical metricity is also essential in this genre—and not in the *āṭ!*—for in practice, the song must align with the women’s continuous stepping and clapping. Within the limits of her physical capabilities, Pa. Mathi attempted to keep the song unbroken and flowing in her rendition. When a group of women are singing together—for many years Pa. Mathi was the song leader—many small articulations are lost in a wash of overlapping voices and many women are singing in the smoother style we have already encountered.

Example 6: Terukkūttu song sung by Pa. Mathi

Pa. Mathi was born in Kolmel, but moved to Menar village for about a year between 1925 and 1945 to live with her cousin following the death of her parents. From the 1930s or earlier until at least the 1950s the Kotas used to entertain themselves in some of their villages with forms of drama drawn from their Tamil environment.¹⁰ According to T. Bellan of Menar, Kotas performed Tamil-language *terukkūttus* (Tamil: “street drama”) such as *Kovalan* in his village.¹¹ Pa. Mathi would have been exposed to these dramas when she lived there. In those days there were no stages, microphones, or speakers, and the actors would have to project their voices to be

heard. When Pa. Mathi came to record songs in my room in Kolmel village for the first time, perhaps buoyed by an urge to perform reminiscent of these early days, she commenced with the Tamil invocation, “muttaḷanta mētaitaṇṇilē,” used in *terukkūttu*. The full Tamil text is not provided as it is not clear enough to decipher, but the parts of it that are clear reveal what is for her a distinctive singing style in the Kota context. Glottal articulations and glides on “a” are completely absent, breaths are hardly audible. She does sing with considerable force and continuity until the end of her breath, as she does in other songs, and as would have been required by the public performers in her childhood. Most distinctive is the seven-pulse metric pattern interspersed with pauses, which is, in part, conditioned by the text’s poetic meter. In the first two feet the final short syllables (ta and ni) are treated as long:

m̄ut tā̄ ḷān tā̄ / m̄ē ṭaī taṇ̄ n̄ī / lē̄ ...

This sets up a pattern of seven with the standard proportion of a long syllable equalling twice the length of a short (2 + 1 + 2 + 2). The pattern is not repeated continuously but asserts itself throughout the excerpt until the last six seconds. At that point Pa. Mathi renders two phrases (ending *māṭṭār*, “he won’t”) beginning with a dense series of syllables that provide rhythmic and metric contrast.

Example 7: Lullaby composed for Kota drama. Sung and composed by Bellan (see Appendix, page 87)

T. Bellan explained that in his youth the older *terukkūttu* style started to wane as he and his schoolmates began to develop a new kind of drama in the village: a “cinema type” based on modern dramas and films in Ooty. They introduced a stage, props, electric lights, and so forth. Bellan described teaching the drama to the boys studying in school and composing songs based on film songs. The purpose of this new drama, including one sub-genre called *Naṇpaṇiṇṇi* tiyākam (“friend’s help”), was to “show people how to behave.” “In our ‘caste,’” he said, “*nākarikam* (modernity) was somewhat lacking. People were doing things that we didn’t like, so we staged ‘drama’ and showed them how to behave properly” (in Tamil, English words in single quotes; 13 October 1997).

One of the songs he composed for such a drama in about 1957 is a lullaby to a child (example 7). Appreciative villagers wrote down the text and began to sing it for their own enjoyment, “on special occasions, using a ‘mic.’” Some recontextualized the song and sang it at nightlong child-naming ceremonies. Although Kotas no longer perform any sort of drama, the aim of getting Kota children properly educated was ultimately successful.

Like other lullabies in the region, this one addresses the child with terms of endearment and praise, and includes attempts to cajole the child. Bellan recorded this song for me in the process of a conversation and was not able to perform to his potential; but the smooth vocal delivery that was intended, and the melody, show the debt to the film song on which this was based (Bellan could not remember the source).

Example 8: “Kōveke mōlāniyo,” composed by A. K. Rangan. Sung by P. Kamatn, May 1992 (see Appendix, page 88)

A. K. Rangan, whose history of the Nilgiris figured in our earlier discussion, was the composer of a number of Kota songs in the new filmy style that took hold in Kota villages in the 1940s and 1950s. Rangan’s songs were still extremely popular in the 1990s and a few were still being sung late in the first decade of the twenty-first century. One favorite expresses a perennial concern over the population size.¹² In the Kota context, the gentle crooning song style is decidedly modern, with its smooth beginnings and endings of phrases, and its warbling, tremulous quality reminiscent of both Tamil film songs and Western sentimental singing. Techniques of alliteration, consonance, assonance, and Tamil techniques of *mōṇai* and *etukai* are all present (note sections in bold) and create parallelisms that contribute to the meaning of the song (see also WOLF 2006, 57).

