Hindustani music in the time of Aurangzeb

Schofield, Katherine Ruth

Awarding institution:
LocalizedString(id=99598007, text={en_GB=School of Oriental and African Studies })

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

END USER LICENCE AGREEMENT

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

You are free to:
- Share: to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:
- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
Hindustani music in the time of Aurangzeb

Katherine Ruth Butler BROWN

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

SEPTEMBER 2003
ABSTRACT

The long reign of the last Great Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707), is highly controversial in Indian history. An orthodox Muslim, Aurangzeb is infamous for his bigoted and oppressive political and cultural policies. Scholars have long argued that he banned music throughout his reign, leaving a crucial period in Indian music history unexamined. This thesis investigates North Indian musical life in the time of Aurangzeb, through a critical analysis of musical discourse in contemporary Persian language sources. These demonstrate that far from having banned music, musical practice thrived under Aurangzeb. My thesis aims 1) to refute the story of the ban and demonstrate that music played an integral role in Mughal society throughout Aurangzeb’s reign; 2) to establish an epistemology of Indo-Persian musical treatises that enables these overlooked sources to be studied in their intellectual and cultural contexts; and 3) to explore two major developments in Hindustani music at this time. Chapter One sets out the historical context of the thesis, and introduces its main themes. In Chapter Two I present a critical epistemology of Indo-Persian musical treatises in the Mughal period. I assess the textual evidence for Aurangzeb’s attitudes towards music in Chapter Three, refuting the idea that he banned it. Chapter Four looks at elite patronage of music in Aurangzeb’s reign, focussing on the nature and purpose of music, masculinity and princely etiquette, and the mehfil. Chapter Five explores two complementary systems used to classify raga at the Mughal court – the rāga-rāginī system, and two ḥāṭ systems grounded in the treatises of Kamilkhani and Ahobala. In Chapter Six I unveil a new theory on the origin and development of khayāl, arguing that it originally emerged in a particular Sufi context, and first rose to prominence at the court of Aurangzeb. Finally, in Chapter Seven I conclude with a summary of musical developments in the time of Aurangzeb, and how they shed new light on his reign.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.................................................................................................................................................. 2
Acknowledgements................................................................................................................................. 4
Notes on transliteration............................................................................................................................ 7
Notes on translation.................................................................................................................................. 10
Chronology of events............................................................................................................................... 11
Map of Mughal empire............................................................................................................................. 13
    Chapter One: Introduction.................................................................................................................. 14
    Chapter Two: Indo-Persian musical treatises under the Mughals......................................................... 27
    Chapter Three: Did Aurangzeb ban music?.......................................................................................... 81
    Chapter Four: Music, masculinity, and the Mughal mehfil................................................................. 118
    Chapter Five: Rāga systems in performance..................................................................................... 177
    Chapter Six: The origins and development of khayāl................................................................. 226
    Chapter Seven: Conclusion................................................................................................................... 269
Bibliography............................................................................................................................................ 279
Appendix One.......................................................................................................................................... 295
To my ustāds, my patient mentors
my hamrāh, my inspiration

I have become you, and you me; I have become the body,
you the soul; So that none hereafter may say
that “I am someone and you someone else.”
Khusrau a beggar, a stranger has come wandering to your town;
For the sake of god, have pity on this beggar
and do not turn him away from your door

~ Amir Khusrau

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with all scholarly endeavours, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the generous assistance of a large number of people and institutions. Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), who were primarily responsible for funding this research through their Postgraduate Award Scheme, which included an additional grant for research in India. I am also grateful to the SOAS Scholarships’ Committee for providing me with a SOAS Fieldwork Award.

Of all the scholars who assisted me with my research, I wish to thank first and foremost my supervisor Richard Widdess. I could not have had a better guide through the academic minefield that constitutes doctoral research. His sincere enthusiasm for and interest in my project helped sustain my own energy levels throughout, and his criticisms and wisdom were invaluable in making this thesis a much better product.

I am especially grateful to all the libraries in India and the UK who gave me permission to consult their collections of Indo-Persian manuscripts. In particular I wish to acknowledge the assistance of HH Nawab Kazim Ali Khan of Rampur, who facilitated my entry into the Raza Library. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the directors and staff
of the following libraries for their helpfulness, who are unfortunately too many to list individually: Dr Zakir Hussain Library, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University; Raza Library, Rampur; Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna; Patna Museum Library; Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata; Indian National Library, Kolkata; Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras; Salar Jung Musuem Library, Hyderabad; Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Hyderabad; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Edinburgh University Library; the British Library, London; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and Cambridge University Library.

To the individual scholars who kindly advised me at various stages of my research – Thank you! (in no particular order): Inayet and Sunita Zaidi, Madhu Trivedi, Radhika Chopra, Muzaffar Alam, Satish Chandra, Irfan Habib, Shireen Moosvi, W H Siddiqi, Ritwik Sanyal, Dr and Mrs Habibur Rahman Chighani, N Ramanathan, Syeda Asfia Kauser, Avril Powell, David Arnold, Rupert Snell, Rosalind O’Hanlon, Christopher Bayly, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, Shailaja Fennell, Francesca Orsini, Jeevan Deol, Sanjay Subrahmanym, Francis Robinson, Nick Barnard, Ursula Sims-Williams, Sunil Sharma, and Jim Kippen. I am also indebted to my Persian and Sanskrit teachers at SOAS, Ms Farzad, Dr Vajdi, Professor Yahaghi, and Ann Glazier, and the Music Department faculty and staff. Special thanks need to go to Gage Averill, Aditya Behl, Joep Bor, Joanna Butler, Harold Powers, and Owen Wright, all of whom read and commented on various drafts of my thesis; and particularly to Françoise “Nalini” Delvoye. Their critical interest in my work challenged and inspired my thinking, and their encouragement was indispensable.

On a personal level, I wish to remember the friends I made in India whose hospitality and kindness can never be repaid: Dr and Mrs Abdul Khalique in Aligarh, in Rampur Jaffar Ali Khan, Sanam and Swaleh, in Patna Paul Jackson and the Mashhadi family, Vijayan and Premila Pavamani and all our friends at EMC, Kolkata, the Gilbergs and the staff of Hebron School in Ooty, Sridevi, Pandiri Krishna Mohan and Sitaram Reddy in Chennai, and Clare Anderson of the University of Leicester for an enjoyable last five days in India. I have been particularly honoured over the past four years to study *khayāl* with Ustad Wajahat Khan in London. I am most grateful to him and his family, especially his father the great Ustad Imrat Khan Sahib, for entrusting me with their
musical and historical treasures, and for supporting my humble encroachment on what is, after all, their tradition.

I could not have completed this research without the support and friendship of my parents Geoff and Ruth Butler, my sister Beth and her partner Graham Harden, Anna Morcom, Nicolas Magriel, Robin and Lucy Bunce (especially for solving last minute computer glitches!), Andy Warren, Jo Richardson, Bridget Scott, Liam Gribbin, David Trasoff, Christian Novetzke, and Richard Holroyd. Your intelligent advice on my various scholarly and not-so-scholarly predicaments has helped enormously. I also wish to thank the various groups of friends who have prayed for me over the years, and the boys in the band, Karl, Richard, Jim and Phil, for keeping me sane.

And finally, to my wonderful partner Ben, who suffered patiently alongside me every step of the way and carried so many of my burdens without complaining – thank you. Your love and support mean more than I can say.
NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

This thesis examines musical culture in Mughal élite society primarily through Persian language sources dated c.1590-1750. A small number of Sanskrit sanḍgītaśāstras are also used in this project. Persian musical treatises include many Sanskrit and Hindavi terms, sometimes systematically transliterated into Arabic-Persian script, but more often than not idiosyncratically. Such terms are often difficult to identify precisely in the Persian texts. This is partly because short vowels are customarily not indicated in Arabic-Persian script, and consonants that occur in Persian but not in Arabic are often signified in this period by their Arabic counterparts, particularly گ k for ک g, چ j for ج c (χ), and چپ b for پ p. Moreover, the scribes who copied manuscripts often didn’t recognise Sanskrit or specialist Hindavi terms, and misplaced vital dots; thus cutkula or cutkulā (چکلا) mistakenly appears as jangla or janglā (جانگلا) in the published editions of Dargah Quli Khan’s Murāqqaʿ-i Dehlī. Simple miscopyings abound, even when the author built a system of transliteration into his text – for example, Someśvara mat in the Toḥfat al-Hind appears in different manuscripts as S-mīsh-r, Sh-mīshīr, or S-m-b-shīr. Another complication is the regular alternation of certain consonants, particularly the replacement of ی v with چپ b; thus vishnūpad customarily appears as bishnūpad.

Where possible I have tried to identify Sanskrit terms and transcribe them according to Sanskrit-English norms of transliteration. Fortunately, there is a standard method of transliterating Devanagari script into English. I have used the system set out in Monier-Williams’ Sanskrit Dictionary. In cases where the Sanskrit term is elusive, and with most Hindavi terms, I have transliterated directly from the most reliable Persian version (but vishnūpad not bishnūpad, or vīṣṇūpada for that matter). Unfortunately, there is no standard way to transliterate Arabic-Persian script into Roman. For the sake of those who do not read Persian, my primary concern has been to transliterate in accordance with how the word is pronounced, rather than how the letters “should” be transliterated phonetically from Arabic – hence ḥadiṣ rather than ḥadīth, etc. (It is worth noting that in Persian the alef-hamza ʾ (transliterated ‘) is mainly an orthographical convention and is not pronounced.)
To complicate matters, the Indian pronunciation and transliteration of vowels in words of Persian origin is different from modern Iranian pronunciation; the Indian Aurangzeb, for example, is Aurangzīb in Iran, and Persian hamīshe “always” has become Urdu hamesha. The most prominent example of contrasting vowels is probably the transliteration of the ezafe suffix connecting adjectives and nouns; in modern Iran this is -e after consonants and -ye after vowels, and in Indian publications is usually -i in both cases. There is no easy way to resolve this. In general I have chosen to reproduce transliterations given in Steingass’ Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, using the Indian izafa (ezafe) in all cases to be consistent with other Mughal scholars (who mostly refer to the Ā’īn-i Akbarī, not the Ā’īn-e Akbarī).

With respect to personal and place names, for the sake of elegance I have dispensed with diacritical markings and have chosen to use familiar versions of famous names, even when this is not, strictly speaking, “correct” – Aurangzeb not Aurangzīb, Mughal not Moghūl, Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi not Shaikh Bahā’ū al-dīn Barnāwī. I am aware that the Mughals were not really “Mongols”, but Timurids, but in the end I have chosen to use the familiar term Mughal – few outside the confines of Mughal studies have ever heard of the “Timurid Empire”. Lastly, after an extensive search I failed to locate a diacritical font that was capable of transliterating both Devanagari and Arabic-Persian scripts; SILDoulos was the best compromise I could find.
### Arabic-Persian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial a, i (e), u / ā/ ā́</th>
<th>OTH</th>
<th>sh</th>
<th>ش</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ī/ai</td>
<td>ی</td>
<td>ی</td>
<td>ص</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ū/au</td>
<td>و</td>
<td>ز</td>
<td>ض</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final a (e)</td>
<td>ه</td>
<td>ی</td>
<td>ط</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>ب</td>
<td>ز</td>
<td>ظ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>ب</td>
<td>ً</td>
<td>ع</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>ت</td>
<td>gh</td>
<td>غ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>ف</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>چ</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>ق</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch</td>
<td>چ</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>ک</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥ</td>
<td>ح</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>گ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kh</td>
<td>خ</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>ل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>د</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>م</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>ذ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>ن</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>ر</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>و</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>ز</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>ه</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zh</td>
<td>ژ</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>ی</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>س</td>
<td>ا</td>
<td>أ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES ON TRANSLATION

Translation is always an act of interpretation. The inevitable gap between two linguistic cultures forces one translator to make choices of word and meaning that another would make differently. No translation is ever able to reproduce all the nuances and intentions of the original passage, and all translations are in some sense misleading. Unfortunately, this is rarely recognised once a translation appears in print – published translations are very often analysed as if they transparently reflect the original text. My translations should be understood not as the final word on a passage, but as interpretations that as far as possible attempt to be faithful to the original.

With short passages, I have tried where possible to produce literal translations, while maintaining readability in English. To avoid (as far as possible) my interpretive choices being understood as authoritative, I have placed English words necessary to the translation but not found in the original, and transliterations of Persian words, in round brackets (). In addition, explanatory statements that go beyond literal translation are placed in square brackets []. I have tended to translate longer passages more loosely; these should not be read as translations, but as paraphrases. I indicate if a passage is a paraphrase at the end of the citation. With respect to the Rāg Darpan, I have cited Shahab Sarmadee’s translation (1996), except where I consider his translation is not sufficiently accurate or faithful to the original.
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1600
English East India Company founded.

1605-1627 Reign of Jahangir
1612 Khurram (Shah Jahan), second son of Jahangir, marries Mumtaz Mahal.
1617 Birth of Aurangzeb (third son of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal).
1622 Khurram revolts; Jahangir holds Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb as hostages.
1627 Jahangir dies 28th October.
1628 19th January Khurram declared emperor under title Shah Jahan.

1628-1658 Reign of Shah Jahan
1644 Aurangzeb viceroy of the Deccan.
1653 Meets Hira Bai “Zainabadi” in Burhanpur; she dies nine months later.
1657-8 War of Succession between Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb.
1658 Aurangzeb imprisons Shah Jahan 8th June and proclaims himself emperor 21st July under title ‘Alamgir.
1659 Coronation of Aurangzeb 5th June; Dara Shikoh condemned to death on grounds of apostasy and idolatry and assassinated 30th August.

1658-1707 Reign of Aurangzeb (‘Alamgir)
1663 Maratha leader Shivaji attacks Pune.
1669 Temples ordered to be torn down in Mathura and Varanasi.
1679 Jizya for non-Muslims reinstated (except for Rajputs in imperial service).
1679-80 Rajput rebellion (Mewar and Marwar).
1680-1707 Deccan campaign; Mughal empire at greatest extent 1689.
1680 Shivaji dies and is succeeded by his son Shambaji.
1681 Aurangzeb’s eldest son Prince Akbar rebels.
1686 Annexation of Bijapur.
1687 Annexation of Golconda.
1688 Maratha leader Shambaji captured and executed.
1689 War with the English over autonomy of Bombay – Mughals defeated.

1 Dates from John F Richards The Mughal Empire (1993).
1702  Aurangzeb lays siege to Fort St George (Madras) – defeated by English.
1707  Death of Aurangzeb 3rd March. (Muhammad A’zam Shah killed in war of succession.) Mu’azzam (Shah ‘Alam) declared emperor under title Bahadur Shah.

1707-1712  Reign of Bahadur Shah
1712-1713  Reign of Jahandar Shah
1713-1719  Reign of Farrukhsiyar (puppet of Sayyid brothers)
1719-48   Reign of Muhammad Shah
Map of the Mughal Empire
adapted from Richards 1993
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

_Bury it so deep under the earth that no sound or echo of it may rise again._
~ Aurangzeb on music¹

_There were present... sweet-voiced musicians... I was obliged to write and inform (my) dear son what was good and valuable._
~ Aurangzeb on music²

Historical context

The long reign of the last Great Mughal emperor of India, Aurangzeb (b.1617, r.1658-1707), was a pivotal period in Indian history. Only ninety years separated the coronations of his father Shah Jahan (r.1628-58) and his great-grandson Muhammad Shah (r.1719-48), but in that time vast changes had occurred in the political landscape of India – changes that were to have important consequences for music. During his reign, Aurangzeb pushed the Mughal empire to its greatest extent, only for it to enter a period of “crisis” immediately after his death. Between the years 1707 and 1719, a string of weak emperors, wars of succession, and coups by noblemen heralded the irrevocable weakening of Mughal power. In 1739, a mere thirty years after Aurangzeb’s death, the Persian army under Nadir Shah occupied and plundered Delhi, the temporal and spiritual seat of Mughal power, forcing the once almighty Mughal emperor to pay tribute to a foreign invader. Recent analyses have pointed out that the disintegration of centralised power in eighteenth-century India was far from being the “disaster for Indian society” many earlier historians portrayed (Alam and Subrahmanyam 1998: 70). On the contrary, the eighteenth century saw the rise of strong regional powers who took over many of the functions of the Mughal state, while still recognising the symbolic authority of the Mughal emperor as the sole remaining “sovereign idea” (33, 58). Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the case that between 1707 and 1748, the Mughal centre lost much of its real power, and that this was a source of distress amongst the old ruling élites and of social upheaval more generally (Alam 1986: 9).

¹ As reported by “Ma’muri” (Muntakhab al-Lubāb 1977: 245)
² Aurangzeb in a letter to his son Muhammad A’zam Shah (Ruka’at-i ‘Ālamgīrī 1972: 19)
It was during what is often called the “decline” or “twilight” of the Mughal empire that sub-imperial patronage once again became critical to the development of Hindustani music. More importantly, changes in the status of old élites, both political and musical, precipitated the rapid decline of dhrupad, the conclusive triumph of khayal, and the beginnings of a craze for new dance genres. The causes of the eighteenth-century social and political changes reflected in these musical developments were complex, and have been the subject of fierce scholarly debate in recent years. However, most historians argue that the roots of Mughal decline lie in Aurangzeb’s reign. Scholars have argued this repeatedly in the case of music and culture (e.g. Sarkar 1998: 312-3; Richards 1993: 173). However, the extent to which Aurangzeb’s policies or more impersonal developments affected cultural change in this period has not been tested through an extensive study of a cultural product’s history.

Statement of aims
This thesis aims to investigate Hindustani music in Mughal élite society and culture during the time of Aurangzeb, through a critical analysis of contemporary musical writings in the Persian language. The period of Aurangzeb is a lacuna in Indian music history. Although a number of scholars mention his reign in passing in the context of larger studies, such references are customarily brief and dismissive because of the widespread belief that Aurangzeb banned music in 1668-9 for the rest of his reign. In contradiction, a large number of treatises on Hindustani music were written during this period in Persian, the court language of the Mughal élite. Very few music historians have accessed the Indo-Persian corpus of musical literature, despite the fact that it is an unusually rich mine of information about contemporary practice. The pioneers of Indo-Persian musicology, Françoise “Nalini” Delvoye and Shahab Sarmadee, dissent from the prevailing view that Aurangzeb’s reign was a period of musical stagnation (1994: 181; 1996: xl-xlii). However, neither focuses specifically on Aurangzeb in their work. Of the three secondary sources that make extensive use of musical treatises written during his

---

3 Notably two excellent studies of instruments, Joep Bor’s “The voice of the sarangi” (1986/7), and Allyn Miner’s Sitar and sarod in the 18th and 19th centuries (1993); the work of Madhu Trivedi (1999, 2000); and Bonnie Wade’s recent study of musical imagery in Mughal paintings, Imaging sound (1998). Older material includes S N Haider Rizvi’s “Music in Muslim India” (1941) and Dharma Bhanu’s “Promotion of music by the Turko-Afghan rulers of India” (1955). Similar descriptions of Aurangzeb’s treatment of music appear in the standard political histories of his reign, notably Jadunath Sarkar’s History of Aurangzeb (1912-26), and J F Richard’s The Mughal Empire (1993).
time, two are translations or paraphrases of primary sources, and the other concentrates on the sources’ musicological dimensions, making few connections with wider Mughal issues.4

In this thesis, I will be focusing on musical culture in the time of Aurangzeb as a product of its time and context. I will be looking principally at the people who produced and consumed musical performances and texts c.1630-1700. More narrowly, my emphasis will be on musical culture in élite male space – the communities of musicians and the noble male patrons who inhabited that space, and music’s relationship with larger issues surrounding élite male culture in Mughal society. I will demonstrate that many eighteenth-century developments, particularly the decentralisation of patronage and the rise of khayal, had significant connections with developments in Aurangzeb’s reign. However, my analysis of the nature of these connections sharply contradicts the conventional historiography of music under Aurangzeb. By exposing and exploring the unexpected vibrancy of musical life in Aurangzeb’s India, my thesis challenges the historical assumptions that have left this crucial fifty-year period of Indian music history unstudied. I seek to pursue a paradigm for writing music history that shows how “purely” musical questions are embedded in political, social, and cultural ones. In doing so, I aim also to demonstrate how the history of music can shed new light on the wider historical questions of Aurangzeb’s reign.