Example 9: “Aynōr ninne kāṇāde neynje,” sung and composed by B. Mari. Recorded 1991 (see Appendix, page 89)

The popular Kota singer B. Mari, who was thirty-five at the time of recording this song, based the melody of her song on the Tamil hit “Rācātti unṇa” from the 1984 film *Vaiteki kāttiruntāl* (Music director Ilayaraja, singer P. Jayachandran; a version of the original is provided in example 10). The resemblance between Mari’s song and the Tamil original is so close that the metric positions of particular words and sounds in each match perfectly; these matching positions are highlighted in bold for the first line below. The adoration of a woman is transformed here, in keeping with *bhakti* songs in general, into the longing for God.¹³

rācātti unṇak kāṇāta neṅcu kāttāṭi pōlāṭatu

“Queen! [my] heart spins like a windmill without seeing you!”

aynōre ninne kāṇāde neynje arē koṟm^l nīrāy āco

“Aynōr! without seeing you, [my] heart trembles like a half-filled [round] pot of water”

An obligatorily interactive social context is missing from “modern” songs like examples 8 and 9. People *can* and *do* perform these songs for others, but those others play little role as active listeners. Granted, the presence of clear addressees (Kota women and God) sets up a set of implied relations. But those singing Rangan’s songs may not feel that their songs will actually serve to deliver a message in the manner Kargeyn alluded to above. In the “song day” context, by contrast, the whole day is devoted to group singing, and in such a context it is possible for singers to feel that their message is being heard. A single song, sung at home for a few people at most, hardly engages the community in the same way.

Summary

Kota songs and song styles index modernity and various forms of Kota subjectivity in different ways. The *āt!* style is characterized by such forms of vocal expression

as the breathy inhalation, the abrupt glottal stop, and the vocalized “a.” These are not among the palette of sounds prominent in South Indian popular song and have not, probably for that reason, endured.¹⁴ Although the expressive devices that make the *āt̪̥* distinctive could have been seized upon and used actively to present a collective “tribal” or other form of traditional persona in the kinds of self-reflective contexts discussed earlier, they have not. Nevertheless, some of the poetic devices employed in both *āt̪̥*’s and god songs persist in the variety of new songs composed for changing societal needs and desires.

The *āt̪̥*’s social contexts have also diminished with the changes in work habits and the accessibility of television, radio, and tape players. Still, the human motivations for grieving have not ceased, and in giving voice to these emotions, some Kotas continue to sing and compose *āt̪̥*’s with new styles, drawing images and methods of delivery from other genres.

Regardless of genre, Kota songs often express moral messages related to values of equality and unity, values which are expressly used in Kota typifications of themselves as “tribal.” Each genre possesses its own conventional form for moral messages, a few of which have been described here. Some of the “modern” songs composed since the 1940s and 1950s differ from *āt̪̥*’s and god songs in having had explicitly reformist aims. Examples throughout the Kota corpus present moments of typification—of gender, of Kota versus non-Kota, and occasionally, of “the *ādivāsī*.” The extent to which these typifications circulate depends largely on the structure of social interaction. The menu of new songs does not have a unitary set of associated social forms, but among the possibilities are those of a largely participatory context with women singing together, and that of a lone voice, singing a composition in isolation or for others who will never sing it themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

No one local notion of indigeneity predominates among the Kotas. Complex agents create and experience different kinds of entitativity as they enter into ever-new social situations. Kota self-awareness at various levels—community, village, gender, and individual—does not at every moment implicate primordial connections to the Nilgiris. Kotas express concern with forms of Kotaness in the context of many village-based rituals. During the rituals themselves and in periods prior to and following them Kotas may reconsider the practical details of these rituals and their current relevance, but the Kota focus on creating and maintaining a viable existence as a community remains steadfast. This is not merely a response to a perceived threat from neighboring populations. It is a moral imperative that creates the conditions of possibility for their gods to be efficacious.

As Kotas contemplate themselves in relation to non-Kotas, they may make symbolic moves of affiliation and disaffiliation; emphasis on Kota “tribalness” both distinguishes Kotas from Tamils and connects them to other populations in the Nilgiris (and elsewhere) that share observable cultural traits. The place of the “tribal”

in relation to the “modern” or “civilized” may be one of diachronic development (a tribe modernizes) or one of essential compatibility (Kotas are like Europeans in some respects; Kotas are liberal and flexible).

Kota song texts, discourses about sound, and ways of performing music and texts support the creation of multifaceted forms of entitativity. *Edykd* (chanting “a hau kau”) iterates inclusion in a Nilgiri whole that embraces Badagas and Todas, whereas the performance of instrumental music invokes more specific relationships: relationships between living and dead Kotas and between Kotas and other instrument-performing tribes such as the Kattu Nayakas. The use of particular vowels for vocalization, techniques for creating continuity (full throated or crooning), and articulation (abrupt or gradual), and the artful manipulation of sound similarities and contrasts (alliteration, and so on) create, at times, a sense that Kota songs are recognizable above and beyond the specificity of the Kota language. And yet, the possibility of varying and mixing the characteristics of genres such as *āṭṭ*s, lullabies, god songs, and so forth with emergent styles in Tamil drama and film is a reminder that Kota music continues to retain its “tribal” resonance because it remains forever in dialogue with the sound world of the Nilgiris, Tamilnadu, India, and beyond.

NOTES

* Unless otherwise noted, all statements attributed to Kota men or women were made to, or in the presence of, the author.

1. If this battle took place at all, it was probably with the army of Tipu’s father, Haidar Ali (1720–1782). Tipu was born in 1750.

2. The war drum is probably a reference to the *ērdabaṭṭk*, a kettle drum Kotas now use in a variety of ritual contexts and that might well have origins in the *naqqārah* kettle drums associated with royalty in South and West Asia.

3. *Māmūl* is of Arabic origin and probably entered the Kota lexicon via Persian (in court documents) and then through Tamil.

4. In earlier times, Kota men wore their hair long, a sign of masculinity that also served (and serves) a ritual function.

5. That upper area (*aṭṭ*) is a place where items associated with the God Ceremony (*devr*) are kept when not in use, the symbolism of physical elevation being important.

6. According to Emeneau, Todas call this genre *koṇ* (EMENEAU 1971, xiv) and set the chant to conventional, paired phrases, also called *koṇ* (NARA and BHASKARARAO 2003, 1). Only Kotas in a few villages vary the words of *edykd*, and they call this process *kaṇ et-* (“render words”).

7. Maṭṭ went so far as to say the Kurgōj version “ijjin a ha a ha” represented an amalgam of Kota and Toda languages and means “give goodness” (*olyd tā*).

8. The one exception is in the village of Menar, where they do not play instruments during their *ayṇōr* festival because of the association of instrumental music with funerals.

9. The small, superscript letters refer to vowels added during singing that would not appear during ordinary speech.

10. Mandelbaum found that Kotas were performing dramas during his periods of field-work (letter dated 13 October 1952 to Mandelbaum’s PhD student Alan Beals; Mandelbaum collection, Bancroft Library, carton 1).

11. Kovalan is the main male character in the Tamil epic, *Cilappatikāram*, composed sometime very early in the first millennium CE.

12. Rangan himself could no longer sing and mentally could not properly remember his own songs when I knew him in the early 1990s, but he did claim that some of the lyrics being sung were not originally part of his songs. This makes a close reading of the song's intent difficult (the reference to the "curse" at the end is questionable, for instance).

13. Tamil intervocalic single consonants are voiced, so *t* and *ṭ* are pronounced *d* and *ḍ* when between two vowels.

14. Comparison with the Tamil *oppāri* (lament) is beyond the scope of this article. See WOLF 1997 for a treatment of this topic.

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 APPENDIX

I have used superscript letters to indicate the extension of released consonants. Final, long, “e” sounds are so common in speech and song that I have not given them a special symbol. However when the final “e” is the release of a consonant and has the quality of a “short” vowel, even when it is drawn out, it is indicated by a superscript “e.” One or more “:”s give a rough indication of relative length as performed. Phonemic length is indicated by a macron. Consonant doubling is indicated according to the way the song is actually performed (gemination is phonemic only in the distinction between ʀ and ɖ, the latter being held longer than the former).