Music historiography and theories of Mughal decline
The historiography of culture under Aurangzeb, and of music in particular, has been shaped by a single episode – his alleged introduction in 1668-9 of harsh cultural and religious policies in line with the shari‘a (Islamic law). That Aurangzeb was a devout, orthodox Sunni Muslim is not in question, and this was apparent from an early age. Legends about him earning his own keep by stitching devotional caps and writing out the Qur’an enhanced his reputation for piety. This was exaggerated by later European misunderstandings of the phrase “to turn recluse” in connection with his first falling out with Shah Jahan (c.1644). “To turn recluse” simply meant to resign from imperial service as an act of political protest, rather than the devout act of becoming a faqir (a poor

4 Sarmadee’s translation of Faqirullah’s Rāg Darpan (1996) and N P Ahmad’s Hindustani music: a study of its developments in 17th and 18th centuries (1984) which is short on “study” and long on paraphrase; and Trivedi’s “Tradition and transition” (1999) and “Hindustani music and dance” (2000).
religious mendicant), as Aurangzeb is legendarily supposed to have done (Sarkar 1912-26: 76-8). Nevertheless, Aurangzeb’s reign began infelicitously for his reputation with the usurpation of his father’s throne and the execution of his brothers, most famously the eldest Dara Shikoh. Aurangzeb used his religious orthodoxy to legitimise his takeover and consolidate his precarious hold on power (Richards 1993: 164, 172). Many scholars have argued that henceforward Aurangzeb ushered in a period of unprecedented religious intolerance and political oppression in India.

Historians have argued that in 1668-9, in accordance with his narrowly orthodox Islamic ideology, Aurangzeb banned music, poetry, painting, historical writing, and a whole host of other cultural expressions, throughout the empire. With respect to music this is nearly always construed as a total ban enforced for the rest of his reign. These injunctions were accompanied by orders to destroy Hindu temples, and were followed in 1679 by the reimposition of the jizya tax on non-Muslim communities (Richards 1993: 171-3). The fate of music in particular became a written symbol of the alleged destruction of Indian culture under Aurangzeb’s bigotry. Scholars generally portray the cultural history of his reign as one long period of stagnation and decline, a kind of history of absence, with Aurangzeb personally to blame (e.g. Richards 1993: 173; Wade 1998: 187). According to Jadunath Sarkar, this Islamic hubris was destined to meet its nemesis – the disintegration of the empire:

The literal interpretation of the Quranic Law sets up a chronic antagonism between the rulers and the ruled, which has, in the end, broken up every Islamic State with a composite population. And the reign of Aurangzeb was to illustrate this truth in a form clear to the meanest intellect. (1912-26: vol.iii 300-1)

The theory that the Mughal empire failed because of Aurangzeb’s religious intolerance, influential as it still is on a popular level, needs to be seen in perspective as one of the least persuasive of several theories of Mughal decline, all of which have failed fully to explain it. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanymam argue these theories fall into two main groups (see The Mughal State (1998: Introduction))

5 Richards 1993: 153; Manucci 1907: vol.i 229. The biography of Shah Quli Khan Mahram in the Ma‘āṣir al-Umarā’ describes a similar incident, in which Shah Quli Khan “donned the dress of a jogi and went into retirement” in protest at his punishment by Akbar (1999: vol.ii 774; Chatterjee 2002: 75 n.23).
6 See also Alam 1986: 2-10. Alam and Subrahmanyam provide a comprehensive survey of secondary literature on the Mughal state and its decline, which exposes the major weaknesses and ideological biases of
approach that emphasises economic and structural failings; and what they have called the 
“personality-oriented view.” This blames the empire’s collapse on the character flaws 
and personal failings of the emperors, principally Aurangzeb. It hardly needs to be stated 
that in the realm of cultural history, the personality-oriented view is the only theory on 
offer. However, as Stewart Gordon points out, neither structural nor character-based 
thories are “even marginally successful” at explaining Aurangzeb’s failure to maintain 
his grip on the empire. In particular, “a theory of religious intolerance has trouble 
explaining why there were so many Hindus in the Mughal armies” (1994: 182). Given 
that some of Aurangzeb’s most trusted generals were Hindu Rajputs, and that conversely 
several Muslim groups, Sunni and Shi‘a, rebelled against his rule (Alam 1986: 3)\textsuperscript{7}, 
religious intolerance makes little sense as an explanation of imperial decline. If this is so, 
it destroys the basis upon which the cultural historiography of Aurangzeb’s reign has 
been founded. Moreover, if we lay aside the presupposition that nothing of cultural 
interest happened in Aurangzeb’s reign, an investigation of cultural phenomena at this 
time might generate new insights into the nature of his rule. A fresh look at the history of 
culture during Aurangzeb’s period would seem to be long overdue.

**The cultural turn**

Several historians have recently advocated a turn to “culture” as a potentially fruitful but 
largely unexplored avenue to explain the empire’s “longevity, and its demise” (Alam and 
Subrahmanyam 1998: 59). Some early claims made about Mughal political history on the 
basis of cultural evidence have been somewhat overblown. One example is Stephen 
Blake’s *Shahjahanabad* (1993), in which he heavily interprets symbols and rituals as 
mediators of political and social realities. While Blake’s view of the Mughal state as a 
“patrimonial-bureaucratic empire” is innovative, Subrahmanyam has criticised it as 
hyper-centralised and monolithic (1992: 308, 311), and Aurangzeb’s reign – which 
constitutes half the period of his study – is virtually absent. More seriously, in his chapter 
on “culture” Blake reads the evidence of the atypical *Muraqqa’-i Dehlī* (1739-40), often 

\textsuperscript{7} One only needs to mention the armed opposition to Aurangzeb of his own son Muhammad Akbar, the 
‘Adil Shahis of Bijapur, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda, the Yusufzais, and the Afghans under Khushhal 
Khan Katthak, to make the point that Hindu-led uprisings are no proof that Aurangzeb’s “Islamic bigotry” 
was to blame for opposition to his rule.
mistranslated, backwards onto the seventeenth century (see Appendix One).

Nevertheless, this cultural turn in Mughal historiography is an important one, and later advocates have demonstrated that the symbolic artifacts and rituals that constitute the domain of “culture” can indeed alter our understanding of Mughal state and society.

What is usually meant by the amorphous term “culture” seems to be anything that identifies or belongs to a community, and simultaneously differentiates, even alienates, it from other communities. Gordon for example explores military culture, including ideas of honour, court rituals and symbols, as a source of identity between Mughals and Rajputs, and of misunderstanding and conflict between the Mughals and the Marathas and Telegu nāyakas. The etiquette of Mughal amīrs is one area of cultural history that has received significant attention, while Alam and Subrahmanyam point to linguistic conflict between official court Persian and regional languages, and the communities each represented. Within this they note the power of myth and symbolism in oral narratives as sites of subaltern resistance.

What few recent advocates of the cultural turn in Mughal historiography include in their analyses, however, is “high” culture – the painting, architecture, poetry, and music sponsored by the Mughal élite. This is partly because the study of “high” cultural artifacts requires specialist technical knowledge, and political and social historians have traditionally left the fine and performing arts to disciplinary experts. These specialists for their part have rarely shown interest in using “high” cultural evidence to challenge existing historiographical paradigms, let alone to construct new ones:

Writings [on cultural history] remain imperfectly integrated into the larger political, social and economic history of the [Mughal] period. . . Most writers on art-history and architectural history accept in a relatively unquestioning manner the basic postulates on the nature and history of the Mughal state set out for them by political and social historians. . . political and social historians, for their part,

---

8 I have included as Appendix One my lecture on homoeroticism in the eighteenth-century mehfil, which looks in detail at the incongruity of Dargah Quli Khan’s portrayal of Hindustani musicians and how this should affect a critical reading of the Muraqqa’-i Dehlī.


10 Notably Richards “Norms of comportment among imperial Mughal officers” (1984), Blake “Courtly culture under Babur and the early Mughals” (1986), and Rosalind O’Hanlon “Manliness and imperial service in Mughal North India” (1999).

11 They refer in particular to an article by Richards and V Narayana Rao (in Alam and Subrahmanyam 1998) that compares the written Persian account “from above” and the oral Telegu ballad “from below” of the early eighteenth-century folk hero Papadu.
seem to have disdain for art-history and allied disciplines. (Subrahmanyam 1992: 293)

This situation is beginning to change for the periods of Akbar and Shah Jahan. However, for the reign of Aurangzeb, cultural historians’ uncritical submission to political historians’ beliefs that Aurangzeb banned painting, poetry, and music, has created a vicious cycle. The conclusion that little of cultural interest occurred during his reign has meant that there are no full-length studies of “high” culture under Aurangzeb, which has reinforced the idea that there are few cultural artifacts there to uncover, and so on. Even critical works like Catherine Asher’s *Architecture of Mughal India* (1992) and Michell and Zebrowski’s *Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates* (1999) – both of which include chapters covering Aurangzeb’s period – illustrate this point. Asher takes issue with Aurangzeb’s reputation as an architectural iconoclast, and Michell and Zebrowski describe instances of artistic florescence under sub-imperial patronage; they note that Aurangzeb’s conquest of Hyderabad brought about “one of the most exciting phases of Indian portraiture” (1999: 210). However, in both studies the history of the artifact is paramount. Neither seriously aims to use the artifact as a lens on political or social issues, and neither particularly upsets the historiographical status quo. Milo Cleveland Beach’s *Mughal and Rajput Painting* (1993) is more obviously illustrative of the “history of absence” paradigm of Aurangzeb’s period. Despite covering the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, Beach barely addresses the subject of painting under Aurangzeb, turning from the Mughals to regional traditions on reaching 1660. Bonnie Wade does attempt to elucidate the political and social meanings of Mughal painting and music c.1526-1707 in *Imaging Sound*. However, she never moves beyond traditional historiographical paradigms. In step with Beach and Blake, her entire section on Aurangzeb is only three pages long and ends with a conventional dismissal of his whole period.

The neglect of “high” culture as a window onto the political and social history of the Mughals is counterintuitive. Of all manifestations of Mughal “culture”, it is the fine and performing arts that were most directly creations of the élite, and of the ideologies that sustained them in power. The very existence of music, art, architecture, and to a lesser extent literature in the empire was entirely dependent on patronage. Changes in
artistic trends at the Mughal court were inextricably linked to the changing political fortunes and societal fashions of the emperor and his nobles – albeit not in the simplistic ways some historians have unquestioningly postulated. Most importantly, the evidence of “high” culture is at the heart of arguments about Aurangzeb’s religious intolerance and its impact on the empire as a political entity. If issues of social relations, political, religious and cultural ideologies, and the changing fortunes of Aurangzeb’s nobles, are still relevant to a coherent understanding of what went wrong in Aurangzeb’s reign, it seems obvious that “high” cultural products should be central to any “cultural” analysis of imperial decline.

**Hindustani music in the time of Aurangzeb**

I begin my study of Hindustani music in the time of Aurangzeb with an extended, comparative analysis of the principal Indo-Persian musical treatises of Aurangzeb’s reign. My intention here is to examine how they operate as a body of knowledge, to establish their intellectual precedents and common features, to ground them in the social and cultural contexts of their production and reception, and to assess which are the most important and/or influential, in terms of their originality and their role in establishing an Indo-Muslim tradition of musical writing. In this way my aim is to construct for the Indo-Persian treatises an epistemology that brings the information they reveal about contemporary practice to the surface, while embedding this in its cultural and literary context.

In Chapter Three, I change gears, turning my attention to music’s appearance on the political stage. I use these new sources in conjunction with the canonical historical narratives, European and Mughal, and other Indo-Persian archival material such as *tazkiras* (compendia of biographical notices) of musicians and poets, to examine the historicity of Aurangzeb’s ban on music. My critical reading of the legend of Aurangzeb’s burial of music shows how its power over the historiographical imagination has acted to silence the dissenting voices of the vast majority of contemporary evidence. In allowing these voices to speak I conclude that while Aurangzeb renounced music himself for reasons of personal piety, he did not ban music at all. Instead, music thrived during his reign under the patronage of the Mughal amirs. This has implications for our

---

12 See Subrahmanyam (1992: 292-3 n.3) for a bibliography of recent works of art, architectural, and literary history under Akbar and Shah Jahan that have at least begun the attempt to view their subject matter as
understanding of Aurangzeb’s “intolerance”, and the extent of centralisation of the Mughal state. More importantly, however, it undermines the theory of cultural decline under Aurangzeb. It also points to a different engine of cultural change in the late seventeenth century – the Mughal male élite. After Aurangzeb had laid aside the mantle of cultural arbiter, it was the royal princes and Mughal noblemen who took the lead in establishing musical trends in the empire, leading to changes in styles, genres, instruments, and favoured communities of musicians. In Chapter Four I look at how the cultural imperatives behind Mughal patronage of music, and in particular élite conceptions of masculinity, shaped musical fashion. Finally, in Chapters Five and Six I examine two major developments in Hindustani music under Aurangzeb exposed in the Indo-Persian musical treatises – the coexistence and interrelationship of two systems of classifying the North Indian rāgas, the rāga-rāginī system and the ṭhāl system; and the origins, development, and rise to popularity of the Hindustani vocal genre khayāl. In doing so I show that an understanding of these musical developments is impossible without reference to the political, social, and cultural contexts in which they were embedded.

**Useful resources**

Apart from the limited exceptions already noted, there is very little secondary literature on music under Aurangzeb. This is because belief in the ban and the lack of secondary literature are inseparably entwined. For this reason I have reserved my critique of the limited scholarly accounts of music during this period for my discussion of the ban in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, without intending to present an exhaustive review of the rest of the literature I have used, I wish to identify a few secondary sources that have proven to be invaluable to my research.

Critical bibliographies of primary source materials often do not get the recognition they deserve. With respect to Indo-Persian sources, I am indebted to the painstaking work of Françoise “Nalini” Delvoye in her “Indo-Persian literature on art-music: some historical and technical aspects” (1994). This article broadly establishes the intellectual context of such sources, and lists the main collections that contain musical manuscripts. Delvoye’s pioneering work on Indo-Persian musical texts has influenced my thinking on the epistemology of Mughal musicological literature. Without this particular article,
locating musical manuscripts in India would have been much more difficult. Similarly, Emmie te Nijenhuis’ bibliography of Sanskrit saṅgītasastras, *Musicological literature* (1977), has proven essential in placing the few vital works of Sanskrit musical theory I have used in their historical and intellectual contexts. With respect to interpreting Indo-Persian historical narratives, I found the insights of Barbara Metcalf’s articles “Narrating lives: a Mughal Empress, a French Nabob, a nationalist Muslim intellectual” and “Too little and too much: reflections on Muslims in the history of India” (both 1995), and Julie Scott Meisami’s *Persian historiography* (1999), stimulating in honing my cultural antennae and critical faculties.

I have consulted three sources repeatedly for the information they contain on instruments and the musicians who played them. Firstly, Joep Bor’s “Voice of the sarangi” (1986/7) is an excellent, carefully sourced, mine of musical and cultural information on the history of the sārangī, accompanying instruments like the dhol, and musicians, especially the ḍhāḍhīs and courtesans. On extra-musical issues there is an occasional tendency to accept complex primary written sources at face value. Nevertheless, this is a superb resource, and I understand the author is in the process of revising it. Secondly, Allyn Miner’s *Sitar and sarod in the 18th and 19th centuries* (1993) is one of the most critical and nuanced recent works of Indian instrumental history, and partly covers the period of my research. In my thesis I highlight Miner’s occasional misreadings of Persian texts, possibly mediated through faulty Urdu translations, which lead her to make a few historical errors. The seventeenth-century Indo-Persian sources also contradict many of her speculations about the origin of khayāl, which is not in any case the main focus of her research. Nevertheless, on musical issues she takes a critical approach to primary source material that yields persuasive results. Furthermore, despite its acceptance of the ban story, her brief discussion of what happened to music under Aurangzeb is the most penetrating in the secondary literature. More importantly, her instrumental history of sitār and sarod is authoritative.

Thirdly, despite my serious misgivings about Bonnie Wade’s *Imaging Sound* (1998), this book has also proved indispensable. Wade’s interpretations of cultural meaning are untrustworthy (see Brown 2001). Nevertheless, my copy has been in

---

13 Primarily attributing Ni’mat Khan “Sadarang”’s early patronage to the emperor Bahadur Shah instead of his brother Muhammad A’zam Shah, and her translation of qawwāls as “qawwālī singers”. This expression is never used in the original (see Chapter Six).
constant use, for the simple reason that it provides an unprecedented wealth of primary source material in a single volume, in the form of miniature paintings and previously untranslated sections of Indo-Persian texts. Finally, Shahab Sarmadée’s introduction and notes to his translation of Faqirullah’s seminal Rāg Darpan (1996), are full of valuable insights about this work’s immediate musical, historical, and cultural context (although these are sometimes imperfectly worked out).

In my pursuit of information about patrons and their socio-cultural milieux I have relied extensively on four sources. Athar Ali’s exhaustive list of Aurangzebi manṣabdārs above the rank of 1000 zāt (1966) is an easily accessible source for the rank of nearly all noblemen named in the historical chronicles of Aurangzeb’s reign. With respect to the Mughal royal family, Christopher Buyers’ genealogical website The Royal Ark (2000) is an important resource, containing complete and accurate information on the major dates of each emperor’s life and reign, their titles, and the names and dates of their wives and progeny. Without the extensive biographies of Mughal noblemen compiled in the eighteenth-century Ma’āṣir al-Umara’ (1999), the backgrounds of most patrons of music would have remained obscure. In the unlikely circumstance a nobleman was not listed in the Ma’āṣir al-Umara’, S A A Rizvi’s two volume A history of Sufism in India (1978, 1983) often came to the rescue. This work is an indispensable source of information concerning the provenance of Indo-Persian texts, and of course Sufi patrons, musicians, and musical culture. Rizvi’s work needs to be used with caution, because it is littered with inaccurate dates and other factual errors, and is not strong on analysis. However, it has two advantages: it is exhaustive, and much of it simply paraphrases often rare primary sources in detail.

Three works on Mughal conceptions of élite masculinity have inspired my discussion of musical patronage: John F Richards’ “Norms of comportment among imperial Mughal officers” (1984), Indrani Chatterjee’s “Alienation, intimacy, and gender: problems for a history of love in South Asia” (2002), and Rosalind O’Hanlon’s “Manliness and imperial service in Mughal North India” (1999). Although I disagree in part with O’Hanlon’s conclusions, my decision to focus in Chapter Four on masculinity and patronage in the meḥfil first arose from encountering her work. This was partly

14 Buyer’s website is also an exhaustive source of accurate genealogical information on many of the successor states to the Mughals.
because the British Library Mīrzānāma of c.1660, upon which she bases the second half of her article, includes an extensive discussion of musical patronage. In addition, despite my rejection of Stephen Blake’s monolithic “patrimonial-bureaucratic” empire as an accurate description of the Mughal state – especially with regard to culture – I found his focus on physical and social space in Shahjahanabad (1993) helpful in thinking about the dynamics of the mehfil.

My perspective on Mughal historiography in general is in sympathy with the critiques in Muzaffar Alam’s The crisis of empire in Mughal North India (1986), Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s “The Mughal state – structure or process? Reflections on recent western historiography” (1992), and Alam and Subrahmanyam’s introduction to The Mughal state, 1526-1750 (1998). The evidence of late seventeenth-century musical discourse militates against the religious theory of decline under Aurangzeb, and the economic/structural approaches of the “Aligarh” school of historians have little room for the symbolic evidence of musical culture. Like Alam and Subrahmanyam, I remain unconvinced by the newer Western syntheses of the two approaches, because at root they mark a “return to the central theses of the older personality-oriented generation” (Alam and Subrahmanyam 1993: 57). With respect to cultural history, the thesis that Indian culture imploded because of Aurangzeb’s personal religious vendetta is incompatible with the evidence for music history during his reign.