Key:

- ̤: breath
- {gs}: glottal stop
- {g}: glottal articulation
- {vg}: glottal stop after held vowel that increases in intensity just before the stop
- (x): brief vocalization on syllable indicated by “x” before beginning a section of melody
- x. : relative length of vowel or semivowel, with the number of dots proportional to the duration. This is distinct from phonemic lengthening, which is indicated by a macron.
- ^{a,e,i}. and so on: These indicate the vowel sounds a, e, and i, respectively that are heard in the release of consonants in singing; they are not phonemic sounds, and in singing they are heard more prominently than in ordinary speech. The lengthening of these vowels is indicated with a series of dots proportional to the duration, as for ordinary vowels as discussed above. For example, a lengthened “i” vowel acting as an extended release of a consonant would be notated as ⁱ...
- [y] glide before initial e

EXAMPLE 2. “Ennave, ayo mōle,” sung by V. Mathi, 8 February 1992.

<p>(m.){g}(m) li la li la, li la li la, li la la la, la la la la {g}</p>	<p>Vocalization on song melody using idiomatically Kota syllables; commas separate 4 sections of melody</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.){g}(a) ayo mōle, [y]enna.ve, ayo mōle, mā.yde {vg}</p>	<p>Oh daughter, my mother [term of endearment], oh daughter Madi!</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) kāk^avay^a guṇḍ^kka, vēr^k.ne, oytēn ammā, tatī [y]ammā {vg}</p>	<p>Having gone to Crow’s Nest Boulder for firewood, you died, mother</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) vāl^k kaṣ^{vā}.d^e, vāl^e jōyg^l mōle, ayo mōle, mā.yde {vg}</p>	<p>You never had to cross the threshold [to work, just like the beautiful] daughter of Jogi [the Badaga who didn’t have to cross her] threshold. Oh daughter Madi!</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) oḍ^e mog^e veciṭe, īṇḍī^t ammā, [y]enne giṭe, āḍēn ammā {vg}</p>	<p>Having given birth to one child, what to do? I raised [you] mother</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) kāk^a vay.e, guṇḍ^k oytē. , tatī [y]ammā, [y]ennave māyde</p>	<p>Having gone to Crow’s Nest Boulder you died, mother, my mother Madi</p>
<p><u>b</u> ayo mōle, māyde ḍ^lre, oḍe mogēne, āḍ^vēn ammā {vg}</p>	<p>Oh daughter, called Madi, I raised one child, mother!</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) kēr^k kaṣ^{vā}.d^a, kēr^e jōyg^e mōle. , ayo mōle, mā.yde {g}</p>	<p>You never had to cross the yard [to work, just like the beautiful] daughter of Jogi [the Badaga who didn’t have to cross her] yard. Oh daughter Madi!</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) iṇḍ^ek ammā, aṇ^l.nēne, tay^lḍ^lṭ^ek^e, mēlōgmēne {g}</p>	<p>Today mother, casting aside [your] father, heaven,</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) cēḍī.go, ayd^ld^e vāk^e, [y]ennāyṛ ōbe, ayo mōle {vg}</p>	<p>your reached, so said the words [of the <i>tērkārn</i>?]. How will I go on [without you], oh daughter!</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) ninnav mēre, tatāḷigo, ninēne, naymb^lēnigo {g}</p>	<p>Your mother also died. I trusted you [not to die]!</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) mānt^e kēḷāde, ōgādīde, avrōr^e cēyd^lre, ō.nigo {g}</p>	<p>Without listening to my admonition “don’t go” you went along with them</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) kāk^e vayye, guṇḍ^k uyṭe, kallāyṛēne, marḍiyo mōle {g}</p>	<p>Having gone to Crow’s Nest Boulder, you rolled over like a stone [died], daughter!</p>
<p><u>b</u> [y]ennav āne, ayo mōle, mā.yde {g}</p>	<p>[tune changes] Oh daughter who is my mother, Madi</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) ārⁿēne, mōle gībe, [y]enn^emāyṛe, āne ibēnammā {vg}</p>	<p>Whom will I make my daughter? How ever will I go on?</p>
<p><u>b</u> (a.) ārⁿēne, mōle gībe, [y]enn^emāyṛe, āne ibēnammā {vg}</p>	<p>Whom will I make my daughter? How ever will I go on?</p>

EXAMPLE 3 (this page and facing page). “Decmāyngē,” sung by
Penij (maternal aunt of R. Mathi), 8 August 1992.

<p>a la la. le. la la. le. la la. le. ., la la. <u>b</u> a la ya lo. li li. lo {vg}</p> <p><u>b</u> (a) [y]enavve [y]enavve decmāyngē <u>b</u> en'kōm [y]enavve decmāyngē {vg}</p> <p><u>b</u> (a) koṭālōṛ^o kū.ṛ^o. decmāyngē <u>b</u> (a) koṭācōṛ^o kūrādī idēno</p> <p><u>b</u> (a) [y]enavve [y]enavve (a) decmāyngē.en <u>b</u> kōm [y]enavve decmāyngē {vg}</p> <p><u>b</u> (a) pevāyke ōkōme vā dḷṭe <u>b</u> (a) nīre kaṛṭkōme vādḷṭe {vg}</p> <p><u>b</u> (a) maṇḍ^e.ne pēne ācḷṭe <u>b</u> (a) ocāl^o ceṭe nāyro idāla <u>b</u> (a) [y]enavve [y]enkōmo (a) decmāyngē {vg}</p> <p><u>b</u> (a) {g} (a) la la. le la la le . la. le <u>b</u> (a) li la. lo. li la. lo. li la. lo {vg}</p> <p>Story:</p> <p>1. mindalle oj āc perduko 2. oj āc perḍṭk, aṇṇ oj āle, alk aṇṇ amog īṛāl oḷo 3. amog īṛāle oḷo, alk amog īṛāl engicko ūn aṇṇe? 4. āne ūyṭk maygūr ūyṭakēnēr ōcīko.</p> <p>5. alk vakvēḍbaṭk ūḷ ojāc pavḷ itko. 6. alk pavḷ ikvēḍbaṭke, ikōṭāc vadṭ nāng āce. 7. alk vā, nīr kaṛṭkōme vā, vā kōṭāce vā kōṭāce idko.</p> <p>8. alk ūḷ vadlārē idko. 9. ūḷ muṛmuṛn pacre ōcīko pevāyke. 10. pevāyḷ pacr oṇṭke, cēr maṇḍe maṇḍe doḍ maṇḍ, mārudnm maṇḍe. 11. alk doḍ maṇḍle, alky pēn nōcṭ takēn tālīḍāle</p> <p>12. cēr maṇḍḷ pēn ilāḍāle. 13. ilā oḍṛī nōctakēn nōctākēn idāle. 14. alk pāpo maṇḍ nōcāle 15. (Raman: pemog pacand oḷḍ?)</p> <p>16. ē pacand oḷḍe. 17. alkeke ūḷ oc āḷ ceṭ nāyro 18. maṇḍn telykiṭ nōcde oc āḷ ceṭ nāyro idk mūdo</p>	<p>my mother [term of endearment for daughter here] Decmāyngē, what to say? my mother, Decmāyngē</p> <p>“gather with male friends Decmāyngē; don’t gather with female friends” I said [because girls are jealous of your beauty]</p> <p>my mother Decmāyngē, what to say? my mother, Decmāyngē</p> <p>having said “come, let’s go to the stream” having said “come, we’ll bathe”</p> <p>having removed lice from [your] head, she said “the stench of a new [non-Kota] man reeks,” my mother, what to say? Decmāyngē</p> <p>1. First one girl [Decmāyngē] was born 2. one girl having been born, the father was alone [no wife], so the father and that child were two people. 3. [with] that child, there were two of them, then what did that father— of the two people (one of whom was) that child—do? 4. Saying, “I’ll go to Maygur and return,” he went.</p> <p>5. then while [he was] coming, she was alone in the house. 6. then while she was staying in the house, as for this Kota girl, there were four girl friends. 7 then “come, we’ll bather, come, come [Kota female] friend, come friend” [her female Kota friends] called</p> <p>8. then she said “I won’t come.” 9. they [the friends] just took her along [anyway] to the stream. 10. Having taken [her] to the stream— ok, [she had] long hair, arm’s length hair—11. then she said “wait, I’ll search for lice” in that long hair</p> <p>12. “there aren’t any lice” she [Decmāyngē] said. 13. “No, there are, I’ll check for you [lit “look and give”], I’ll check for you, she said. 14 . then, alas, she looked. (Raman: the girl was beautiful?)</p> <p>16. yes, she was beautiful. 17. then, they [said] “the stench of a new [non-Kota] man reeks” 18. parting the hair and looking, “a new man’s stench reeks” [they] said, so it is said</p>