**Final word**

Ethnomusicologists have long argued that music is powerful in its ability to illuminate its social, cultural, and political world. If the history of music under Aurangzeb can be taken as a test case, what we discover is that in all likelihood the theory of cultural decline under Aurangzeb is incorrect. This may simply mean that the cultural history of his reign cannot provide answers to the question of his role in the decline of empire, because it is not a history of absence or decline after all, but one of vitality. On the other hand, it may be evidence that Aurangzeb’s reign was not the irreversible disaster for the empire often portrayed. At the very least, evidence of musical vitality undermines the theory that Aurangzeb’s “intolerance” was a factor in the empire’s demise, because this idea is itself dependent largely on uncritical acceptance of the story of sweeping cultural prohibitions in 1668–9. The development of a new paradigm for the history of Aurangzeb’s reign based on the evidence of culture is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, in
confirming the fatal weakness of the current paradigm of Aurangzeb’s cultural history, already suggested by other recent historians, I hope to open the debate up further, and to indicate some possible new directions for analysis.
CHAPTER TWO

Indo-Persian musical treatises under the Mughals

The sound of music cannot be stifled by pen and ink on the surface of the page.
~ Sher Khan Lodi

I

Introduction

Persian was the lingua franca of Muslim élite society for nearly the entire period of Muslim rule in North India, from the late thirteenth until the eighteenth centuries. It was also the official language of government and trade from the Delhi Sultanate until the Late Mughal period. A large number of important Indo-Persian treatises on Hindustani music were written during this time. However, the critical study of this tradition of musical writing remains something of a lacuna in Indian music studies. From the birth of modern Indian musicology in the late nineteenth century, many scholars have made passing references to important texts like the Rāg Darpan (1666), the fifth chapter of the Tohfat al-Hind (c.1675) (henceforth Tohfat al-Hind (V)) and the Uṣūl-i Naghmāt al-Āṣafi (1793), without attempting serious analyses of their contents. A few Indo-Persian treatises have been published in their original language, notably the Tohfat al-Hind, the Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyān-i Hindūstān (1753), and the preface to the Sahasras or Hazār Dhurpad-i Nāyak Bakhshū (1637-46). Several articles in English summarising the contents of important Indo-Persian treatises appeared in the 1940s and ‘50s, mainly in the journal

1 Mir’āt al Khayāl BL, f.140a.
2 For example Bor (1986/7: 50), Miner (1993: 89), Gangoly (1935: 220). One small exception is Bhatkhande’s translation into Marathi of limited extracts from the Uṣūl-i Naghmāt al-Āṣafi, with some attempt to analyse its rāga classificatory scheme (Powers 2003: forthcoming).
3 The “date” 1734-5 given in some secondary sources is in fact the catalogue number (!) of the Khuda Bakhsh Library copy of the Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyān-i Hindūstān on which the published edition is based (1961: 5). Instead, this work was written in the fifth regnal year of Ahmad Shah (r.1748-54) (Marshall 1967: 205).
4 dates Irfan Habib, personal communication 2000.
Islamic Culture⁶, and Prem Lata Sharma translated the Sahasras, including the Persian preface, into Hindi in 1972. These and other scholarly acts of awareness raising alerted a non-Persian-reading audience to the existence and potential significance of Indo-Persian musical writings. However, until recently, the Indo-Persian texts have not been the focus of serious analysis in their own right, nor has their place in Indian musicological thought and their reflection of music-historical developments been critically assessed.

This has begun to change. Of particular importance is the pioneering work of Shahab Sarmadee and François “Nalini” Delvoye on pre-Mughal Indo-Persian traditions of musical writing and on the reign of Akbar, and especially Sarmadee’s editions of three Indo-Persian treatises, the Ghunyat al-Munya (1374-5), the Lahjāt-i Sikander Shāhī (1489-1517), and the Rāg Darpan⁷. Sarmadee’s edition of the Rāg Darpan constitutes the first English translation of an Indo-Persian musical treatise, with the exception of Blochmann’s nineteenth-century translation of Abul Fazl’s chapter on saṅgīta in the Ā’īn-i Akbarī (1593). Both Sarmadee and Delvoye treat their sources critically, attempting to locate them within the cultural contexts of their production, and drawing attention to the texts’ relationships with theoretical traditions and historical developments outside their immediate milieux.

The time of Aurangzeb warrants particular scrutiny from Indo-Persian scholars, because more treatises on Hindustani music were written in Persian during his reign than in the previous 450 years of Muslim rule. The seventeenth-century texts have become the subject of recent scholarly attention by N P Ahmad and Madhu Trivedi⁸. The writings of both are valuable sources of basic information, in that they literally paraphrase a considerable amount of Indo-Persian material not available elsewhere in English, albeit with a number of errors. Some of their insights are important; I am indebted for example to Dr Trivedi for pointing out the role of cutkulā in the development of khayāl, and her insight that the use of the word qawwālī to describe a genre sung by the qawwāls is a recent development (see Chapter Six). However, both Ahmad and Trivedi present

---

⁶ The Lahjāt-i Sikander Shāhī and the Kitāb-i Nauras were both summarised by Nazir Ahmad in Islamic Culture (both 1954); and the Rāg Darpan by S K Srivastava in a paper presented at the Indian History Congress in 1953. Several other articles in Islamic Culture from roughly this period used Indo-Persian musical treatises as source material, notably S N H Rizvi (1931), Halim (1945), and Bhanu (1955).
⁷ Delvoye’s work on dhrupad, Tansen, and Akbar (e.g. 1993, 1997), the Sultanate of Gujarat (e.g. 2000), and Indo-Persian epistemology (1994, 1998); Sarmadee’s on Amir Khusrau (see Delvoye 1994: 129-30), the Ghunyat al-Munya (1978), the Lahjāt-i Sikander Shāhī (1999), and the Rāg Darpan (1996).
stereotypical readings of music history based on discredited “common-sense” historical paradigms, and their musicological analysis penetrates no further than face-value readings of the treatises. Although both acknowledge the Indo-Persian texts’ indebtedness to Sanskrit antecedents, neither Ahmad nor Trivedi seem able to distinguish the writers’ contemporary observations from information culled from obsolete and earlier writings; or to differentiate between the mythological and the historical, the ideational and the real. Much of it is presented uncritically as current and literally true (including obvious scribal errors! e.g. Ahmad 1984: 62), with little discrimination as to what is significant, and what unimportant. They rarely try to draw critical comparisons or reconcile conflicts between contemporary texts. Nor do they assess the functions of borrowed or conventional material or its relationship with current performance practice; or establish connections between musical writings and other Indo-Persian literary genres, or their social milieux.

As a result, we are yet to see a critical study of Indo-Persian musical treatises during the seventeenth century that embeds them in the contexts of their production and analyses how they operate as a system of knowledge. Without such a study it is arguably impossible to assess their relevance, usefulness, and unique contribution to the study of musical life and patterns of change in this period. It is this gap that I seek to fill in this chapter. I will firstly look at various influences on the writing of Mughal musical treatises, and how these affected the selection and description of material. The influences on Indo-Persian musicology include Sanskrit, West Asian, Indo-Persian and orally transmitted musicological models, the musical and devotional culture of Indian Sufism, and the ādāb (manners, etiquettes) of musical patronage and literary traditions in Mughal male ēlite society. I will then go on briefly to analyse, chronologically and comparatively, the contents and significance of the seven treatises that I consider make the most important contributions to Indo-Persian musicology during Aurangzeb’s reign. In doing so I aim to establish a critical epistemology of Indo-Persian musical treatises in seventeenth-century North India that enables them to be more appropriately used in the construction of music history under the Mughals.

II

Early musicological models

The decades between 1660 and 1700 witnessed an unprecedented efflorescence of Indo-Persian writing on Hindustani music by noblemen and musicians attached to the Mughal
court. Contrary to expectation, Aurangzeb’s reign represents a peak of intellectual interest in North Indian music amongst the Mughal élite. The Mughal musical treatises reflect a variety of earlier intellectual traditions of writing about music. It has often been noted that Indo-Persian treatises owe a large debt to the Sanskrit musicological tradition, the saṅgītaśāstras (e.g. Delvoye 1994: 103-4). While this is true, there are two streams of Indo-Persian writing on Hindustani music during Aurangzeb’s reign: one which acknowledges this debt and partly defers to Sanskrit precedent, and one in which Sanskrit influence is at most oblique, if it is present at all. Moreover, there are also two streams of Sanskrit musicology in this period, the more traditional of which had a stronger influence on Indo-Persian conventions.

Looming large over Indo-Persian texts that defer to Sanskrit authority is the long shadow of Sāṅgadeva’s Saṅgītaratnākara (c.1250), which was popularly known as the saptādhyāya, or “seven chapters”. The Saṅgītaratnākara also exercised a profound influence over the writing of Sanskrit saṅgītaśāstras during the Mughal period, even though many of the concepts it discussed were long obsolete. It is not the Saṅgītaratnākara itself that influenced Mughal musical writing, but the privileged ideational position the saptādhyāya concept occupied in contemporary saṅgītaśāstras, in pre-Mughal Indo-Persian musicology, and in oral theory, represented, for example, in dhrupad compositions. The seventeenth-century Indo-Persian treatises reflect the Saṅgītaratnākara’s influence only indirectly, basing their commentaries on later reworkings of Sāṅgadeva’s text, particularly ones that replicated the more recent rāga-rāginī classificatory system, like Damodara’s Saṅgītadarpāṇa (c.1625).

A less obvious, but still important, influence was the precedent of Arabic and Persian musical treatises, in particular an attempt to reconcile Pythagorean tuning systems and ideas about the music of the spheres, and Perso-Arabic understandings of the medicinal effects of musical notes and modes, with the Hindustani melodic system. Several treatises on Arabic and Persian music were reproduced in Mughal North India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and knowledge of these musical systems was clearly desirable for Mughal noblemen well into the eighteenth century. A number of seventeenth-century treatises on Hindustani music include sections on Persian music, particularly on the maqāms.
Finally, many texts demonstrate a reliance on the oral theories of practising musicians, particularly stories about music’s creation, great musicians of the past, and the properties of instruments and rāgas. This valuable incorporation of oral material demonstrates the preference of the Indo-Persian writers for performance practice over theory – “lakṣa over lakṣana. . . ‘amal over ‘ilm” – that makes their contribution to Indian musicology so important (Delvoye 1994: 103).

To this mixture of Sanskrit, West Asian and oral theories, the Indo-Persian writers added substantial original commentary on performance practice and its relationship to the theories presented. This procedure is evident in the paradigmatic Mughal treatise on Hindustani music, Abul Fazl’s chapter on saṅgīta in the Ā’in-i Akbarī (1593). This text was the primary influence on the establishment of an Indo-Persian musicological tradition in the seventeenth century. The Ā’in-i Akbarī also demonstrates in embryonic fashion how the selection and description of material in Indo-Persian texts was dictated by the cultural predispositions of the men who wrote them. With one exception, the seventeenth-century authors I discuss below were all members of the Mughal male élite, including at least two of very high rank. The exception was Ras Baras Khan Kalawant, who was instead the most venerated hereditary musician of the late seventeenth century, and a full participant in the Mughal culture of patronage. The Indo-Persian tradition of musical writing was in other words a distinctive product of Mughal élite society.

Sanskrit and oral traditions
Seventeenth-century works on Hindustani music in Persian can be divided into two groups: those that intentionally use structures and concepts taken from Sanskrit authorities as the framework for discussion, and those that are independent of the saṅgītaśāstra tradition. The first group includes translations of single Sanskrit treatises, such as Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation of Ahobala’s Saṅgītapārijāta, the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak (1666), as well as works borrowing from a larger number of sources, like Faqirullah’s Rāg Darpan (1666). Members of this group explicitly associate their works with Sanskrit models as a means of establishing authority and prestige. Works in the second group, like the treatises of Kamilkhani (1668-9), despite being largely unrelated to the saṅgītaśāstras, sometimes contain oblique acknowledgement of the Sanskrit tradition, probably filtered through oral theory. Whatever the extent of their derivation from the
saṅgītaśāstras, all Indo-Persian sources diverge significantly from their Sanskrit counterparts, making them uniquely interesting in their comparative insights. According to Delvoye:

while “translating” Sanskrit theoretical works on music, Indo-Persian authors often add interesting comments about some musical aspects which had become obsolete or which they even disapproved of. . . They frequently refer to contemporary music practiced around them, especially by court-musicians, using interesting technical terms, which often are not to be found in Sanskrit texts. . . [and] even if Indo-Persian authors borrow the traditional structure of Sanskrit theoretical treatises, they almost systematically add up-to-date information about music and judicious remarks and even pertinent criticisms. (1994: 103-4)

It is vital to know which Sanskrit treatises were used by the Indo-Persian writers as sources of information, in order to determine what has been added to the originals, and what the new treatises’ real contribution is to our knowledge of contemporary practice.

Several Indo-Muslim rulers prior to the Mughal period were distinguished patrons of Sanskrit literature and learning as well as Indian music, such as Sultan Mahmud Begar of Gujarat (r.1458-1511), and Sultan Malika Shahi of Allahabad, for whom the musical treatise the Saṅgīṭaśiromaṇi (1428) was compiled. Numerous Sanskrit treatises were produced for noblemen at the Mughal court, notably Puṇḍarīkavīṭhala’s Rāgamaṇjari (1570s) for Akbar’s maṇṣabdārs Raja Man Singh and Madhava Singh of Amber (te Nijenhuis 1977: 22-3), and the voluminous works of Bhava Bhatta for Aurangzeb’s general Raja Anup Singh of Bikaner (Bhatkhande 1990:69). Muslim patronage of Sanskrit musical treatises continued under the Mughal emperors. Puṇḍarīkavīṭhala, for example, wrote his important Rāgamālā (1576) and Nārtanānirṇaya for Akbar (r.1556-1605) (Nārtanānirṇaya 1994: 18), and Damodara apparently composed his Saṅgīṭadarpaṇa for Jahangir (r.1605-1627) (Bhagyalekshmy 1991: 90). A number of seventeenth-century Mughal writers like Mirza Raushan Zamir and Qazi Hasan display considerable knowledge of Sanskrit, including the specialist vocabulary of the saṅgītaśāstras. This intellectual interest amongst Mughal patrons and

---

9 He was a vassal of Sultan Ibrahim Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur (r.1401-40). See Aziz Ahmad (1964: 218-23) for a long list of Muslim rulers who patronised Sanskrit poets, and other genres of Sanskrit literature.
11 te Nijenhuis incorrectly has “Jaipur” for “Amber” here (1977: 22-3); Jaipur was not founded until the eighteenth century.
theorists in local theories of music was to some extent reciprocated. An interesting feature of Puṇḍarīkaviṃśṭha’s Rāgamañjari – written for Rajput patrons – is his discussion of the Persian maqāms for the first time in a Sanskrit saṅgīṭaśāstra (Rāg Darpan 1996: xxv).

In her survey of Sanskrit literature on music, Emmie te Nijenhuis gives an outline of the principal saṅgīṭaśāstras that would have been available to Indo-Persian writers in the Mughal period (1977: 20-30). Sanskrit texts had diverged into two main groups by the seventeenth century: those which fairly faithfully reiterated the organisational and theoretical concepts of the Saṅgītaratnākara, and those which reflected more realistically the areas in which the Saṅgītaratnākara had become obsolete. Despite this, Sanskrit theorists belonging to both groups still “felt obliged to pay respect to older authorities like Sāṅgadeva” (te Nijenhuis 1977: 20).

Central to such acts of deference was the homage paid to the seven-chapter structure of the Saṅgītaratnākara, the saptādhya. The seven chapters of the Saṅgītaratnākara and their contents – on swara (notes), rāga (mode), prakīrṇa (miscellanea), prabhāṇḍha (song genres), tāla (rhythm), vādya (instruments), and nṛtya (dance) – determined the organisation of more conservative Sanskrit works like the Saṅgītadarpaṇa and Bhava Bhatta’s Anupasaṅgītaratnākara. This often led to the reproduction of archaic theoretical constructs as if they were still current. Many treatises in this theoretical stream did, however, partly diverge from the Saṅgītaratnākara’s model in placing emphasis on the later rāga-rāginī system of classifying rāgas aesthetically, into six male rāgas with subsidiary “wives” or rāginīs. First emerging in the fourteenth century, the most influential Sanskrit manifestations of the rāga-rāginī system in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were probably Meṣakarṇa’s Rāgamālā (1509), the Mānakutiḥala dedicated to Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (r.1486-1517), Puṇḍarīkaviṃśṭha’s Rāgamālā (1576), and Damodara’s Saṅgītadarpaṇa (c.1625).

The signature development of the more innovative group of theorists, beginning with Rāmāmātya’s Svaramelākalāṇidhi (1550)12, was the melā system of classifying rāgas according to their basic scalar material. The equal imperative on this group to
demonstrate allegiance to the authoritative tradition led to convoluted attempts to reconcile Sāṅgadeva’s theoretical concerns with the divergent realities of contemporary practice. Ahobala, for example, tries with difficulty in the Saṅgītapārījāta to make the 12 semitones of his quasi-Pythagorean scalar system fit into the quite different 22 śruti division of the octave Sāṅgadeva adapted from the even earlier Nātyaśāstra (Tarjoma-i Pārījāta BL808, f.12a-b, see Chapter Five). Nevertheless, the realisation that the musical system had changed since the thirteenth century influenced substantial alterations in the way these treatises were written. Rāmāmātya for example dispensed with the hallowed saptādhyāya (as did Ahobala), retaining only two of its conventional subjects, swara and rāga. Instead, he organised the Svaramelākalānidhi thus: swara; the types and tuning of the viṇā; melā or scale pattern as a classificatory system for the rāgas; and rāga itself (te Nijenhuis 1977: 20-2).

Rāmāmātya’s emphasis on scale systems and rāga, especially as worked out on the viṇā, became central to the work of later theorists of both South and North Indian systems, particularly Puṇḍarikaviṭṭhala13, Somanātha14, and Ahobala. As I demonstrate in Chapter Five, these subjects were of practical importance in the North Indian system.

Mirza Raushan Zamir’s masterly contemporaneous translation of Ahobala’s Saṅgītapārījāta indicates this stream of Sanskrit musicology was well known at the seventeenth-century Mughal court, given the large number of manuscript copies of the Tarjoma-i Pārījāta still extant15. Despite important exceptions, however, the Indo-Persian treatises largely ignored the new emphasis of this stream of Sanskrit musicology. Instead, most of those that drew inspiration from the saṅgītaśāstras conformed to the more conservative theoretical stream.

Not all Indo-Persian treatises cite their Sanskrit sources by name, some deferring instead to shadowy authorities like the “ustāds of old” (Nishaṭārā, f.20b), or more importantly the “Nāyaks of the Deccan” (Mir’āt al Khayāl GOML, f.69a). The South,

---

12 This work was written for a nobleman at the Vijayanagar court of King Sadaśiva (te Nijenhuis 1977: 20).
13 Although he was a South Indian musicologist, Puṇḍarikaviṭṭhala was the first Sanskrit theorist to apply the melā system to Hindustani music (te Nijenhuis 1977: 22).
14 Possibly originating in the Northern Deccan, Somanātha’s only extant treatise is the Rāgavibodha (1609) (Ayyangar 1980: 28-9).
15 The British Library alone has four copies of the Tarjoma-i Pārījāta.
and the Deccan in particular, seems to have become a locus of idealised authenticity and
authority in the Indo-Persian musical imagination. Originally, this was arguably because
the *Saṅgītaratnākara* was written there, in Devagiri (Daulatabad), and so the Deccan
became known as the place from which the keepers of musical authority, the *pandītas* and
*nāyakas*, came. In this way, Muslim musicians hallowed as great masters, like Shaikh
Bahauddin Barnawi,legendarily went to the Deccan to gain their musical supremacy
(*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 189). Similarly, Abul Fazl believed that obsolete “*mārga*” genres
named in the authoritative *saṅgītaśāstras* continued to be performed in the Deccan, even
though this was not true; as Faqirullah discovered to his surprise, visiting musicians from
the South refuted this16! The metaphysical, as opposed to geographical, location of this
place of authority is demonstrated by Mirza Khan’s inclusion of the *Rāg Darpan* as an
“esteemed Karnata” alongside the *Rāgāṛṇava*, etc, in the *Toḥfat al-Hind (V)* (Bod,
f.104a). By designating Faqirullah’s manifestly North Indian, Indo-Persian treatise as
“Karnatic”17, Mirza Khan shows that the idea of the South as the source of authenticity
was not linked to a specific geographical area or cultural/religious group. Rather, in the
Indo-Persian musical imagination the South signified any source venerated as an
authority, regardless of its origin.

The earliest Indo-Persian treatises to cite specific sources, Qazi Hasan’s *Sarūd al-
Bahr* (1663) and *Mifṭāḥ al-Sarūd* (1664), place the burden of authority on four idealised
texts: the *Saṅgītaratnākara*, *Rūparatnākara*, *Saṅgītamakaranḍa*, and *Bhārataśaṅgīta*. Of
these, Qazi Hasan asserts (wrongly) that the musical traditions of the first three were
currently practised in the Deccan, Telangana and the Karnatak, and that only
*Bhārataśaṅgīta* applied to Hindustani music (*Sarūd al-Bahr*, f.3a). It is clear from its
contents, however, that the *Sarūd al-Bahr* is a descendant of the *Saṅgītaratnākara*, and
that it is a *rāgamālā* in the midst of a reworking of Sāṅgadeva’s text. The most
prominent reworking of the *Saṅgītaratnākara* featured in the Indo-Persian treatises is the
*Saṅgītadarpaṇa*. Damodara’s text was one of the most popular works of Sanskrit
musicology in the seventeenth century. According to te Nijenhuis, “its pictorial
descriptions [of the *rāgas*] (*dhyaṇas*). . . were profusely quoted on *rāgamālā* miniature

paintings all over India” (1977: 27-8). Its popularity is certainly reflected in its position as the preeminent Sanskrit source for Indo-Persian treatises during Aurangzeb’s reign. The Saṅgītadarpana is named in the Rāg Darpan (1996: 13), Mirza Khan’s Toḥfat al-Hind (V) (c.1675) (Bod, f.104a), and Ras Baras Khan Kalawant’s Shams al-ʿĀswāt (1698). These three treatises also list other Sanskrit sources, including Bhāratasaṅgīta, the Saṅgītaratnakara, the Nartanаниrṇaya, the Mānakutūhala, Meṣakarṇa’s Rāgamālā, and the fourteenth-century Rāgārya. Nevertheless, a perusal of their subject matter reveals a primary indebtedness to the Saṅgītadarpana. A sample comparison of parallel sections in the Rāg Darpan and the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) on the eight (seven) deficiencies of the voice, demonstrates that while the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) does not cite the Rāg Darpan directly, they are more similar to each other than either is to the Saṅgītaratnakara, from which the list of deficiencies ultimately derives. It is therefore most probable that Faqirullah and Mirza Khan copied the Saṅgītadarpana in such passages. The Shams al-ʿĀswāt is intended to be a full translation of Damodara’s text (SJ, f.13b; but see below).

Apart from its adherence to the saptādhyāya, why did the Indo-Persian theorists embrace such an “old-fashioned” and reactionary text (te Nijenhuis 1977: 27-8) as their principal Sanskrit authority? Sarmadee is surely correct to point to their overwhelming interest in rāga. He argues that the Saṅgītadarpana’s “classification of melodies, on rāga-rāginī basis. . . [was] the main reason of [its] popularity among the Persian writers of the time” (Rāg Darpan 1996: xxiv, 261 n.11). Hence, the likely reason they cited the Saṅgītadarpana so extensively was because its section on rāga concurred with the continuing ideational preeminence in Mughal India of an aesthetic system of rāga classification. The centrality of the rāga-rāginī concept to Mughal understandings of Hindustani music provides one reason why Faqirullah chose to translate the Mānakutūhala into Persian. It also explains why he cites Puṇḍarikaviṭhala’s less well-known Nartanаниrṇaya rather than his Rāgamaṇjarī – the former uses the rāga-rāginī

---

17 In fact, all the Sanskrit sources he lists were written in North India (Toḥfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.104a)
18 Rāg Darpan 1996: 13, 33; Toḥfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.104a.
20 This is hardly a new observation, although it seems to have been forgotten; William Jones noted Mirza Khan’s dependence on the Saṅgītadarpana in 1784 (1882: 136).
system, whereas the latter classifies North Indian rāgas according to their melās
(Nartananirṇaya 1994: vol.i 28-9). Interestingly, the Nartananirṇaya is also structured
according to the saptādhyāya, whereas the Rāgamaṇjari is not. It is arguably not a
coincidence that the earlier and more radical Rāgamaṇjari was written while
Puṇḍarīkaviṇṭhala was under Rajput patronage, before he entered the service of the
Mughal emperor Akbar. It seems the Mughals may have been clinging to an older,
aesthetic conception of rāga even while the winds of change were blowing through the
Sanskrit tradition. In Chapter Five I demonstrate why the maintenance of an aesthetic
concept of rāga was necessary for psycho-physiological reasons in Mughal élite society,
and how this related to the scale-based system used in practice to conceptualise rāgas in
performance.

The seventeenth-century reproduction of more “archaic” forms of Sanskrit theory
therefore does not stem from the Saṅgītadarpana’s enormous popularity. On the
contrary, the popularity of Damodara’s text derives from its replication of models the
Mughals already considered “authoritative” – the saptādhyāya and the rāga-rāginī
system. They were arguably influenced in particular by the emphasis musicians
themselves placed on these two concepts. A wealth of theories culled from the oral
traditions of musicians are preserved in the Indo-Persian texts – from Lord Shiva’s
creation of the rāgas and rāginīs, to the legendary contest between Amir Khusrau and
Nayak Gopal, to the Sufi mystical meanings of the syllables used in dhrupad ālāp, to
dohras preserving in mnemonic form a method of tuning the rudra vīṇā. Oral theories
filtering concepts from the Sanskrit tradition are well represented in dhrupad
compositions of the period, for example in the Sahasras written for Shah Jahan (r.1628-
58). Srivastava, for example, cites a dhrupad text attributed to the great master musician
of Akbar’s reign, Tansen:

The art of music is infinite yet complete. A learner should carefully understand its
rules concerning rhythm and should always remember God. First he should
master the seven notes because this is the backbone of music and then he should
study the saptādhyāi i.e. swarādhyāya (chapter on notes), rāgādhyāya (chapter on

---

21 Mir’āt al-Khayāl BL, f.136b; Rāg Darpan 1996: 103-9; Shams al-Aswāi GOML, f.27a-b; Tarjoma-i
Pārijāat BL793, f.48a.
melody), tālādhāya (chapter on rhythm), nṛttādhāya (chapter on dance),
prakīrṇādhāya (chapter on miscellaneous topics), prabandhādhāya (chapter on compositions) and mṛdangādhāya (chapter on instruments). Many experts tried to master its intricacy but nobody could do so. Tānasena says this art is limitless. (Srivastava 1980: 41)

What is interesting about this exposition of oral theory is that although it includes all seven chapters of the Saṅgītaratnākara, they are in the wrong order and the chapter on instruments is named after the barrel-shaped drum, the mṛdangam (pakhāwaj). Several dhrupad texts in the Sahasras similarly pay homage to the saptādhāya and the thirty-six rāgas and rāginīs (N P Ahmad 1984: 88), demonstrating their cherished position in seventeenth-century oral theory.

Earlier Indo-Persian precedent also influenced the Mughal writers to embrace these concepts. The two best known pre-Mughal Indo-Persian treatises, the Ghunyat al-Munya and the Lahjāt-i Sikander Shāhī, were both designed around the saptādhāya, and the latter was intended as a translation of the Saṅgītaratnākara (Delvoye 1994: 101-2). In this way, the more conservative stream of Sanskrit theory, the oral theory of musicians, and previous Indo-Persian theorists all played a role in reifying the saptādhāya and the rāga-rāginī system as the “authoritative” Hindustani tradition in the minds of Mughal patrons and theorists. Nevertheless, as we will see, the paramount influence on the epistemology of seventeenth-century Indo-Persian treatises was a single text, the Āʿīn-i Akbarī.

**Arabic and Persian traditions**
The Mughal emperors were enthusiastic patrons of West and Central Asian music long before they encountered the music of Hindustan. Treatises on Persian music were still being written as late as the eighteenth century as far away from Delhi as the Mughal outpost of Arcot, west of Madras. Several treatises on Persian music were written for the earlier Mughal emperors, such as Qasim bin Dost ‘Ali Bukhari’s Kashf al-Autār and Inayatullah Khan’s Tofhfat al-Adwār for Akbar. Older treatises on Arabic music were also reproduced or translated into Persian at this time, including the Kitāb al-Adwār. The
manuscript collection of an important seventeenth-century patron like Mir ‘Abdul Qadir Diyanat Khan is revealing. Diyanat Khan was governor of the Deccan during Aurangzeb’s reign, including Aurangzeb’s capital Aurangabad, and held a manṣab rank of 2000 ẓār, 1500 savār. A large number of manuscripts on Persian and Arabic music written or copied under his auspices between 1663 and 1665, including new copies of the Kashf al-Autaḵ and Kitāb al-Adwār, are held in the British Library. Between 1663 and 1669 Diyanat Khan also commissioned a collection of Ottoman songs in Persian that is now held in the University Library, Lahore (Wright 1996a, 457; 1996b, 680). His collection is testimony to the continuing veneration of West and Central Asian musical systems in Aurangzeb’s court.

Many sources confirm that Persian music continued to be performed in Mughal India until the late eighteenth century, including descriptions of the ideal mehfil in the British Library Mirzānāmā (c.1660), paintings of musicians accompanying Zafar Khan’s Mašnavi (1663), Kamilkhani’s description of a fret pattern called ghazal thāt with a Persian three-quarter tone Re, and eighteenth-century performances of Persian music in the autobiography of the Urdu poet Mir. However, Diyanat Khan’s collection mainly testifies to the cherished position Arabic and Persian theory still occupied in Mughal society.

Several seventeenth-century treatises on Indian music pay homage to important figures in Arabic and Persian theory, particularly Pythagoras and Ibn Sina (Avicenna), attributing various statements to them. Although less overt than the Sanskrit influence, the impact of Pythagorean tenets are evident in many Indo-Persian treatises on Indian music. Particularly prominent is one theory explaining how the seven swaras of the Hindustani scale were created from the rotation of the seven heavenly bodies – in other

---

22 The Toḥfat al-Naghma, written no earlier than 1744 for the post-Mughal Nawab of Arcot, Wallajah Sirajuddaula, has two sections, the first on Persian music and the second on Hindustani music.
23 Under the Mughal system, a man’s manṣab or rank was calculated on two scales; ẓār, or personal ranking, allocated abstractly according to his relative position in the hierarchy, and savār, or horsemen, referring to the number of cavalry theoretically under his command. A Mughal officer was a manṣabdar, or “manṣab holder”.
25 e.g. Nishatārā, f.14b; Mir’āt al Khayāl BL, f.140a; Rāg Darpan 1996: 75.
26 The sun, moon, and five planets visible to the naked eye.
words the Pythagorean concept of the “music of the spheres”\textsuperscript{27}. This idea was introduced into Arabic theory by the ninth-century theorist al Kindi (Burnett 2000: 86-7). Belief that each \textit{swara} was created by one of the heavenly bodies was not merely an aesthetic convention in the Indo-Persian treatises, but had practical outworkings in their conception of the Hindustani melodic system. The Indo-Persian treatises also testify to the infiltration and indigenisation of Pythagorean tuning systems into the Hindustani scale (see Chapter Five). In addition, many Indo-Persian treatises exhibit an awareness of the medicinal properties of music outlined in Arabic and Persian treatises\textsuperscript{28}. They attribute many of the aesthetic effects of instruments and \textit{rāgas} to their relationship with the four humours of the body in accordance with Unani physiology. More obviously, however, the ongoing Mughal interest in Persian theory is demonstrated by the inclusion of Persian musical material in Qazi Hasan’s treatises, the \textit{Rāg Darpan}, the \textit{Mīr’āt al-Khayāl}, the \textit{Risāla-i Musamma ba-Naghmāt} (1690), and the \textit{Nishaṭārā} (c.1700), especially concerning the use of Persian \textit{maqāms} to create “mixed” Hindustani \textit{rāgas}. The \textit{Toḥfat al-Hind (V)} includes a whole chapter on Persian music, and works entirely dedicated to it continued to be written during the seventeenth century, like the \textit{Risāla-i Ḥāji Ḫūsain Zahrī Esfahānī dar fan-i mūsiqī} dedicated to Aurangzeb.

\textbf{Indo-Persian texts prior to 1660}

Prior to Aurangzeb’s reign, there are very few extant examples of Mughal writings on Hindustani music in Persian. This was neither for lack of models, nor for lack of interest in the new world of music encountered by the Mughal conquerors of Hindustan. At least two important Indo-Persian treatises on Indian music were produced prior to Babur’s conquest of Delhi in 1526: the \textit{Ghunyat al-Munya} (1374-5) written for the Sultan of Gujarat, and Yahia al Kabuli’s \textit{Lahjāt-i Sikander Ṣhāhī} written in the imperial capital during the reign of Sultan Sikander Lodi (r.1489-1517) (Delvoye 1994: 100)\textsuperscript{29}. References by the Sufi poet and courtier Amir Khusrau (d.1325) to Indian and Persian music at the Khilji court are well known (e.g. Sarmadee 1996: xxxv, lii). Several Indo-

\textsuperscript{27} e.g. \textit{Nishaṭārā}, f.16a; \textit{Mīr’āt al Khayāl} GOML, f.68b; \textit{Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn}, f.124a-b; \textit{Shams al-Āywāt}, f.16b-7a; \textit{Javāhir al-Mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī}, f.24b.

\textsuperscript{28} e.g. \textit{Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ}, f.110b-11a; \textit{Risāla-i Ḫāji Ḫūsain}, f.10a; \textit{Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn}, f.127a-b; \textit{Shams al-Āywāt}, f.16b-7a; \textit{Javāhir al-Mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī}, f.67b.
Persian treatises contemporary to the Mughal period were written at independent Muslim courts, notably the *Kitāb-i Nauras* (c.1600-25), a collection of *dhrupad* compositions by the ruler of Bijapur Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah, and Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim’s *Javāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadi*, written for a later ruler of Bijapur, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (d.1656). Numerous Mughal *mansabdārs*, such as Baz Bahadur under Akbar and Mirza Nathan under Jahangir, are known from contemporary sources to have been important patrons of Hindustani music. More importantly, the major historical chronicles of all the Mughal Emperors from Babur to Shah Jahan bear witness to their engagement with Persian and increasingly with Indian music.

It is not surprising that no Indo-Persian work on Indian music is known to have been written for the first two Mughal Emperors Babur (r.1526-30) and Humayun (r.1530-56), nor that their official histories evoke little interest in Hindustani music. Babur, whose cultural experience prior to his conquest of Delhi was restricted to Transoxania and Afghanistan (Wade 1998: 43-4), ruled Hindustan for less than five years, while Humayun spent the majority of his “reign” in exile in Persia. What is surprising is that so few treatises on Indian music were written under the Mughals between the coronation of Akbar in 1556 and the accession of Aurangzeb more than 100 years later.

All the major Indo-Persian historical narratives of the time describe Akbar in particular (r.1556-1605), as well as his successors Jahangir (r.1605-27) and Shah Jahan (r.1628-58), as great patrons of North Indian music. Some of these texts, such as ‘Abdul Hamid Lahawri’s history of Shah Jahan, the *Pādishāhnāma*, include extended passages that are rich in musical detail. The frequent use of terms exclusive to Hindustani music, such as *rāga*, *kalāwant*, *bīn*, and *dhrupad*, without any explanation of their meaning, suggests these had entered the everyday vocabulary of Persian speakers at the Mughal

---

29 See Delvoye (1994: 100-2) for a more extensive discussion of these two treatises; see also Sarmadee (1978), and Nazir Ahmed (1954).
30 The *Kitāb-i Nauras* was known at the Mughal court, as Jahangir names it in his memoirs (*Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī* 1909: 272).
31 The *Bāburnāma* and the *Humāyūnīnāma*; see the bibliographies in Richards (1993) and Wade (1998).
32 North India was ruled by the Bihari Afghan leader Sher Shah Sur and his descendants from 1540 until 1555 (Richards 1993: 12).
33 The *Akbarīnāma*, the *Ā‘īn-i Akbarī*, and the *Muntakḥīb ut-Tawārīkh* for Akbar’s reign, the *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī* for Jahangir, and the *Pādishāhnāma* and the *Shāhjahānīnāma* for Shah Jahan. For details see the bibliographies in Richards (1993) and Wade (1998).
34 See for example Lahawri’s description of Lal Khan Kalawant and his sons, which includes information on a number of Indian musical genres (*Pādishāhnāma* 1867-8: vol. ii 5-7).
court. The miniature paintings that illustrate these texts frequently portray Indian instruments, ensembles and musicians that demonstrate the extensive infiltration of Hindustani music into Mughal élite culture. It seems that by the end of Akbar’s reign Hindustani music had become such a natural fixture in court life that it was not necessary to explain it to the Mughal audience of these narratives. On the basis of such evidence, the period of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan has long been regarded as the golden age of “Mughal darbārī music” (Miner 1993: 75). It is therefore an enigma that only two works on Indian music of significance should have been written in Persian during this time – Abul Fazl’s Āʿīn-i Akbarī (1593), and the Sahasras (c.1637-46) compiled by Islam Khan.

Why then was there such an upsurge around 1660 in Persian treatises explaining the indigenous theory behind Hindustani musical practice? N P Ahmad’s suggestion, that music lovers turned their talents to writing theory because their performative ambitions were frustrated by Aurangzeb’s hostility to music (1984: 7), is spurious. All the late seventeenth-century Indo-Persian treatises include significant references to current practice, and not one mentions any restrictions on music. One possible solution lies in a comparison of the provenance of the two earlier works with that of the late seventeenth-century treatises. Abul Fazl’s brief exposition of Hindustani musical theory in the Āʿīn-i Akbarī is akin to a general encyclopedia entry designed for an interested but uninitiated audience. The Sahasras is a collection of 1004 dhrupads composed by a great master of the pre-Mughal past, Nayak Bakhshu, which were deemed to be authentic and still sung during Shah Jahan’s reign (Sahasras, f.20b). The Āʿīn-i Akbarī and the Sahasras are thus very different in kind. What they have in common is that they were both written at the emperor’s command, for Akbar and Shah Jahan respectively.

The Āʿīn-i Akbarī belongs to a period in which the Mughals were still relative newcomers to India. It must be remembered that at the beginning of Akbar’s reign he was a foreigner to Hindustan, as were the vast majority of his nobles (Richards 1993, 19). Despite the mature Akbar’s reputation for his liberal patronage of Hindu culture and recruitment of local Rajput rulers to the nobility, the proportion of foreign-born nobles in his service remained large compared with the considerable indigenisation that had occurred by Aurangzeb’s reign. Akbar’s personal curiosity about Indian traditions of

35 See Wade (1998) for the most exhaustive discussion to date of music in Mughal miniatures. It includes a large gallery section.
literature and learning led to an official effort to translate classics of Sanskrit literature into Persian. Despite this, according to Aziz Ahmad:
Akbar’s court developed complementary but separate intellectual traditions, the Muslim [Persianate] and the Hindu [Sanskrit], which co-existed in mutual tolerance, but did not merge... the great Persian literature written in this period, with the exception of some of the writings of Faizı and Abul Fazl remained almost totally uninfluenced by and indifferent to Sanskrit. (1964: 221)

In other words, imperial policy at this early stage did not really represent an attempt to syncretise local philosophies with Mughal traditions, much less to embrace them as an alternative.

Akbar’s policy is in sharp contrast with the way Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb’s brother and onetime rival, engaged with Sanskrit religious writings in the mid seventeen century. Dara Shikoh was a noted adept of the Qadiri order of Sufism, who demonstrated a sincere interest in non-Muslim devotional expressions. As part of his deep engagement with bhakti philosophies, with the assistance of local panditas he translated the Bhagavadgīta and fifty-two Upanishads into Persian as part of his own “spiritual quest.” Controversially, in the latter work he attempted to draw deep correspondences between Sufi and Hindu theologies that verged on syncretism36. This text, known as the Sirr-i Akbar, seems to have gained a wide audience amongst his Mughal contemporaries (Aziz Ahmad 1964: 194-5).

Akbar’s sponsorship of Sanskrit writings and their translation, on the other hand, while tolerant, demonstrated not syncretism but the eclecticism of patronage befitting the ruler of such a diverse empire. The “complementary but separate” nature of Sanskrit and Persian intellectual streams under Akbar is certainly demonstrated in the production of works of music theory. Abul Fazl’s Ā’in-i Akbarī is something of an exception. Nevertheless, it still primarily reflected the official imperial policy of tolerance of diversity, and perhaps the personal predilections of the emperor, rather than symbolising the cultural heartbeat of the ruling class as a whole.

In contrast, most treatises on Hindustani music produced under Aurangzeb were written by high-ranking patrons and connoisseurs like Faqirullah for other connoisseurs – both for named patrons like Diyanat Khan and Muhammad Aʿzam Shah, and for a wider audience extending from the authors’ intimate circle of friends (Rāg Darpan 1996: 223)37

---

36 Dara Shikoh’s alleged “apostasy” from Islam was Aurangzeb’s chief justification for waging war against him in the 1658 War of Succession, and for executing him after his defeat.
37 Faqirullah intended to present the Rāg Darpan to Aurangzeb, whom he explicitly calls his patron, but did not and thus could not include the emperor’s name as dedicatee (1996: 225). Qureshi’s unsubstantiated
to “singers and listeners” in general (Sarūd al-Bahr, f.3b). (Imperial patronage of musical treatises nevertheless continued after 1660, with several works including the Miftāḥ al Sarūd and the Shams al-ʿAwāt dedicated to Aurangzeb, himself a connoisseur.) Moreover, several seminal texts of Aurangzeb’s period exhibit anxiety over the ignorance of patrons unfamiliar with the Sanskrit saṅgītaśāstras of the principles behind Hindustani music. This was leading to incorrect performance practice going unchecked, which in turn was destroying the proper effect of Indian music on the listener. In particular the writers were concerned that patrons and musicians did not even know that rāgas should be performed at specified times, let alone know the correct time for particular rāgas.

While this complaint was to a significant extent a rhetorical convention, it was ostensibly in order to rectify this that many of the more important treatises were written38.

As Faqirullah testifies, there was significant consumer demand – indeed, impatience – for such texts amongst Mughal patrons of Hindustani music – even amongst those who were already “most well informed” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 223). No longer do Indo-Persian treatises primarily represent the personal preferences and official policies of the emperor. Rather, paralleling Dara Shikoh’s engagement with Sanskrit devotional literature, the upsurge in Indo-Persian musical treatises during Aurangzeb’s reign seems to reflect an unprecedented interest amongst the general Mughal élite in understanding the intellectual, emotional, and philosophical underpinnings of the Hindustani tradition. More importantly, it demonstrates their desire to apply them to their patronage and personal experience of North Indian music. In other words, this upsurge testifies to an increasing indigenisation of Mughal culture in the mid seventeenth century.