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<p>19. ō, ū oc ā ceṭ nāyrūdd ameme? 20. ām ināmāyṛ perdvōmn anḍōlne, iḍṭke payke vadvōle</p> <p>21. payk vadōle kārḡāyḡ made iṛṭṭke, iṛcōle 22. (Raman: kārḡāyḡ iḡḍ oḡ viśa made) vicm madde. 23. a vicm madde itadōle, iṛcōle,</p> <p>24 amde koypk, iṛṭṭke, vacṭke, mandīrgn pāytōle, maṅcēl iṭōle, maṅḍpaṭ kacōle, 25 alkike neṛneṛn paṭṭk varāṛn inm kavcōle, 26. vāl kuḍ iṭōle, alk uḍko 27. (Raman: alk taṭīko) alk taṭīko</p> <p>28. (Raman: alke aṅṅ mānt kēlāyḡḍenāle) ē, alk taṭīko. 29. taṭīḡk avn aṅṅ vadṭk māyṅge māyṅge māyṅgēr pay payk taṛyḡkōne</p> <p>30. taṛkvēḍbaṭke, pāpo, ayye veyntmūru ay veyntmūru 31 ay ilārmūru, ay veyntmūru ay ilāmūru, 32 arvat paye taṛyḡkōne, alk engicko pāpo? dārkd cūple?</p> <p>33. aco vāl kuḍ iṭōn māydr gickū iḡmūḍo. 34. alk vadṭ , taḡk vēḍbaṭk tāy taḡkvēḍbaṭke, alk tāy kuḍ iṭḡkmūḍo.</p> <p>35. alk pārōṛ eḡyḡkōre, tāyn makaḡcōre, 36 alk inm tāv alk tāv taṭīḡoḍmūro 37 tāv kaḍvōre. tāv kaḍvōre (Raman: kaḍuko)</p> <p>38 tāv kaṭṭe, alk avnayṅ vadṭ kirmūḍū, 39 maṅḍ tacmūḍū (Raman: aṛḍto) 40 aṛṭe aṛṭe alk pāpo maṅḍ tacīṭ maṅḍel oṛḍīkmūḍo.</p> <p>41 av taṭīṭ av k adn piḡātār aṭ tāv tuṭṭe vadkmūḍo (Raman: adne) 42 paytēviḡcīkmūḍo bīḍy 43 (Raman: koṭāck kūṛāḍi) (then together:) kōṭāḡke kūṛe (Raman: irre avn aṅṅ ayḍīko) 44 avn aṅṅ ayḍko munddle ...</p>	<p>19. oh, [Decmāyṅge] thinks, “they say the stench of a new man reeks”? 20. We [i.e. I] were born this way, she thinks; thinking thus, she came home</p> <p>21. she came home and having pounded/extracted medicine from the [poisonous] fruit of the snake plant [arisema toruosum and Lescheneaultis], she pounded. 22 (Raman: Kārḡāyḡ means a kind of drug) poisonous drug. 23. the girl [Decmāyṅge] who brought that that poisonous drug pounded it</p> <p>24. [putting it] into our [traditional drinking] vessel, having extracted it, having kept it [aside], she spread a mat, put down a pillow, tied a cloth around her head [as is done for a corpse], 25. then she lay down flat on her back and covered herself with a cloak like this [up to her neck] 26. bolted the door from inside, then drank it. 27 (Raman: then she died) then she died</p> <p>28. (Raman: then because she didn’t listen to the admonitions of her father) yes, she died 29. after she died her father, having come, searched from house to house [calling] “Mayṅge Mayṅge”</p> <p>30. while looking, alas, there he asked it is said, there he asked it is said, 31 she’s not there they said, it is said; there he asked, she’s not there it is said. 32 sixty houses he searched and what to do, alas? would anyone have news?</p> <p>33 “oh, someone has made it like the door is bolted” he said, it is said 34 while opening the door, while waiting to open the door, the door was bolted, it is said</p> <p>35. then he pried it with a crow bar, forcing the door [open] 36. the corpse was like this; the corpse had died it is said 37. he saw the corpse, he saw the corpse (Raman: He saw it)</p> <p>38. Having seen it, then her father screamed, it is said 39. beat his head it is said (Raman: cried). 40 cried and cried until, alas, he broke his head [made a cut in it] from beating it it is said</p> <p>41 after she died they cremated the corpse and returned (Raman: that’s it). 42 he became crazy it is said. 43 (Raman: “do not go with Kota girl friends”) (then together:) “go with Kota male friends” (Raman: thus said her father) 44. her father said that at first... [story ends reiterating text in the song; this crucial piece of information was left out]</p>
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EXAMPLE 4. “Elizabeth,” sung by R Mathi.