The Āʾīn-i Akbarī (1593) of Abul Fazl

The Āʾīn-i Akbarī (1593) is important in its own right as a source for earlier developments, which enables us to track the origins of musical transformations in Aurangzeb’s reign. However it also acted as an influential model for later Indo-Persian writing on music. Abul Fazl’s chapter on saṅgīta was the first significant Indo-Persian

---

38 Sarūd al-Bahr, f.3b, 7a; Miftāḥ al-Sarūd SJ, f.4a, 8a-b; Rāg Darpan 1996: 11, 79; Risāla dar ʿamal-i bīn, f.123b; Shams al-Aswāt, f.6a, 7a.
work on Hindustani music in the Mughal period. The Â’în-i Akbarî is traditionally considered to be the most important and influential manual on governance written during the Mughal era (Subrahmanyam 1992: 294). It was well known amongst the Mughal élite, and it is certain that Faqirullah, the author of the Rāg Darpan (1666), had access to it. It is effectively an encyclopedia of Indian arts and sciences, covering a range of topics from elephant husbandry to the nature of God. Abul Fazl’s aim was to explain to a Persian-reading audience “the opinions professed by the majority of the learned among the Hindus” (Â’în-i Akbarî 1873-94: vol. i, 1). In accordance with this he organises his chapter on saṅgīta using the saptādhyāya structure of the Saṅgītaratnākara (Â’în-i Akbarî 1876-7: 134-42). Directly after the chapter on saṅgīta, Abul Fazl includes a chapter on communities of musicians and dancers in Hindustan (142-4), which is misleadingly incorporated into the chapter on saṅgīta in the English translation (Â’în-i Akbarî 1873-94: vol. ii, 271), and a section on dance entertainments (akhāra) (144). It is worth noting that Blochmann’s translation of these chapters is bowdlerised in several places to remove erotic references in the original. Separate from this, Abul Fazl also includes a list of biographical notices, or tażkira, of musicians attached to Akbar’s court (Â’în-i Akbarî 1873-94: vol. ii, 681-2).

In emphasising the ideational preeminence of cherished tradition represented in the saptādhyāya, Abul Fazl was observing Indo-Persian, Sanskrit, and oral precedent. However, it is obvious that Abul Fazl considered some subject matter more important than others. His selective treatment of each adhyāya arguably reveals what he considered was most central to Hindustani music, and therefore most important for the Mughal patron to know. He only cursorily skims over the chapters on prakīrṇa and prabandha, and his treatment of tāla and nṛtya is confined to meagre definitions of those two words. His discussion of swara is considerably more substantial, and of all the chapters adheres most closely to sāstric precedent, but it too has been condensed to just three topics: the

---

39 It needs to be noted that Subrahmanyam is critiquing the preeminent position given to the Â’în-i Akbarî by the “Aligarh” school of Mughal historians. Nevertheless, it was influential at the time, and clearly still wielded significant power over the historiographical imagination.

40 For example, Blochmann erases half the section on bhaṅds, a community of homoerotic Muslim male dancers, in the chapter on musicians. More unacceptably, he deliberately alters the gender of the natwas in the chapter on the akhāra from male (natwa) to female (natwā), and erases their function as pandars of
philosophy of manifest (āhata) and unmanifest (anāhata) sound; the seven principal swaras, their animal of origin, and physical location in the body according to yogic concepts; and the definition of audava (pentatonic), shādava (hexatonic) and sampūraṇa (heptatonic) scales. The last topic is functional, but the first two are philosophical, and had long been incorporated into Sufi devotional practices (see below). Thus a connection between the imperatives of Indo-Muslim culture and the material included in Mughal treatises on Hindustani music was established right from the start.

The section on rāga appears at first to be a similar distillation of essential theoretical information, in accordance with the more recent rāga-rāginī system of classification. Abul Fazl lists six principal rāgas, each of which is allocated six rāginīs, corresponding to what the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) calls “Kallinātha mat”. However, he then digresses significantly from Sanskrit models by inserting an unprecedented passage on song genres currently performed in the Mughal empire, such as dhrupad, cutkulā, qaul and tarāna, including their place of origin, structure, subject matter, and names of famous exponents. If included anywhere these should have come under prabandha, but they do not. This idea, of inserting original information about current practice into discussions of śāstric concepts, is developed further in Abul Fazl’s section on vādya, which includes descriptions of several West and Central Asian instruments. Finally, in his separate chapter on communities of musicians and dancers, which enlarges upon his description of vocal genres in the chapter on saṅgīta, he leaves Sanskrit models behind altogether. In short, although Abul Fazl considers the saptaḥāvyāya to be ideationally sacrosanct, he chooses to concentrate on swara, rāga, and vādya; and he breaks the boundaries of his Sanskrit models by including significant new information on current performance practice in the areas of vocal genre, instruments, and communities of performers.

The Ā‘īn-i Akbarī was influential in the development during Aurangzeb’s reign of an Indo-Persian epistemology for Hindustani musical treatises that endured until the late nineteenth century, where it is still apparent in Urdu works like the Ma‘dan al-Mūsīqi
Of the two groups of Indo-Persian treatise, the one that reflected the saṅgītaśāstras constituted the mainstream of Indo-Persian musicology by the end of Aurangzeb’s reign. It is here that the impact of Abul Fazl’s model is primarily seen. Taking his cue, several treatises in this group consider it essential to include a preliminary statement on the seven “fundamentals” of saṅgīt, but none of them uses the saptādhyaśya structure in its entirety. Most conform to the essentially three-fold model of the Ā’īn-i Akbarī, including a chapter on swara that is conservative in its adherence to Sanskrit models; an extensive chapter(s) on rāga; and sections on a range of other subjects, often deriving from the Saṅgītadarpāṇa and later, Indo-Persian models. However, the Indo-Persian writers do not simply translate Sanskrit theory for a Persian-reading audience. Following the precedent set by Abul Fazl, they use the traditional structure and concepts as a springboard for commentary based on their own observations of performance practice. Like him, their most interesting and original contributions are generally made in the areas of vocal genre, instruments, classes of musicians, biographies of performers, evidence of Indian/Persian synthesis, and other contextual information.

The extent of the Ā’īn-i Akbarī’s influence is demonstrated by Faqirullah’s extensive – and unacknowledged – reliance on it as a source for the Rāg Darpan, itself the most famous treatise of the seventeenth century. Because Faqirullah’s first task was to translate the Mānakutūhala, a treatise entirely on rāga, the Rāg Darpan does not adhere exactly to Abul Fazl’s structure. Nevertheless, by comparing sections covering the same subjects, it becomes obvious that Faqirullah used the Ā’īn-i Akbarī heavily both conceptually and in terms of content. This is particularly the case in the places where both treatises diverge most from the saṅgītaśāstras. Faqirullah derives most of his śāstric information directly from Sanskrit sources. On the other hand, large parts of the most “original” sections of the Rāg Darpan have been copied word for word from the Ā’īn-i Akbarī. This includes nearly the whole of the passage on instruments, the majority of the section on vocal genres, parts of the discussion of nāyakas, nāyikās and sakhīs (the subject of the previous chapter of the Ā’īn-i Akbarī), and various smaller passages.

---

42 Qureshi chooses to highlight the individuality of the author’s vision in her analysis of this treatise, but she seems to underestimate the full extent of its reliance on Persian antecedents.
43 See also Delvoye (1994).
In this way, the Rāg Darpan is an early and important example of a characteristic pattern in the way seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Indo-Muslim treatises use their antecedents. Many treatises ritualistically invoke in their prefaces Sanskrit and Indo-Persian sources that had become venerated as authorities. At the same time, they then borrow heavily from another Indo-Persian text, structurally and materially, without acknowledging their source. Other than the Rāg Darpan, examples include the important late eighteenth-century Uṣūl-i Naghmāt al-Âšafi, which is closely modelled on the seventeenth-century Shams al-Âswāt; the mid nineteenth-century Urdu treatise the Ma’dan al-Mūsqī, based on the Toḥfat al-Hind (V); and several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts which regurgitate the Rāg Darpan44.

In copying the Â’in-i Akbarī, Faqirullah was following the intellectual conventions of his time. Much as we now footnote our sources, Indo-Persian writers of this period showed their respect for their antecedents by quoting them verbatim, with or without acknowledgement (Meisami 1999: 5)45. The fact that Faqirullah derives much of what we have assumed to be unique contemporary information directly from an earlier source does not mean that the Rāg Darpan is unoriginal and valueless. Rather, it shifts the focus of interest. How Faqirullah departs from his Sanskrit sources becomes less important. What now becomes interesting is what Faqirullah has added to Abul Fazl (or occasionally omitted) and why. Abul Fazl’s original digressions, which are themselves novel insertions into a conventional summary of Sanskrit theory, gave later Indo-Persian writers a license to insert their own commentary on the same subjects. Concentrating on how Faqirullah differs from Abul Fazl in such passages thereby enables us to sift new developments from the old, and to trace how changes occurred.

As an example, let us consider how Faqirullah treats his source in the section on vocal genres. All of the vocal genres listed in the Â’in-i Akbarī appear in the Rāg Darpan, in the same order. In most cases Faqirullah quotes Abul Fazl verbatim, and then provides additional information about the genre, for example for cutkulā. However, in the case of dhrupad, Faqirullah dispenses with Abul Fazl’s two-line description and provides a lengthy explanation of his own. This probably indicates the cherished position of dhrupad at the time of writing, but it may also betray the need to canonise a genre

44 Including the Nishaṭārā, the Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ, and the Risāla-i Musamma ba-Naghmāt amongst others.
currently threatened by other genres’ rising popularity (see Chapter Six). In addition, Faqirullah inserts two whole new sections into Abul Fazl’s list. When Abul Fazl discusses the music of Delhi, for example, he mentions only two genres, qaul and tarāna, which “belong to the ravish [“style” or “school”] of Amir Khusrau” (1876-7: 139). Faqirullah expands this list to ten – qaul, tarāna, khayāl, naqsh, nigār, basīt, tillalāna [sic], sohila, fārsī and fard. He describes qaul and khayāl and their cultural milieux at length, then gives definitions for the remaining genres, before returning to Abul Fazl’s list. It is likely that Faqirullah added these genres because the movement of the Mughal court from Agra to Shahjahanabad in 1648 meant that the music of Delhi required more comprehensive treatment than Abul Fazl had given it (Rāg Darpan 1996: 111-3). However, the insertion of some of these genres highlights recent developments as well. By using Abul Fazl’s palimpsestic structure of citation, commentary and insertion, Faqirullah neatly provides us with the timeframe and cultural context for the emergence of khayāl as a distinctive genre (see Chapter Six).

Like the Â‘in-i Akbari, the Rāg Darpan was hugely popular, and itself was transformed over time from a new palimpsest to an authoritative source for later writers to copy and expand. In this way, Abul Fazl laid the foundations for a conceptual model of writing on music, whereby a reverence for precedent, whether that be an adherence to Sanskrit organisational principles or to the content of Abul Fazl’s own digressions, was combined with a license to provide original commentary, especially on subjects where the Â‘in-i Akbari had done the original groundwork. Hence, the imprint of Abul Fazl’s groundbreaking treatise can still be seen, filtered through the Rāg Darpan, in the Tohfat al-Hind (V), not only in Mirza Khan’s identically ordered list of vocal genres, but also in his wholly new descriptions of them (Bod, f.113a-4a).

III
Themes in two seminal treatises of the 1660s

The first Indo-Persian treatise based on the saṅgītaśāstras to appear in Aurangzeb’s reign has often been thought to have been the Rāg Darpan, which was published in its final form in 1666, but which existed as a draft from 1663 (1996: 213). However, prior to

45 An educated reader would in any case have known where the citation came from.
1666 two other treatises on Hindustani music were written in Persian by the Islamic jurist
Qazi Hasan: the Sarūd al Bahr in 1663, and the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd in 1664. The Sarūd al
Bahr is an initial draft of the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd, and they are sufficiently similar that I will
consider them as a unit. It is possible that there is a relationship between the Rāg Darpan
and the Sarūds, as some of their content is identical without being directly quoted. Either
way, both authors develop a number of common themes that were to become
characteristic of Indo-Persian musical writing in the seventeenth century. In particular,
they demonstrate the influence of Sufi contexts on the patronage of music and the writing
of Indo-Persian music theory, and the importance of Mughal élite conceptions of adab in
the selection of material – to present, and to erase.

Qazi Hasan and Faqirullah
Although Qazi Hasan is credited with several treatises, all with similar titles, he wrote
only two, the Sarūd al-Bahr (1663) and the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd (1664). Several identical
copies of the latter exist under different names, including the Miṣbāḥ al-Sorūr and the
Miftāḥ al-Sorūr⁴⁶. It has frequently been misdated to 1674, presumably a misreading of
the date 1074 AH (c.1664) that appears in the preface of all the copies I have seen. In
1663, Qazi Hasan bin Khwaja Tahir was the Islamic judge of the pargana of Antur in the
sarkār of Daulatabad (Sarūd al-Bahr, f.1b). Nothing else is known about his life, or his
qualifications for writing a treatise on saṅgīṭa. However, his writing indicates that he was
a Sufi initiate. One striking feature of Indo-Persian treatises on music that sets them apart
from their Sanskrit counterparts are their prefaces, which customarily provide a defence
of music from a Sufi perspective. The lengthy preface to the Sarūds is a particularly
noteworthy example of the genre. In addition, apart from being well educated in Arabic
and Persian (f.1b), he must have been able to read Sanskrit fluently (f.3a). He also must
have had access to the imperial court, because the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd is dedicated to
Aurangzeb, who gave permission for the work to be written (ASB, f.4a).

The Rāg Darpan of Saif Khan “Faqirullah”, on the other hand, is a famous
landmark in the history of Indo-Persian musicology. The final draft was completed in
1666, and was originally intended to be dedicated and presented to Aurangzeb (Rāg
Faqirullah was born into the Mughal élite, and as a favourite of both Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb became a high-ranking amīr. At his death in 1684 he possessed a manṣab of 3000 zāt 2500 savār, which ranked him amongst Aurangzeb’s top two hundred manṣabdārs (Athar Ali 1966: 231). This was despite the fact that he twice lost his manṣab and was forced into retirement, on account of his “hot disposition”.

According to the Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’, only his “bohemian temperament” prevented him from attaining “the highest rank of Amirship”. Faqirullah was clearly a man of exceptional abilities both on and off the battlefield. He was commended for his bravery in the War of Succession, in which he supported Aurangzeb’s cause. For his loyalty he was put in charge of the execution of Aurangzeb’s chief rival, Dara Shikoh. During his lifetime Faqirullah held several important governorships, including Shahjahanabad, Kashmir, Multan, Bihar, and Allahabad, and was responsible for the conquest of Greater Tibet. He was equally renowned for his abilities in the arts, in poetry and particularly in music, and his writing reveals him to have been steeped in the culture of Sufism. He was also famed for his long-term homoerotic relationship with the satirical poet Miyan Shah Nasir ‘Ali. Their companionship was regarded with tolerance, and was possibly even celebrated (Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: vol.ii 683-6).

What Faqirullah and Qazi Hasan choose to include, how they write about it, and to whom, illuminate their worldview as members of the Mughal male élite and as Sufi adepts – and the limits of such a perspective. From Faqirullah’s writing in particular it is clear that he belonged to one subgroup of the Mughal élite, those who participated in a particular Sufi context that approved of using music as a means of inducing devotional ecstasy (as did Qazi Hasan). This was the most important group by whom music was patronised and within which musical trends were set in the Mughal empire. However, as I demonstrate in Chapter Four, it was not the only one, and the patterns of conduct Faqirullah describes were contested at this time. The situation described in the Rāg

---

46 Both scribal errors: when handwritten sarūd is easily confused with sorūr, and miftāḥ with miṣbāḥ.
47 Sarmadee’s recent English translation is based on Faqirullah’s autograph copy of the 1666 version (1996: 1xiv), held in the Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University (Fārsī `Ulūm no. 41).
48 Sarmadee’s biography of Faqirullah is flawed (Rāg Darpan 1996, lix). Faqirullah did not teach Kam Bakhsh archery; this was his son, also entitled Saif Khan (Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: 686); and Faqirullah’s final manṣab rank was not 2500/500 (Athar Ali 1966: 231).
49 rindāna - licentiousness, behaviour worthy of a drunkard.
Darpan is therefore partial. However, Faqirullah’s text, alongside Qazi Hasan’s work, does illuminate the important role Sufi culture and devotion played in the development of Hindustani music under the Mughals.

Faqirullah’s prowess as a fearsome warrior and political leader, and the authorship of a highly-regarded treatise on music, might seem to sit uneasily together. But in Mughal terms, his achievements in such diverse spheres made Faqirullah the quintessential “man of sword and pen”, the ideal embodiment of Mughal manliness, whose superior proficiency in “the arts both of peace and war” set him apart as a great amīr, or prince (Blake 1986: 193-4). Princely status was defined and cultivated in Mughal India by strategic negotiation of the rules of élite male adab, or etiquette. Rosalind O’Hanlon defines adab as “at once moral training, cultivation of manner, bodily discipline and spiritual refinement”. In the late seventeenth century the rules of princely adab were most explicitly prescribed in the mīrzānāma literature, literally “letters for princes” (1999: 51-8). Theoretically, a mīrzā, or prince, was a member of the Mughal male élite with a manṣāb rank above 1000 zāt. The mīrzānāma literature included detailed rules for the patronage of music, which I discuss in Chapter Four. As a man who qualified as a mīrzā both in terms of his accomplishments and in terms of rank51, Faqirullah would have been fully acquainted with this discourse, and would instinctively have operated within its dictates (Blake 1984: 195, 198). A concern with establishing the adab of musicians and in fulfilling the adab of noble patrons is evident throughout the Rāg Darpan. It is also manifested in Qazi Hasan’s treatise. However, the Rāg Darpan particularly can be read as a work of musical adab.

Sufism

Nearly all the Indo-Persian treatises of this period reflect Sufi contexts of production and reception to some extent. By “Sufi context” I do not mean the enclosed, esoteric world of the Sufi order, which revealed its secrets only to the initiate. Rather, I am referring to a kind of generalised, popular Sufism, which pervaded public discourse and social practice in Mughal élite society. Most Mughal men and women in this period were at least

---

50 As with most Indo-Persian prose texts, it is not possible to tell from the Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ whether or not this relationship was sexual, although it was clearly deeply loving and permanent (see Chapter Four).

51 As with the similar English concept of a “gentleman”, these were not necessarily synonymous. It was possible to be a mīrzā without being a manṣābadār, and vice versa! (Aziz Ahmad 1975: 100).
nominally, and some of them profoundly, attached to one Sufi order or another. This manifested itself in devotional obeisance to Sufi shrines, in pilgrimages, and in ritual practices; but also in an intellectual adherence to Sufi mystical and philosophical tenets that affected cultural discourse outside the “purely” devotional context. In the Sarūds and in later texts like Kamilkhani’s treatises this context is primarily manifested in the distinctively Indo-Muslim preface. The preface is standardised in construction, and is similar to other prefatory genres of Indo-Persian literature, but possesses its own music-specific logic and raison d’être. On the other hand, the Sufi context in which the Rāg Darpan was embedded is largely revealed in its content, manner of writing, and audience. Some texts like the Shams al-Āswāt demonstrate their context in both ways.

The two best examples of the Indo-Persian preface in Aurangzeb’s period are the Sarūds and the Shams al-Āswāt, although Faqirullah demonstrates his familiarity with the convention in miniature at the beginning of the Rāg Darpan. Many of the elements of musical prefaces were not specifically Sufi, but were generic literary conventions. Customary material included opening with praise of Allah, praise of the Prophet Muhammad, praise of the author’s patron, the circumstances of the text’s production (its date, etc), and the ritual effacement of the author (cf. Madhumālati 2000: xv-xvii). The opening and first chapter of the Rāg Darpan is a good example of a conventional preface, partly because it is so succinct. It includes all the customary material in the above order, apart from the praise of a patron, and Faqirullah explains this omission in his conclusion. Although these were standard non-devotional conventions, the inclusion of such material represented an attempt to bring the non-Islamic subject matter of the Indo-Persian musical treatise – the Sanskrit-based philosophy of Hindustani music – within an Islamic intellectual fold. An apposite comparison can be made with the earlier literary genre of the Hindavi Sufi romance, which was the product of a pre-Mughal period of Indo-Muslim indigenisation. According to Behl and Weightman, the Sufi romances were often dedicated to Indo-Muslim rulers, and denoted courtly contexts, but at the same time they drew on local literary metaphors and non-Islamic devotional tropes to create an allegory of the Sufi quest for the Divine. It is unlikely that the Sufi romances were known outside

---

52 The Sufi romances belong to the period of the Sultans of Delhi and their contemporaries, such as the Sharqi Sultans of Jaunpur. Important Sufi romances were also written concurrently with the Mughal period during the reign of the Suri rulers, who ousted Humayun to rule Hindustan between 1540 and 1555.
their immediate social contexts. However, although the two textual traditions are therefore unrelated, the Sufi romances used similar prefatory conventions to the musical treatises for a comparable reason: to “frame these romances within the metaphysics of an Islamic godhead. . . as well as within courtly and Sufi institutional settings with their distinct yet interlinked protocols of reception” (Madhumālatī 2000: xv).

The desire to locate Hindustani music within the legitimate pursuits of Islam, and more specifically Sufism, is made clear in the music-specific content of the preface. The writers follow the laudatory sections of the preface with an explanation of matters pertaining to the unique contents of the treatise. It is here that, in order to justify writing about music at all, the authors must confront the central fact about music in an Islamic universe – that it is controversial at best, and frequently condemned. For a Muslim patron or theorist, the primary justification for listening to music derived from its use in the Sufi majlis as a vehicle for ecstatic union with the Divine, itself controversial. Thus, by logical extension, all writers of Indo-Persian musical treatises must have belonged to a section of society that embraced the use of music in the Sufi assembly. This is demonstrated in the apologias Qazi Hasan and others present in their prefaces.

The word applied to music in a devotional context is samā’, meaning “audition”, and is used to describe the act of listening to music to induce a state of spiritual ecstasy. Saints’ pronouncements on the permissibility of samā’ were often extrapolated to music in other contexts. In Islamic legal discourse, activities and behaviour are traditionally categorised according to whether they are ḥalāl (good, approved), mubah (neutral, permissible), makrūḥ (disapproved), or ḥarām (forbidden). Sheikh ‘Abdul Haqq Dehlavi’s treatise on samā’, the Risāla-i Tāliṣa-i Qur’ us-Sama’ (1605), exemplifies a conservative Indo-Muslim view of music. ‘Abdul Haqq Dehlavi, a Qadiri Sufi, was influential in the conservative backlash against Akbar’s religious policies, a reaction mainly supported by the Naqshbandi order (Aziz Ahmad 1964: 190). Although he died in 1642, his plans for the monarchy came to fruition in the person of Aurangzeb, who himself followed the Naqshbandi order early in his reign (191). ‘Abdul Haqq Dehlavi argued that while it was acceptable (mubah) to listen to the unaccompanied voice, samā’

54 See for example the Javāḥīr al-Mūsāqāt-i Muḥammadī, f.19b.
55 Ernst and Lawrence (2002: 50). Aziz Ahmad states that ‘Abdul Haqq Dehlavi was a Naqshbandi (1964: 190).
was controversial, and listening to instruments was “unanimously forbidden” (*ba-ittifāq ḥarām*). Given the correspondence between their stated positions,\(^56\) it is possible that Aurangzeb was influenced by ‘Abdul Haq Dehlavi in his personal assessment of music (see Chapter Three). The writers of musical treatises may have perceived an increased need to assert the spiritual benefits of music at this time. They did this in the manner that had become customary – a prefatory defence of *samā‘*.

In common with other musical writers, in his apologia Qazi Hasan cites traditions of the Prophet (*ḥadīṣ*) and stories and sayings of the saints supporting music. Qazi Hasan also offers some of the most nuanced legal arguments in favour of music in the seventeenth-century corpus. He acknowledges that “according to the exponents of the *shari‘a*, listening to the sound of music, instruments, and the graceful recitation of *ghazals* is unacceptable and forbidden (*ḥarām*).” However, he immediately counters this: “But if the heart of a person is innocent, for that person music is good and approved (*ḥalāḥ*)” (*Miftāḥ al Sarūd* SJ, f.2b). After giving analogical examples of things considered impure in one context but pure in another (such as raw and tanned hide), and of situations in which music acts on the human spirit to incline it towards revelation of divine Truth (*ḥaqq*), Qazi Hasan clinches his argument by stating that:

> Music is pure (*pāk*) either if its contents dwell on Truth, the worship of God, and other such subjects, or if the contents are worldly but the hearer is godly and (inclined) towards Truth. In such cases, music is lawful and acceptable for every musician who is associated with it, and for those initiated into the ways of mysticism (*ahl-i taṣawwuf*). It is even correct for the scholars of *ḥadīṣ*. [After all], the science (*‘ilm*) of music is food for the soul and the ears. (*Miftāḥ al Sarūd* SJ, f.3a-b)

The defence of music from a Sufi perspective extends to other prefaces. Ras Baras Khan Kalawant opens his treatise with a strong apologia on the grounds of music’s use by the prophets and saints of old, such as Khwaja Bakhtiyar, who allegedly attained revelation of the Truth (died!) through listening to music.\(^57\) Ras Baras Khan argues that

---


\(^{57}\) Khwaja Bakhtiyar legendarishly attained eternal union with the Divine after four days in ecstasy brought on by *samā‘*. 
music has two principal spiritual benefits: that listeners will acquire the ability to discern Truth, and that listening generates love for God (Shams al-Aswāt SJ, f.1b, 8a-b).

Kamilkhani even states that the Hindustani rāgas are exalted because the “disciplined ones (mortāzān), the devout (ʿābidān), the dervishes, the Sufis, the Prophets and the Sufi saints (auliyā)” embraced them. In his opinion, the performance of rāga with instrumental accompaniment was legitimised by past Sufi saints, “great and small”, who “themselves have practised rāga with handclapping [dastak; often synonymous with tāla], instruments, and voices.” The singing of rāga itself, according to Kamilkhani’s appropriation of a bhakti aphorism, was the means of being united with Truth, and singing without ceasing the means of approaching the divine Essence (Risāla dar ʿamal-i bīn, f.123a-4b). To Qazi Hasan, God gave human beings music as a means of worshipping him. He describes music and love as the very soul (jān) of the Lover (ʿāshiq) (Sarūd al-Bahr f.2b), a word Sufi initiates preferred to describe themselves. The musical writers’ use of devotional rhetoric in their prefaces places music firmly within a Sufi universe. In doing so they defend all music’s legitimacy on the grounds of its spiritual benefits, as the “essence of all happiness” (Miftāḥ al Sarūd SJ, f.4b).

The prefaces do not merely reflect a Sufi context of production, but also of reception. Ras Baras Khan’s audience is particularly well defined. He states that he has written his treatise “so everyone who listens can be made joyful, especially those who are Lovers (ʿāshiqān) of the Truth, and those filled with desire (mashtāqān) [for God]” (Shams al-Aswāt SJ, f.6a). Several of his other statements indicate a Sufi audience, such as his instruction to readers to turn to manuals on taṣāwuwf (Sufism) to find further ḥadīth in support of music, and his advice to the mastān (those who go into ecstasy during samā’) that they should “study [his] book night and day” (f.8a, 13a). Neither Kamilkhani nor Qazi Hasan explicitly dedicate their treatises to the Lovers. Nevertheless, they both seem to be preaching to the converted in their use of exclusive jargon, including several direct references to Lovers and Sufis (ʿāshiqān, ahl-i taṣāwuwf, ṣufiyyān), and to obscure mystical texts like the Rauẓat al-Aḥbāb, the “Paradise of Lovers” (Risāla dar ʿamal-i bīn, f.124b). Kamilkhani’s preface in particular becomes quite esoteric at times.
Faqirullah also speaks to a Sufi audience, if rhetorically, by addressing in his opening statement the “lords of ḥāl and qāl” (the leaders of the Sufi orders and the Islamic scholars) (Rāg Darpan 1996: 10). However, Sufi contexts of production and reception are most prominently reflected in his choice and description of subject matter. Most obvious are the many general references to Sufism in the Rāg Darpan, and to musicians and patrons involved in Sufi practice. For example, in his discussion of rāga Faqirullah notes that in the Sufi assembly, unlike in the courtly mehfīl, it is not necessary for rāgas to be sung at the correct times, because “those who worship the Absolute... possess the power to listen to the mysteries of the sound produced even by a water-wheel” (1996: 79-81). All of Faqirullah’s own musicians, whom he lists in his tazkira, operated within a Sufi social environment, and all the patrons he lists were Sufi initiates, some of whom themselves sang in the majlis. He even describes Aurangzeb, the intended dedicatee of the Rāg Darpan, as a Sufi who sat on the throne as a spiritual discipline to purify his soul (217). Even Faqirullah’s chosen nom de plume “Faqir of Allah”, faqīr being a Sufi mendicant, symbolises the strength of this influence on his musical vision.

Less obviously, some of his selections of Sanskrit material reflect a devotional impetus. His discussion of the seven swaras at the beginning of Chapter Four, which adds to Abul Fazl’s earlier treatment, is significant in this respect. Like Abul Fazl, Faqirullah notes that the swaras were produced from sound rising through the 22 nāḍīs or horizontal veins in the human torso. This idea was first mooted in the Saṅgītaratnākara’s yogic discussion of cakras and nāḍīs as the physiological basis of sound. Several other Indo-Persian writers refer to this, and Ras Baras Khan translates the entire corresponding section of the Saṅgītadarpaṇa. The most likely reason this idea had such a hold over the Indo-Persian musical imagination was because it had for a long period been transferred into practice as the ḥabs-i nafs technique of breath control in zikr, by the same Sufi orders who embraced the performance of music in the majlis. During Aurangzèb’s reign, Chishti advocates of yogic techniques included the influential pīr Shah Kalimullah (1650-1729), who lived in Shahjahanabad. Along with ḥabs-i nafs, his practices included the hearing of āhata and anāhata sound, Sanskrit concepts included in nearly all Indo-Persian
musical treatises\textsuperscript{58}. The Shattari order went furthest in adopting yogic sound concepts into their spiritual disciplines (\textit{Madhumālati} 2000: xxiv). The connection between the Shattariyya and Hindustani music in the Mughal era coalesced in the person of Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus Gwaliori (d.1563), reputedly the \textit{pīr} of Tansen (Wade 1998: 113-4). It is suggestive that Ras Baras Khan, the greatest singer of the late seventeenth century and a direct descendent of Tansen, seems to have incorporated devotional techniques related to \textit{zikr} into his \textit{dhrupad ālāp} (see below).

\textbf{Adab (etiquette)}

However, the Indo-Persian writers’ choice of material was more often influenced by considerations of \textit{adab} in Hindustani musical performance, for both patron-connoisseurs and musicians. It is arguably no coincidence that the flurry of Indo-Persian musicological activity in the 1660s was preceded by a lengthy statement on musical \textit{adab} in the British Library \textit{Mīrizānāma} of c.1660 (f.91a-b). This is the earliest extended discussion of music in an Indo-Persian text of Aurangzeb’s reign. The British Library \textit{Mīrizānāma} was written by an unknown \textit{mīrza}, for other \textit{mīrzs}, and was designed to codify the etiquette required of a nobleman at Aurangzeb’s court. O’Hanlon suggests that during Aurangzeb’s reign, the male élite adopted increasingly complex codes of etiquette as a means of asserting social superiority and boundaries in a much more fluid and competitive masculine environment (1999: 84-5). She argues that:

\begin{quote}
all sorts of inferior people were calling themselves \textit{mīrzā} when they had no business to, and they were interpreting its codes of behaviour in sometimes unorthodox and transgressive ways. For the BM \textit{Mīrzā Nāmah}, the point was to make a serious distinction between the real \textit{mīrzā} on one hand, and mere vulgar upstarts, and the ‘bastard’ \textit{mīrzā’ī} of men effeminate in dress and love, on the other. (1999: 84)
\end{quote}

On the contrary, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, the author of the British Library \textit{Mīrizānāma} was probably a low-ranking \textit{mīrzā}, and therefore of marginal status. While he needed to promote and adhere to the strictest standards of \textit{adab}, higher-ranking and more established \textit{mīrzās} could get away with more “unorthodox and transgressive”

\textsuperscript{58}Rizvi 1978: 323; 1983: 296-304; see above.
behaviour without it affecting their social standing. Nevertheless, as a piece of prescriptive literature, the British Library Mîrzânāma is a good reflection of the highest standards of mîrzâ’i during Aurangzeb’s period. This applies to its codification of the ādāb of élite patrons and musicians.

It is notable that the Mîrzânāma’s codes for musical performance were directed at the same audience for the same reasons as the musical treatises of the same period. Like the Mîrzânāma, all of the treatises aimed at a specific audience were written for patron-connoisseurs, and only secondarily for performers. Faqirullah frequently directs his statements at the “lords of discernment and enlightenment”. That his audience was intended to be connoisseurs of his own class and position, as opposed to professional musicians, is indicated by the known readership of the Rāg Darpan:

It so happened that some of my (friends whose entire pleasure is in music (yārān ka zauq-i tamām ba-mūsiqī dārand)) came and insisted upon having a copy of [the first draft], . . . [To] any of my friends (dūstān) . . . and to all (men of discernment (gāhib-i nazar)), a humble request is made to discard it. (1996: 222-5; my translation in brackets)

In other words, the intended audience of the Rāg Darpan consisted of Faqirullah’s friends, and other connoisseurs of music. The likelihood that Faqirullah pursued friendships with professional musicians is exceedingly remote, as this would have been a serious breach of his adab. Rather, Faqirullah chose his friends from amongst the educated élite, moving within overlapping friendship circles of mystically-inclined noblemen and lower-ranking literati (see Chapter Four).

Faqirullah’s emphasis on discernment also permeates the British Library Mîrzânāma. There is a stress here on equipping the mîrzâ to discriminate between “best practice”, and what was not. What distinguished a true mîrzâ in the court of Aurangzeb was learned patronage of élite music. A mîrzâ “should know the requirements of musical

---

59 Only the Sarūds openly address performers at all (Sarūd al-Bahr SJ, f.3b). Many singers and musicians would not have been able to read or write, Ras Baras Khan being an obvious exception.
60 arbab-i hūsh, arbab-i khirad, zamīr-i munīr
61 Sarmadee’s translation is incorrect here; the original merely has “friends” (1996: 224-5).
62 nazar in the sense of “weighing, evaluating, having insight”
63 Even in the most licentious social circles when societal norms were in upheaval under Muhammad Shah (r.1719-48), noblemen who consorted with musicians were despised (Muraqqa’-i Dehli 1993: 73)
recital” and possess a high degree of discernment regarding different Indian genres and styles. This discernment was not to be cultivated through practical involvement in music making, but through intellectual knowledge (‘ilm). Significantly, the author of the Mîrzânâma is the first to express the common sentiment of the musical treatises that “This noble science (of music) was formerly held in great esteem; now, with the passage of time, it has declined” (Aziz Ahmad 1975: 101). A treatise in the élite court language of the day, whose purpose was to establish best practice according to recognised and reputable authorities, and to discriminate between what was good and bad, would be the ideal vehicle to restore this vital knowledge.

This is precisely what the Indo-Persian musical treatises set out to do. Ras Baras Khan’s stated aim in his treatise is to “restore the knowledge of the masters of old to every musical assembly” (Shams al-Aywâr SJ, f.7a). Like the Mîrzânâma, Qazi Hasan’s major concern is that the musicians of his day had supposedly lost touch with the theoretical roots of the music they performed (Miftâḥ al-Sarūd ASB, f.4a; 8a). So serious were the musicians’ incompetencies in performing the rāgas at the right times and the connoisseurs’ ineptitude in correcting their errors that “God’s blessings have fled their houses” (Miftâḥ al-Sarūd SJ, f.12b). Qazi Hasan’s purpose in writing was to rectify this:

so that performers and listeners who do not know (this art) can learn from this book, so that in the musical assembly the musicians and (others) who have the stamp of genius are not put to shame, and so that the connoisseurs of music (sarūd-shenāsān) do not find fault with them. (Sarūd al-Bahr SJ, f.3b)

Similarly, Faqirullah argues that because the musicians no longer adhered to the times laid down by the “ancients” and “the nāyakas”, the aesthetic effect of the rāgas “is not what it used to be” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 79). This neglect of ‘ilm (knowledge) in favour of a much altered, and in his view faulty, ‘amal (practice), was the reason Faqirullah argues he translated the Mānakutūhala (183). Written for Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (1486-1517), the reputed inventor of dhrupad, on the advice of an illustrious convention of nāyakas, including Nayak Bakhshu whose dhrupads were still revered at Aurangzeb’s court\textsuperscript{64}, the Mānakutūhala had an impeccably “authentic” pedigree.

\textsuperscript{64} Nayak Bakhshu’s dhrupad compositions, collated as the Sahasras for Shah Jahan, were well known to music lovers at Aurangzeb’s court. The Bodleian Library copy of the Sahasras was commissioned by
In this way, the re-educative emphasis of the *Mīrzānāma* pervades the musical treatises as well. Faqirullah states in several places that his work is for the benefit of “students of this art” and “seekers of knowledge”\(^{65}\). The Sanskrit material he chooses to include exposes the purpose of “seeking” this “knowledge” in a Mughal context – to fulfil the ṣadāb of patrons and performers in the *mehfil*. Reminding participants of the “authoritative” times for the performance of rāga was vital for the correct aesthetic effects to be produced, as we shall see in Chapters Four and Five. In addition, Faqirullah’s inclusion *for the education of the patron* of so much obsolete information on the etiquette of musicians (see below) testifies to the widespread obsession at this time with the correct *adab* of musical performance, for the musician, but more particularly for the *mīrzā* who was his patron. The connection thus established between the Indo-Persian musical literature and wider discourses of princely etiquette throws significant light on musical patronage in Mughal male society (see Chapter Four).

Persianate conceptions of literary *adab* also affected the way these treatises were written, especially the *Rāg Darpan*. Faqirullah’s rhetorical style demonstrates an effortless command of Persianate literary conventions, which signify his mastery of *mīrzā’s*ī’. Even the name *Rāg Darpan* or “mirror of rāgas” suggests a connection with Persianate discourses of princely *adab* – the authoritative genre of literature which inspired the seventeenth-century *mīrzānāmas* is known as the “mirrors for princes” literature. One way in which Faqirullah’s observance of literary *adab* is manifested is in what he *leaves out* of his treatise. His erasures are as significant to our understanding of musical culture in the Mughal empire as what he includes. One striking example is that although Faqirullah includes a long passage on the erotic tropes of Indian literature, references to real-life eroticism are conspicuously absent from his text. Despite the ubiquity of female performers as symbols of auspiciousness in Mughal paintings, and the chastened presence in historical chronicles of the courtesan censured for her transgressions, Faqirullah names only one female singer, entirely desexualised and disembodied, and only because the beauty of her voice reflected the glory of her deceased Diyanat Khan in 1668, and the British Library copy belonged to Aurangzeb’s library. The collator’s concern with the “authenticity” of the *dhrupad* compositions he chose for inclusion (*Sahasras* 1993: 18) resembles the imperatives behind the treatises written in Aurangzeb’s reign, and the *Sahasras* is arguably the earliest manifestation of the trend towards indigenisation.

---

\(^{65}\) *jalbajālibān, jālibbān-i ʿilm, jūyandān, mutālaʿa konandān*
male ustād (1996: 197-9). This does not mean that courtesans and other female singers played no role in élite musical culture during Aurangzeb’s period; they clearly did. Their absence from the Rāg Darpan merely reflects the impossibility in Indo-Muslim etiquette of this period to write about real-life erotic involvements in prose\(^{66}\). For this reason, Faqirullah’s account of musical life is necessarily partial. His erasure of the courtesans disguises their probable role in the development of khayāl at this time, giving the misleading impression that it was still entirely performed by male Sufi musicians (see Chapters Four and Six).

The Sarūd al-Bahr (1663) and Miftāḥ al-Sarūd (1664) of Qazi Hasan

The ways in which the works of Qazi Hasan and Faqirullah deal with their musical material are also in some senses representative of later treatises in the Indo-Persian tradition. However, in this section I want to look briefly at the individual treatises, beginning with Qazi Hasan’s, to identify the ways in which they are uniquely significant to our understanding of theory and practice under Aurangzeb. I will then turn to the later treatises of Aurangzeb’s reign.

Qazi Hasan’s Sarūds are structurally more typical of later seventeenth-century Indo-Persian treatises than the Rāg Darpan is. Qazi Hasan intended the Sarūd al-Bahr to consist of three chapters; however, the only extant copy finishes abruptly towards the end of the second chapter. These chapters form the basis of the first two chapters of the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd. The Miftāḥ al-Sarūd is in four chapters, roughly reflecting the order of the saptaḍhyāya – one on swara; two on rāga; and one on instruments and dance. The centrepiece of Qazi Hasan’s treatises is a complete rāgamālā according to Hanūmān mat – iconographical descriptions (dhyaṇas) of the six principal rāgas, their five rāginīs, and their eight putras. Much of the Sarūds’ subject matter is conventional, and resembles other reworkings of material from the Saṅgītaratnākara, especially in its structure. However, Qazi Hasan also includes several pieces of information clearly derived from a Sanskrit source(s) that I have found nowhere else. Most importantly, while his rāgamālā

---

\(^{66}\) Liaisons with courtesans (and catamites), although so widespread as to be almost normative, were nevertheless shameful. To speak publicly about such episodes or to write about them in prose was to shame the man involved (Chatterjee 2002: 65). Poetry was a different story; the ghazal for example provided a legitimate aesthetic space in which romantic and erotic love could be voiced safely.
is superficially similar to the Saṅgītadarpaṇa, in that both provide full sets of iconographical descriptions for the rāgas and rāginīs of Hanūmān mat. Qazi Hasan’s set of dhyāṇas includes the putras and in detail is entirely different from the Saṅgītadarpaṇa.