<p>la la ... la la ... la la amā... ōriḍugo yama elicābetī yēnavve rāṇy pāpēmoge... kāṇāde ōnēn amā aṇṇōreke kirtārego yama yēnavve rāṇy</p> <p>aṇceke ... oḷāle ānānīgo yēnave rāṇy kāvileke ... payle āl ilāde amā .. oḷāle ānānīgo</p> <p>yevlle ... oḷū ḍire nōṭkēn amā .. yēnavve rāṇy ālkal ilāde... adicymāyṛe elicibet iḍire pēre vēcī amā amā ... ōriḍugo rāṇi ninayṇeke ... payke varāde ōnām amā ... nīye nama ... vāyeke kūve tīcī rāṇy</p> <p>aṇṇe kāṇo iḍire amā ... ninne ār iḍire aṇḍēn amā payvāleke oyte amā aṇṇene ātī ...go rāṇy dārenene kaṛāc iḍire ārekvgo yamā amā ... ōriḍgo rāṇy aṇceke amā ... kaṛāce kāṇād amā ...</p> <p>oḍe kupāce toyileke anāyde ānān amā rāṇy</p>	<p>mother, listen mother Elizabeth, my mother, queen Oh baby (girl) I went without seeing (you) mother! As for the father God, he plucked her away, mother, my mother, queen</p> <p>as for (your) brother, he has become a lone male my mother, queen to protect (you), the house is without anyone, mother he has become a lone male</p> <p>saying “where are you” I’ll look, mother my mother, queen For everyone, exceptional surprise (that) you got the name “Elizabeth”</p> <p>Mother... listen, queen As for your father, if he goes without coming to the house [that is, if he’s late coming home] You only feed his mouth by hand [you have to feed him] If your brother is absent [not at home], you I tell to call [him] mother! you went to the verandah, mother and called your brother, mother [You] who calls [for your brother] is whose little sister? Mother Mother, listen queen As for [your brother], [he is] without seeing [his] little sister, mother one shirt for washing has become an orphan, mother queen</p>
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EXAMPLE 5. Narjāyne,” god song. The text differs from that in the two recordings. 5a. Video: ~January 1992; 5b. Audio: sung by Pa Mathi, 1991.

narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne aṅ dēre, narajāyne, orāvōne, narajāyne	(refrain, sound of anklets) one who doesn't follow older brother's God
narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne ayṅ dēre, narajāyne, orāvōne, narajāyne	(refrain) is the one who doesn't follow father's God
narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne aṅd dēre, narajāyne	(refrain) Brother's God, narjāyne (sound of anklets)
avvd dēre, narajāyne otle oṇo, narajāyne	mother's God, narjāyne are next to each other
narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne	(refrain)
avk oḍe, narajāyne, ukte varāre, narajāyne narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne	For mother, one double, stylish, men's cloak (refrain)
tāḍe moge, narajāyne, taḍegārā, narajāyne narajāyne, narajāyne	The boy who says “give” is [strong like] a pillar (refrain)
vēḍe moge, narajāyne, villegārā	The boy who says “I want” is a bowman [good hunter]
nīkoṛmgāle, narajāyne, nījavvadoyne, narajāyne	The one with the water pot is Doyne, Nij's mother
narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne, narajāyne a la la la la la kuī	(refrain) (expression of exuberance)

EXAMPLE 7. “Jo jo idāme jāme oḡā,” composed and sung by
T. Bellan, 13 October 1997

1. jo jo idāme jāme oḡā	if you say “jo jo” time doesn't pass
2. kambādīme andēl āyko	don't start falling asleep, it's only evening
3. origigē rāja	sleep dear! [lit. “king”; endearment term for boy]
4. velpk eyta veyle mīne	the morning star will serve as light
5. poranjī nōca poṛtē niyē	if [one] looks outside, you're the sun
6. origigē kaṅe kambāvugē origigē kambāvugē	sleep dear! [lit. “eye”; endearment term for girl] begin to sleep
7. meynē nin ayṅē vārāre kōpmo	son, are you angry that your father didn't come?
8. andēle āykūre ārāde pāpmo?	do you feel bad that it has become evening and [father] didn't put you to sleep [lit. “call”]?
9. andēle āykūre oḍirē vakugē	knowing it's evening he'll come running
10. angayle tuykiṭē āya meynē arkuḡē	Calling “daddy's boy” he'll cuddle you [lit. carry (you) in his palms and inner arms]
11. mēṛ ilāde vānumē	sky without raised ground [reaching it]
12. metan ilāde medāyṛē	raised bed [as befits a king] without steps
13. ucidē unāvē origigē	sleep, newborn full moon!
14. velpk eyta veyle mīne	the morning star will serve as light
15. poranjī nōca poṛtē niyē	if [one] looks outside, you're the sun

EXAMPLE 8. “Köveke mōlāniyo,” composed by A. K. Rangan, sung by P.
Kamatn, May 1992 (repetitions omitted; parallelisms in bold)

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | köveke mōlāniyo
nī ar̄tedē īgūr̄go | You, daughters of Kotas,
stop crying! |
| 2. | nī tāvekāȳr̄ ar̄td ōje
jāytkelme mīrego | Your wailing for the dead makes too much
noise, for everyone |
| 3. | pate digle patīme kātīte
pace mogne āciyo | Having deprived yourself for ten months
you gave birth to a newborn |
| 4. | katile veregume takuļle mogme
tāv nāṭke kēȳpiyo | You’ve sent the firewood in the heap, and
the child in your lap, to the funeral ground |
| 5. | duvle ticne kaḍte neycne
tacir ānāṭōrl ar̄tego | Seeing the flame of cremation, the spirits of
the dead strike their foreheads and cry |
| 6. | moge tatōle moge vayōle
pemog mōle ōriḍugo | Listen daughters, you whose children have died,
you who have not given birth |
| 7. | amd doḍaȳnōre cābnego
tāv tatdelm ayrego | It is our Great Father God’s curse
The dead all know about death |
| 8. | kolmēlle pacāl oōre
kundaȳnōrke ar̄dego | Tell the Little Father God
who resides in the pacāl of Kolmel |
| 9. | cābne tān oḡeṭe nineke
cōbne takevēdego | He’s the one who placed the curse
He’s the one who will relieve you from it |

EXAMPLE 9. “Aynōr ninne kāṇāde neynje,” sung and composed
by B. Mari.

1. aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
Aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water
Aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water
2. nī [y]illāde, nimayde ilā
ōc[!]re niye vāge cōymī
aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
There is no tranquility without you
[please] God, come running!
Aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water
3. dēr^e vāglēne tēr^ekār[!]n ilāde
dēr^eve ilādayyā
nī [y]illāde, nimayde ilā
nī [y]illāde, nimayde ilā
ōc[!]re niye vāge cōymī
aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
nī [y]illāde, nimayde ilā
ōc[!]re niye vāge cōymī
aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
Without a terkarn [diviner] at the gates of the
temple, [we are] without God, father!
There is no tranquility without you
There is no tranquility without you
[please] God, come running!
Aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water
There is no tranquility without you
[please] God, come running!
Aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water
4. ayn illāde a.nāyde
avvillāde tavāyre
āmēne avadī[y]e paṭēm aya
ayn illāde a.nāyde
avvillāde tavāyre
āmēne avadī[y]e paṭēm aya
Without father, orphaned
without mother, orphaned
we feel suffering father!
without father, orphaned
without mother, orphaned
we feel suffering father!
5. oļy va.r[!]me taglekēne
oļy va.r[!]me taglekēne
ōc[!]re niye vāge cōymī
aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
nī [y]illāde, nimayde ilā
ōc[!]re niye vāge cōymī
aynōr^e ninn^e kāṇāde neynj^e
ar^e koṛm[!] nīrāyṛ āco
In order to give good boon(s)
in order to give good boon(s)
[please] God, come running!
aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water
There is no tranquility without you
[please] God, come running!
Aynor, without seeing you, my heart
dances [trembles] like water