Some of Qazi Hasan’s departures from known Sanskrit precedent are his own, particularly his discussion of the etiquette of musicians in the melṣfil, and his animadversions on contemporary singers’ inability to perform the rāgas at the correct times (Miftāḥ al-Sarūd SJ, f.9b-13a). However, his rāgamālā is obviously copied from an earlier Sanskrit text. Harold Powers notes that Damodara’s elaboration of Hanūmān mat has been until now the earliest known “set of pictorial verses to be directly associated with a structured rāg-rāgini format in a musical treatise” (2003: forthcoming). However, it seems Qazi Hasan has preserved a different collection of dhyāṇas for Hanūmān mat that are at least contemporaneous with Damodara, and arguably earlier. This rāgamālā seems to have formed the basis of a probably sixteenth-century Sanskrit treatise, now lost, known as Bhāratasaṅgīta.

The relationship between the Sarūds and Bhāratasaṅgīta is somewhat difficult to unravel. However, with the exception of Qazi Hasan’s original insertions and some borrowings from a second Indo-Persian treatise, also now lost, it seems that the bulk of the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd is a translation of Bhāratasaṅgīta. According to Qazi Hasan:

In Hindustan Bhāratasaṅgīta is esteemed, and everybody agrees that this treatise represents the fundamentals of [Hindustani] music. It is called a rāgamālā. . . I perceive the sense of Bhāratasaṅgīta to be superior to all [other] traditions because it was spoken first. [Nevertheless] the basis of all of them is rāga. [I have translated] this treatise from the Indian idiom into Persian phraseology. . . and called it Miftāḥ al-Sarūd (SJ, f.5a)

Faqirullah also names a text known as Bhāratasaṅgīta, and uses it as a source in his second chapter on rāga. Sarmadee states that in Indo-Persian texts of this time “the term Bhārata-Sangīta refer[red] to the well-known Nātyasāstra ascribed to Bharata” (1996: 261 n.10). This cannot be correct, as it makes nonsense not only of Qazi Hasan’s statement, but also of Faqirullah’s references to Bhāratasaṅgīta in the Rāg Darpan.
There is clearly some conflation in Qazi Hasan’s mind of the authors of the *Nātyaśāstra* and *Bhārataśāṅgīta*, as he defends the latter’s superiority on the basis that it was supposedly “spoken first”. However, the practice of ascribing much later texts to ancient authorities like Bharata, in order to enhance the new text’s authority, was customary in Sanskrit tradition. This is likely to be the source of Qazi Hasan’s confusion.

More conclusively, the *Nātyaśāstra* is not a rāgamālā, whereas the *Bhārataśāṅgīta* Faqirullah cited in the *Rāg Darpan* patently was, and Qazi Hasan explicitly said it was. The rāgamālā at the centre of the *Miftāḥ al-Sarūd* closely resembles Meṣakarṇa’s Rāgamālā (1509) in its list of rāgas, rāginīs and putras. Some of Qazi Hasan’s iconographical descriptions, of Bhairava for example, are also similar to Meṣakarṇa’s. Qazi Hasan’s list bears an equally striking resemblance to the *Mānakutūhala*, translated into Persian as the second chapter of the *Rāg Darpan*. The *Miftāḥ al-Sarūd* is, however, independent of both the *Mānakutūhala* and the *Rāg Darpan*, as neither of these include iconographical descriptions of the rāgas. Faqirullah compares his translation of the *Mānakutūhala* with two other Sanskrit texts as a check on his primary source: Meṣakarṇa’s Rāgamālā, and *Bhārataśāṅgīta*. According to Faqirullah, “Mālasirī, Sarsutī, Kedārā, and Sankarābharaṇ, made to sound as a single melody, yield Mālasirī:sampūrana.” In the margins of the autograph copy of the 1666 version, he added “[Instead of Mālasirī,] Bharata in his book has Madh-Mādhā” (1996: 39).

Similarly, “Mārū, Kedārā, Jayatasrī and Śuwah, appropriately mixed, go to form Ghantā.” According to Faqirullah’s marginal note “in Bharata Sangīta the name is given [as] Khat Sāra” (47). Finally:

According to what Bharata writes. . .of the (six) rāgas, free from any mix-up with the rāginīs, one each pertains to the five mouths of Mahādeva; the sixth rāga, namely Dipaka, has been a creation of Pārvatī, the consort of Mahādeva. (51)

---

67 (unclear) possibly also in the Deccan (*Miftāḥ al-Sarūd* ASB, f.3a).
These references show that Faqirullah’s *Bhārataśaṅgīṭa* was not the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, but a treatise in the same *rāgamālā* tradition as the early sixteenth-century *Mānakutūḥala* and *Rāgamālā* of Meṣakarṇa. Considering that the entire contents of the *Mānakutūḥala* are paralleled in Qazi Hasan’s treatises, it is likely that the *Saruḍ* are indeed a translation of a lost *rāgamālā* called *Bhārataśaṅgīṭa*, as Qazi Hasan says they are.

This raises the question of whether or not Faqirullah used either the *Saruḍ al-Bahr* or the *Miftāḥ al-Saruḍ* as a source for his final draft. The first two sections of Faqirullah’s translation of the *Mānakutūḥala* – on Hanūmān *mat* and on mixed *rāgas* – are derived primarily from his principal source, as the extant copy of the Sanskrit original confirms (*Mānakutūḥala*, f.21)\(^69\). However, the third and final section details the *rāgas* supposedly created by Amir Khusrau, Husain Shah Sharqi and others, information which does not derive from a Sanskrit source. That this section also appears in the *Miftāḥ al-Saruḍ*, in exactly the same place, is suggestive. Given that both the *Saruḍ al-Bahr* and the first draft of the *Rāg Darpan* were written in 1663, it would seem likely they independently used a third source for the section on Amir Khusrau *et al.* Faqirullah states that material added to his translation came from two sources, now lost, written for Akbar by Sayyid Mansur, the *Rāgasāgara* and the *Rāgaprakāśa* (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 59, 75, 181). On the other hand, two of Faqirullah’s references to *Bhārataśaṅgīṭa* appear as last-minute marginalia in the autograph copy of the 1666 version. This suggests that he consulted *Bhārataśaṅgīṭa* in preparation for the final draft. The correspondences between Faqirullah and Qazi Hasan’s chapters on *rāga*, Faqirullah’s known propensity not to cite all his Indo-Persian sources, and his stated use of *Bhārataśaṅgīṭa* make it possible that he did use Qazi Hasan’s treatises in preparing the 1666 version of the *Rāg Darpan*.

**The *Rāg Darpan* (1666) of Faqirullah Saif Khan**

Until recently, the *Rāg Darpan* was thought to consist almost entirely of Faqirullah’s translation of the *Mānakutūḥala*. However, Sarmadee conclusively demonstrates that

\(^69\) The copy of the *Mānakutūḥala* held in the Central Library, Baroda, finishes with the words “*iti Mānakutūḥala*” about two-thirds of the way through Faqirullah’s second section, corresponding with p.49
only the second chapter of ten is the Mānakūṭḥalā. The remainder is ostensibly Faqirullah’s own work. This seems to have been common knowledge amongst his contemporaries; Mirza Khan lists the Mānakūṭḥalā and the Rāg Darpan as separate works when citing his sources for the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) (f.104a). Sarmadee’s statement that Faqirullah was “the original writer on the subject [of music] during Mughal days,” dealing with “every detail of the prevalent art. . . the art-pulse of his time” (Rāg Darpan 1996: xxiv), is overblown. Faqirullah’s Sanskrit citations, and his unacknowledged borrowings from Abul Fazl and possibly Qazi Hasan, make the Rāg Darpan more derivative than has previously been acknowledged. Nevertheless, Faqirullah also drew extensively on his personal knowledge of music-making at the Mughal court to produce one of the most influential, and in some respects groundbreaking, treatises of the seventeenth century. Beginning with the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) only ten years later, the Rāg Darpan was named as an authority or cited without acknowledgement in several subsequent treatises70. It is the only Indo-Persian work on music famous enough to be mentioned in the Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ (1999: vol.ii 686), and more copies of the Rāg Darpan are extant today than of any other Indo-Persian treatise.71

The Rāg Darpan is divided into ten chapters. Although by opening with rāga it is structurally unusual, it covers the subjects of the saptādhyāya Abul Fazl considered most important, in the same order, with some insertions and deletions. The first three chapters are dedicated to rāga, and the times at which they should be performed. Chapter Four covers swara and vocal genres, the fifth chapter instruments and, unexpectedly, the erotic tropes of Hindavi literature, Chapters Six through Nine discuss the etiquette of singers, using śāstric material that usually appears under prakīṛṭa in Sanskrit texts, and the final chapter is a tazkira of musicians who were active during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. Sarmadee’s edition of the Rāg Darpan, while flawed in minor respects72, of Sarmadee’s edition of the Rāg Darpan. It is impossible to tell whether Faqirullah has added material to the end of the Mānakūṭḥalā, or whether the Baroda MS is based on an incomplete earlier copy.

70 Including the Nishajārā, the Ma’rifat al-Arwaḥ, and the Rīsāla-i Musamma ba-Naghīmā, the Toḥfat al-Hind (V), the Rāg Darshan, and the Ma’dan al-Mūṣiqī.

71 Virtually every major collection of Indo-Persian manuscripts has at least one copy.

72 His edition is flawed in two ways. Firstly, it is impossible for the reader unfamiliar with Persian to tell when Sarmadee adds his own interpretations to the translation. Particularly problematic is his tendency to interpolate Sanskrit terminology that does not appear in the original, giving the misleading impression that it does. He also adds explanatory phrases to the English translation that alter the meaning, without making
should be regarded as definitive. I do not intend to duplicate his work here. However, because he fails to identify many of Faqirullah’s borrowings, and because an understanding of Faqirullah’s contribution is dependent on sifting citations from original commentary, I will briefly outline his most significant contributions.

In terms of content, the only original material of significance is the whole of Chapter Ten, and Faqirullah’s sections on vocal genres and instruments in Chapters Four and Five. The latter need to be read in parallel with the Ā’īn-i Akbarī upon which they are based. The remainder derives from reworkings of the Saṅgītaratnākara: the Sangītadarpaṇa, Bhāratasaṅgīta, and the treatises of Sayyid Mansur, all of which he cites. However, the contribution Faqirullah makes to our understanding of performance practice in his three original sections, particularly the information he provides on real musicians and patrons, is invaluable. In addition, as we have seen, his selection of Sanskrit material and his occasional commentary on it reveals much about the cultural imperatives behind the writing of Indo-Persian treatises and the patronage of music. Faqirullah and Qazi Hasan were the forerunners of what was to become a distinguished stream of Indo-Persian writing on music.

IV
The Tarjoma-i Pārijātak (1666) of Mirza Raushan Zamir

Mirza Raushan Zamir’s contemporaneous translation of Ahobala’s seminal Saṅgītapārijāta is independent of the main Indo-Persian tradition of Sanskrit-based works that grew out of the Ā’īn-i Akbarī. It is especially valuable in that, alone amongst treatises based on the saṅgītaśāstras, the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak represents the new branch of Sanskrit theory. Only the first two chapters of Ahobala’s treatise have survived in Sanskrit (te Nijenhuis 1977: 28). For this reason alone, Mirza Raushan Zamir’s overlooked translation is vital to the study of the Saṅgītapārijāta itself, because it

\[\text{clear that they do not appear in the original. Secondly, his introductory analysis is full of factual errors, which arguably lead Sarmadee to overestimate Faqirullah’s “originality” and to misunderstand his true contribution. Nevertheless, these are small problems, and Sarmadee’s translation is commendable for its faithfulness to Faqirullah’s intentions and the time and context in which he lived, and for its inclusion of the original Persian text.}\]

\[\text{73 Only Delvoye seems to be aware of Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation of the Saṅgītapārijāta (1994: 102). In their influential surveys of Sanskrit literature, Bhatkhande and te Nijenhuis are oblivious to the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak’s existence, although they both mention the much later Persian translation of Pandit Dinanath (1724) (1990: 31; 1977: 28).}\]
preserves the third chapter on dance. Moreover, the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak is by far the most systematic and faithful Persian translation of a saṅgītaśāstra in the entire Mughal period, and it deserves much closer examination than I present here.

It is unclear when Ahobala wrote the Saṅgītapārijātā. Bhatkhande has suggested it was written after Somanātha’s Rāgavibodha (1610) (1990: 31), and several late seventeenth-century Sanskrit works quote the Saṅgītapārijāta extensively. However, the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak, completed in 1666, is the earliest known work to provide us with a definite upper limit for the Saṅgītapārijātā. Mirza Raushan Zamir provides not only a literal translation, but includes substantial original commentary referring to contemporary practice. The Tarjoma-i Pārijātak presents a valuable alternative view to the more conservative theory normally found in Sanskrit-based Indo-Persian texts. The large number of extant copies indicates that it was probably well known in its day.

It certainly brought its author fame as an expert on Hindustani music. Mirza Raushan Zamir describes himself as “the least of the khānazāds in the court of the emperor Aurangzeb” (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 808, f.2a). A khānazād, literally “son of the house”, was “an officer boasting hereditary family service to the Mughal emperor,” generally a member of the nobility, who was “fully assimilated to . . . Indo-Persian courtly culture in its elaborate Mughal version” (Richards 1993: 300, 148). In other words, like Faqirullah, Mirza Raushan Zamir was a mīrzā, although probably of lower rank, as he is not mentioned in the Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’. Most of our information on his life comes from a popular contemporary tazkira of Mughal poets, the Mirʾūt al-Khayāl (1690). The author, Sher Khan Lodi, eulogises Mirza Raushan Zamir as “the greatest of the men of ability and of the high-minded noblemen of the day” (Mirʾūt al-Khayāl Bod, f.117b). In 1665 Mirza Raushan Zamir was appointed military administrator and officer in charge of intelligence of the important sea port of Surat (Mirʾūt al-Khayāl BL, f.130a). He was famed amongst his contemporaries for his unsurpassed knowledge of

---

74 See te Nijenhuis (1977: 28-30) for details of works derived from the Saṅgītapārijātā.
75 nīgārī (or waqāʾi’-nīgārī) and bakhshīgārī (or bakhshī) (Mirʾūt al-Khayāl BL, f.130a; Delvoye 1994: 102). A nīgārī was a news collector and chronicler; a bakhshī according to Richards was “a military paymaster also in charge of military inspections and intelligence gathering” (1993: 298). Bakhshī/bakhshīgārī can mean either “commander-in-chief” or “secretary” according to Steingass; Delvoye translates it as “treasurer” (1994: 102).
music theory, and reputedly wrote his own compositions in Arabic, Persian and Hindustani. Aurangzeb was so impressed with Mirza Raushan Zamir’s poetry that he famously bestowed 7000 rupees on him for his performance of a single rubâ‘î (f.129b-30a). As if to highlight his musical expertise, the majority of his entry in the Mir‘āt al-Khayāl is a treatise on music.

Mirza Raushan Zamir’s aim was to translate Ahobala’s important work into Persian and explain its contents to an audience less familiar with Sanskrit theoretical constructs. The Saṅgītapārijāta originally consisted of three chapters: on gīta, which includes swara, rāga, and associated topics; instruments; and dance. However, it is the first chapter which has rightly claimed most scholarly attention (te Nijenhuis 1977: 28). This chapter reflects the new Sanskrit concern with scalar patterns worked out on the viṇā as a system of classifying rāgas, transposed into a North Indian context. Ahobala uses the term melā unsystematically to describe the scalar patterns of individual rāgas in his series of 122 notated rāga examples. However, his major contribution to this branch of Sanskrit theory was a method of determining the pitches of the twelve śuddha and vikṛta swaras in current use in North India according to the fractional division of the Sa string of the viṇā.

The Tarjoma-i Pārijātak follows its Sanskrit model faithfully, with Mirza Raushan Zamir providing a literal translation of each śloka complete with Sanskrit terminology, followed immediately by his own explanation of the verse in Persianate terms. Compared with descendents of the Ā’īn-i Akbarī, the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak is more restricted in its insertion of radically divergent sections describing current practice. Despite this, Mirza Raushan Zamir often incorporates original information that relates to the subject matter at hand. Of particular importance is his inclusion of several dohras culled from the oral theory of musicians that probably acted as mnemonic aids. These are invaluable to our study of contemporary developments in performance and oral theory. Mirza Raushan Zamir’s additions to Ahobala’s descriptions of instruments, such as the rabāb and ṭanbūr (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 808, f.100b-1a), and passages describing the etiquette of contemporary musicians (793, f.47a-b), are similarly valuable.

Most significant is the insight his translation provides into the relationship of the Saṅgītapārijāta to performance practice. Mirza Raushan Zamir uses several revealing
Persian and Hindavi terms in his commentaries in place of Sanskrit terminology and concepts. When analysed in conjunction with the similar but independent treatises of Kamilkhan, his use of terminology makes it clear that Ahobala’s work is not merely a theoretical abstraction, but is based on current practice. Of particular interest is the translator’s use of the word *ṭhāṭ* to describe *mela* throughout Ahobala’s elaboration of his scale theory and *rāga* examples. Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation suggests a much greater longevity for the use of *ṭhāṭ* systems in Hindustani performance practice than has previously been assumed. His evidence makes it possible to abstract a potentially workable thirteen *ṭhāṭ* system from Ahobala’s 122 *rāga* examples. I will discuss this at length in Chapter Five in conjunction with the more highly developed *ṭhāṭ* system of Kamilkhan.

The *Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn* (1668-9) and the *Risāla-i Kāmil Khān* (1668) of Muhammad ‘Iwaz Kamilkhan

Kamilkhan’s treatises belong to the group of Indo-Persian writings that are independent of the Sanskrit *sangītaśāstras*. Although they therefore had no impact on the emerging Indo-Persian mainstream, they are arguably amongst the most original and important works of seventeenth-century North Indian musicology. The only known copy of Kamilkhan’s *Risāla-i ‘Ivaz Muḥammad Kāmilkhānī dar ‘amal-i bīn va thāṭa-i rāgha-i Hindi* or “Treatise on playing the bīn and the *ṭhāṭ* of the Indian rāgas,” is located in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It is bound together with another manuscript, entitled *Risāla-i Kāmil Khān dar bayān-i thāta ya‘nī navākhtan-i sāzhā* or “Kamil Khan’s treatise in explanation of *ṭhāṭ*, that is, the playing of instruments”. It appears to be a first draft of the *Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn*, although the material it covers diverges significantly. The *Risāla-i Kāmil Khān* is dated 1668, and it is therefore almost certain that the *Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn* was completed around the same time. Yet another treatise in the same volume is written in the same hand as Kamilkhan’s treatises. This is the copy of the *Sahasras* commissioned by Diyanat Khan, completed in Shahjahanabad in 1668.

Although the evidence is circumstantial, it is possible that Diyanat Khan was the patron for whom Kamilkhan wrote his two treatises. Kamilkhan is not mentioned in the *Ma‘āṣir al-Umarā*’. It is clear nonetheless that he possessed considerable learning, and
was a close companion of members of the nobility. Although he does not mention a patron, it is reasonable to suggest that Kamilkhani may have been a minor nobleman in the employ of Diyanat Khan, who was residing in the imperial capital when these treatises were written. There is another possibility that he was Diyanat Khan’s social equal rather than his employee; Athar Ali lists a “Kamil Khan” as having been a nobleman of similar rank to Diyanat Khan during Aurangzeb’s reign (1966: 197).

The Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn begins with a conventional Indo-Persian preface on the origins of music and its status in Islam. Kamilkhani’s preface is clearly sympathetic not only to Sufism, but to Hindu bhakti concepts, and draws no clear line between the two; indeed, he seems to be unaware of a distinction. He states that he was intrigued that every rāga had a time specified for its performance, and that performances which conformed to the time theory were regarded as especially moving. However, he found that noone could explain the theory to him. So, in order to fill this gap he wrote a guide on the subject of rāga, music, and instruments (Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn, f.122b). His purpose is in keeping with the contemporary complaint about the gap that supposedly existed between the “authentic” theory of rāgas and modern practice. However, the difference between Kamilkhani and other Indo-Persian theorists is his belief, inculcated by his conversations with experts, that the correct theory was not explained in the sangītaśāstras. He therefore chose to base his treatise instead on conversations with master musicians and connoisseurs, and on his own experiences of learning to play instruments and sing (f.122b).

Kamilkhani obliquely acknowledges the ideological preeminence of traditional Sanskrit theory, and demonstrates a basic knowledge of some of its concepts (f.126a). However, his misunderstanding of many of these demonstrates that he was not familiar with the written tradition (see Chapter Five). It seems that Kamilkhani’s writings are in fact based on his own analysis of Indian classical music as it was practised at the Mughal court. Indeed, his search for the reasons behind the Hindustani time theory does not lead to an explication of the rāga-rāginī system, as one would expect, but instead to an astrological and geomantic explanation based around the notes of the Hindustani scale. The result of his study is an entirely different body of theory from any of his Indo-Persian contemporaries.
The subjects covered in the *Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn* bear a strong resemblance to those of concern to the followers of Rāmāmātya, without being derived from them. The first area of unique importance in Kamilkhanī’s works is his independent development of a twelve-semitone scale\(^7\) from a Pythagorean fractional division of the Sa string of the *bīn*. The second is his elaboration of an eight-*ṭhāṭ* system based on the fretting patterns used to set up the *bīn* for the performance of *rāga*. The earlier *Risāla-i Kāmil Khān* has seventeen *ṭhāṭs*, including the aforementioned *ghazal *ṭhāṭ*, which was presumably used to play Persian *maqāms* (*Risāla-i Kāmil Khān*, f.135b). Of all the Sanskrit works which apply a scale-based classificatory system to Hindustani music, Kamilkhanī’s treatises most closely resemble the *Saṅgītapārijāta*. However, the differences between them are such that it is clear Kamilkhanī developed his system independently (see Chapter Five). Ahobala's twelve pitches are nevertheless close enough to Kamilkhanī's to suggest that such a scale really was used in performance practice.

Kamilkhanī’s writings are without precedent in pre-modern North Indian theory in their systematic elaboration of a system of *ṭhāṭs* directly from this fractionally derived scale. Not only are they original, they are based on observation of and participation in practical music making, and not on written authorities. When viewed alongside the *Saṅgītapārijāta* and Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation, Kamilkhanī’s treatises demonstrate sufficient parallels to suggest they describe a common performance practice. For the first time we have evidence that the *ṭhāṭ* system was practised as early as the seventeenth century, at a centre as important as the Mughal court. In addition, Kamilkhanī’s treatises demonstrate significant crossover on a practical level between Persianate and Hindustani conceptions of the scale. Kamilkhanī’s work is of radical importance for our understanding of musical practice during Aurangzeb’s reign.

**The *Toḥfat al-Hind* (V) (c.1675) of Mirza Khan**

The *Toḥfat al-Hind* by Mirza Khan (or Mirza Jan) was written for Aurangzeb’s third son Muhammad A‘zam Shah (1653-1707), the most important patron of music during Aurangzeb’s reign and himself a composer of renown (see Chapter Three). Mirza Khan’s

\(^7\) But see Chapter Five; he artificially establishes only 11 fret positions on the *vīnā* because of his mistaken belief that the semitones of the Hindustani scale over two octaves must be the 22 *śrūtis* of Sanskrit tradition.
work, which Sarmadee has dated to c.1675 (Rāg Darpan 1996: xli), is a highly-regarded encyclopedia of the sciences of Hindustan in seven chapters (Aziz Ahmad 1964: 222). Its fifth chapter “on the science (‘ilm) of saṅgīta” (Toḥfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.103b) is arguably the paradigmatic Indo-Persian treatise on Hindustani music. The Rāg Darpan notwithstanding, the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) was to prove the most influential model for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indo-Muslim texts. Despite this, the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) is the least original of the major Indo-Persian treatises of this period. It contributes little to our understanding of contemporary developments, and is far less important than has frequently been stated.

Nothing is known about the author of the Toḥfat al-Hind, not even his correct name, which is variously given as Mirza Khan, Mirza Jan, and Mirza Muhammad. There is also confusion over its patron. All copies of the treatise state that it was written during the reign of Aurangzeb for one of his sons (pādishāhzāda). The majority ascribe its patronage to Muhammad Aʿzam Shah, and the editor of the published edition concurs with this (e.g. Toḥfat al-Hind Bod, f.2a; 1968: 5). However, some manuscripts state wrongly that the patron of the Toḥfat al-Hind was Muizuddin Jahandar Shah (e.g. BL, f.2a). This is an anachronism. Muizuddin Jahandar Shah was not Aurangzeb’s son, but the son of Aurangzeb’s successor, Bahadur Shah. Crucially, although Muizuddin was born in 1661 and could have been a patron of music during his grandfather’s reign, he was not granted the title Jahandar Shah until 21 June 1707 – after Aurangzeb’s death, and after Bahadur Shah had killed Muhammad Aʿzam Shah and ascended the throne (Buyers 2000). Muizuddin cannot therefore have been the original patron of the Toḥfat al-Hind. It is likely that between 1707 and his death in 1713, Jahandar Shah commissioned a copy of the Toḥfat al-Hind, expunging the name of its original patron, the vanquished Muhammad Aʿzam Shah, and replacing it with his own. In this way, two textual variants have come down to the present day. The variant bearing the name of Muhammad Aʿzam Shah, however, is the original one.

77 Toḥfat al-Hind (V) KB, f.1b; Bod, f.1b; N P Ahmad 1984: 34. His name may have been Mirza Jan; Rizvi notes a Mirza Jan (d.1718) with literary talents “who served Aurangzib in a minor capacity [and] accompanied the Emperor to the Deccan [in 1679]” (1983: 246).
78 The copy in the Asiatic Society of Bengal erroneously has Magharuddin (Toḥfat al-Hind (V) ASB, f.2a).
The chapter on music in the *Tohfat al-Hind (V)* openly builds on both Indo-Persian and Sanskrit models, and is the most cogent Indo-Persian synthesis of earlier musicological writings. It self-consciously adheres to Sanskrit organisational constructs, and is dominated by the subject of *rāga*, which constitutes over half the treatise. In the brief preface, Mirza Khan sets out the *saptādhyāya*, claiming it as the structural inspiration for his work (*Tohfat al-Hind (V)* Bod, f.104a). Of the “seven chapters”, however, he chooses to discuss only three: *swara*, *rāga* and *tāla*. Most of the information Mirza Khan presents is conventional, much of it based on the *Saṅgītadarpaṇa*. The *Tohfat al-Hind (V)* is mainly interesting insofar as it is the first Indo-Persian treatise to provide a truly systematic coverage of current mainstream theories. Mirza Khan begins his six central sections on *rāga* with a definition of the concept, and a summary of its most important features, providing iconographical descriptions for Hanūmān *mat* very similar to those in the *Saṅgītadarpaṇa*. He then sets out the other *mats* considered important by his authorities (Kallinātha, Someśwara\(^{80}\), and Bhārata), without iconographical descriptions. The last two sections on mixed *rāgas* etc., are lifted in their entirety from the *Rāg Darpan*. With the exception of his clear explanations of terminology, Mirza Khan’s whole discussion of *rāga* is taken from earlier sources. Nevertheless, it is the most exhaustive treatment of the subject in the seventeenth-century Indo-Persian corpus, giving us a valuable overview of earlier sources on North Indian *rāgas*.

Mirza Khan’s most obvious innovations are his inclusion of sections on Persian music and on *tāla*, neither of which are original in content. The *Tohfat al-Hind (V)* is the first Mughal treatise to include a chapter on *tāla*, albeit obsolescent\(^{81}\). Elsewhere, the *Tohfat al-Hind (V)* sometimes offers useful comparisons with its main sources, the *Saṅgītadarpaṇa* and the *Rāg Darpan*. While Mirza Khan derives most of his śāstric information from the *Saṅgītadarpaṇa*, he selectively concentrates on subjects of concern to Faqirullah. In the process, he updates some of this material, using examples rooted in

---

\(^{80}\) This is consistently transliterated incorrectly in the MSS.
practical music making. In particular he adds what appears to be his own list of sixteen virtues to the stereotypical discussion of the “virtues and defects” of singers (Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.109b-10a). Of primary importance are his fresh descriptions of the hierarchy of musicians, and Hindustani vocal genres (e.g. Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.114b). Throughout the latter, Mirza Khan maintains a connection with his antecedents by preserving Faqirullah’s structural order.

To summarise, the contribution of the Tohfat al-Hind (V) does not lie in its limited originality. Mirza Khan’s genius lay in taking the concerns and idiosyncratic structure of the Rāg Darpan and reorganising them in alignment with what he considered to be the authoritative Sanskrit tradition. In this way, Mirza Khan reworked the Indo-Persian treatise on Hindustani music into a cohesive format, transforming the Tohfat al-Hind (V) into the quintessential model for the next generation of Indo-Persian theorists, from the Rāg Darshan (c.1750) to the Ma’dan al- Müsīqī (1857).

The Shams al-Aswat (1698) of Ras Baras Khan Kalawant

The Shams al-Aswat is ostensibly a translation of and commentary on Damodara’s Saṅgītadarpaṇa. In reality, it diverges substantially from its source, providing one of the most important commentaries on contemporary practice in the seventeenth century. The Shams al-Aswat was completed in 1698, and was dedicated to Aurangzeb. The emperor was clearly the patron and recipient of the work, as its preface includes an extravagant three-page eulogy to Aurangzeb. Its importance is enhanced significantly by the pedigree of the musician who wrote it. Ras Baras Khan Kalawant was the son of Aurangzeb’s favourite musician, the unrivalled dhru pad singer Khushhal Khan, son of Lal Khan, who was the star disciple and son-in-law of Bilas Khan, himself the son of the greatest kalāwant of them all, Tansen. Ras Baras Khan was therefore a scion of the most distinguished lineage of musicians in the empire, all of whom served the emperor exclusively. More importantly, Ras Baras Khan was remembered in the early eighteenth century as the greatest performing musician of his generation82. Because of his heritage,

---

81 The tālas in contemporary practice are outlined in the Shams al-Aswat. Mirza Khan’s list of 92 desī tālas bears most resemblance, at least at the beginning of the list, to Lakṣminarāyan’s sixteenth-century Saṅgītasuryodaya (Tala Project files, Department of Indian Music, University of Madras).
82 Risāla dar Tāl, f.59a; Shams al-Aswat EUL, f.1b.
and the likelihood that he was still under the patronage of the emperor in 1698, his comments on current musical practice and ideology are likely to represent the most important hereditary tradition of the day.

The lengthy preface is an important example of the genre, providing substantial evidence of the extent to which the performance of music continued to be integral to the lives of patron-connoisseurs at the Mughal court. The *Shams al-Aśwāt* does not include all the chapters of the *Sanğītadarpaṇa*. Instead, it is in four chapters: swarādhyaḥ; rāgādhyaḥ; ālāpādhyaḥ (which “translates” Damodara’s prakīrṇādhyaḥ); and an untitled chapter on “dastak zadan”, in other words, tālā. The *Shams al-Aśwāt* sticks deceptively close to the structural order of the *Sanğītadarpaṇa*, and in places simply translates Damodara’s text. However, even when translating, Ras Baras Khan customarily conflates what he is describing with current practice, however spuriously; for example writing *dhrupad* in place of *prabandha* in his translation of the ālāpādhyaḥ. In places he seems to believe that Damodara’s theories apply directly to performance practice, for example on the movement of sound through the nāḍīs and cakras of the body. In this particular case, they probably did; there is a significant Sufi element to Ras Baras Khan’s writing, and he was clearly himself a Sufi adept. Several of his named disciples were also Sufis (*Shams al-Aśwāt* EUL, f.1b).

More importantly, he includes large sections delineating his own hereditary knowledge, all of which add substantially to our understanding of oral theory and performance practice. One important example is the first section of his chapter on ālāp. Although he bases the chapter structurally on Damodara, his first section describes the Sufi mystical meanings of the individual syllables performed in *dhrupad* ālāp, for example ā meaning “Allah”, tanū meaning “thou”, na meaning “ocean of love for God”, etc. (*Shams al-Aśwāt* GOML, f.27a-b). This is unprecedented information. Ras Baras Khan’s chapters on rāga and tāla, whose contents diverge entirely from Damodara, are of particular importance. While still preserving the *Sanğītadarpaṇa*’s rhythmic notation of laghus, etc., the chapter on tāla presents a unique, practice-based system of eleven tālas, including some with Persian names. The chapter on rāga is perhaps more important still, because it presents a hitherto unknown set of notated rāga examples for forty-eight rāgas,
including markings to indicate komal and tivra notes. Apart from Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation of the Saṅgītāpārijāta, Ras Baras Khan’s notations are unique in the Indo-Persian corpus.

Ras Baras Khan’s treatise is virtually unknown today. It was, however, influential in the eighteenth century, and William Jones cited it in his groundbreaking “On the musical modes of the Hindoos” of 1784 (1882: 136). The important late eighteenth-century treatise the Uṣūl-i Nağmāt al-Âṣafi (1793) follows the Shams al-Âswāt’s structure almost to the letter, to the extent that at some points it is difficult to tell them apart. Many of the Uṣūl-i Nağmāt al-Âṣafi’s “innovations” that have been hailed as revolutionary were prefigured by Ras Baras Khan. It is only because the Uṣūl-i Nağmāt al-Âṣafi does not acknowledge its distinguished predecessor that Ras Baras Khan’s work remains in obscurity.

V

Conclusion

In what ways do these seven Indo-Persian treatises on Hindustani music, and others like them written after 1660, constitute a “tradition” with a shared epistemology? I have argued that there were two branches of Indo-Persian musical writing at this time, one which openly drew its inspiration from Sanskrit precedent, and a collection of one-off works unique in their content that reflected Sanskrit traditions obliquely if at all. Furthermore, some of the earlier Sanskrit-based works like the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak, while well respected, did not belong to the Indo-Persian theoretical mainstream. Nevertheless, all seven of the treatises I discuss here reflect shared concerns and common contexts of production and reception that reveal them to be quintessential products of Mughal élite culture.

Firstly, all of them were written by men fully embedded in the hierarchy of Mughal service, and therefore intimately familiar with élite Indo-Persian cultural norms. At least two of the writers were mīrzās, Mirza Raushan Zamir and Faqirullah, while three more, Qazi Hasan, Kamilkhani, and Mirza Khan, were at minimum Mughal administrators, “men of the pen” if not “of the sword”. And the last, Ras Baras Khan Kalawant, was the top-ranking hereditary musician of his generation, whose fathers had served the Mughal emperor personally from the time of Akbar. These writers’ intimacy
with the cultural imperatives of Mughal élite society is demonstrated in their overwhelming concern with the ādāb of musical patronage and performance. This is manifested primarily in the audience for whom the treatises were written, the authors’ selection of śāstric material and preferred areas of original commentary, and in the didactic purpose for which most of the treatises were written. In seeking to re-educate patron-connoisseurs in the “authentic” and “authoritative” performance practice of Hindustani music, these treatises mirrored the aims of the contemporary mīrzānāma literature, which sought to prescribe a comprehensive and uniquely Mughal adab for the male élite.

Secondly, at least four of the authors, Qazi Hasan, Faqirullah, Kamilkhani, and Ras Baras Khan, were deeply involved in Sufi devotionalism. This interest is primarily revealed in the prefaces to several of the treatises, which mount a defence of music on the basis of its incorporation into Sufi ritual. However it is also present throughout in their stated audience, content and manner of writing. In addition, the influence of mysticism on the selection of some Sanskrit material indicates a bias towards distinctively Indian manifestations of Sufism, endorsed primarily by the Chishti, the Shattari, and the Qadiri orders. This bias narrows the social context of the treatises’ production and reception to a particular faction of the Mughal élite: those who endorsed music as a means of attaining union with the Divine in the Sufi assembly. Finally, the upsurge in Persian treatises explaining the Sanskrit underpinnings of Hindustani music from 1660 testifies to the increasing indigenisation of the Mughal élite in India. No longer did Indo-Persian musical texts reflect the personal preferences or official policy of the emperor. Instead, they represented a new interest on behalf of noble patrons more widely in understanding Hindustani music from an “inside” perspective, and in applying this knowledge to their patronage and enjoyment of music.

Furthermore, many of these texts were closely related to each other. Aurangzeb’s reign saw a central tradition develop in Indo-Persian musicology, whose roots were in the Ā’in-i Akbarī, and whose trunk consisted of the Rāg Darpan and its younger, more influential offshoot, the Tolhfat al-Hind (V). Even treatises genealogically cut off from the trunk, like the Tarjoma-i Pārijātak and the treatises of Kamilkhani, demonstrate intertextual connections with other well-known works of the period, suggesting they germinated in the same social and cultural hothouse as the main tree. The central
tradition took its main theoretical sustenance from two Sanskrit-derived concepts, the *saptādhyāya* and the *rāga-rāginī* system, strengthened by their earlier adoption by Indo-Persian and oral authorities. These two concepts shaped the central tradition’s organisational structure, but the śāstric content of the treatises was chosen with distinctively Mughal ends in mind. Moreover, the tradition also drew on Persianate literary conventions, Arabic and Persian theoretical concepts, and the oral theory of musicians, which combined to produce sometimes unexpected fruits. The blurring of Sufi and bhakti, Persianate and Hindustani concepts in the treatises closest to performance practice, those of Kamilkhani and Ras Baras Khan, is testimony to the increasing inseparability of Mughal and local influences. With the tradition’s obeisance to the imagined musical paradise of the Deccan, its ritualistic invocations of “authoritative” sources, unacknowledged borrowings from other Indo-Persian texts, and gestures to external literary genres, written and oral, this was a truly intertextual tradition of musical writing. From this genealogical tree, branches extended upwards into a nineteenth-century sky, embracing nearly all the major treatises of the Late Mughal period⁸³, and even nourishing the foreign graftings of William Jones and Augustus Willard (1882: 136; 1882: 37)⁸⁴.

Most importantly of all, however, the Indo-Persian authors demonstrated an unprecedented interest in the music that was being performed around them. Based on Abul Fazl’s palimpsestic technique, refined by Faqirullah and Mirza Khan, the Indo-Persian treatises combined a reverence for precedent with a license to provide original commentary, especially in areas of most interest to the Mughal élite – vocal genres, instruments, classes of musicians, famous performers, the etiquette of the melāfīl, rāga, and the spiritual and emotional effects of music. Their unique descriptions of

---

⁸³ Descendants of the *Rāg Darpan* (all c.1675-1700): *Tohfat al-Hind* (V), *Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ, Nishāţārā, Risāla-i Musamma ba-Naghmāt;* descendants of the *Tohfat al-Hind* (V) (all c.1720-1800): *Rāg Darshan,* Salar Jang *Risāla dar Mūsīqi, Uṣūl-i Naghmāt al-Âṣafī, Khulāṣat al-Aish, Ma’dan al-Mūsīqi* (1857). The *Rāg Darshan* and the *Ma’dan al-Mūsīqi* also cite the *Rāg Darpan,* but only because Mirza Khan does. There are also many independent eighteenth-century works, few of which are of high scholarly value. Notable exceptions include the biographical dictionary the *Risāla-i Zīkr-i Mughaniyān-i Hindūstān,* which borrowed from the 17C *Pādīshāhīnāma* and was itself copied by the Salar Jang *Risāla dar Mūsīqi* and the *Khulāṣat al-Aish;* and two late 18C works on tāla and drumming, the *Âṣl-i Uṣūl* and the *Uṣūl-i Tābla.*

⁸⁴ Willard states that “the reader will not find this work a translation of any of the existing treatises on music” (1882: 12). Despite this, just like his Indo-Persian precedents, Willard translates whole paragraphs directly from the *Tohfat al-Hind* (V) without acknowledging his source, before adding his own contemporary observations! (e.g. 1882: vi on musicians, and 102 on dhrupad and khayāl; cf. *Tohfat al-Hind* (V) Bod, f.113b-5b).
performance practice make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of musical developments in the late seventeenth century, and the culture in which they were embedded.

What then do these distinctive statements of contemporary practice say about musical life under Aurangzeb? Many of them are prescriptive in intent, given the concern that pervades all of these texts with restoring the lost “authenticity” of Hindustani music. However, at the same time, these statements are also unquestionably descriptive of real music performed during this period, particularly Faqirullah’s descriptions of real mehfil he had attended, and Ras Baras Khan’s references to his own performance practice. The evidence of the seventeenth-century Indo-Persian musical treatises is powerful testimony to the flourishing of a vibrant and uninhibited musical culture during Aurangzeb’s reign, under the patronage of the Mughal élite. This cumulative and persuasive picture starkly contradicts the common view of Aurangzeb as an implacable enemy of music, and his reign as a period of unmitigated musical stagnation. It is to the question of whether or not Aurangzeb banned music – and if so, what the consequences were for musical culture during his reign – that we now turn.
CHAPTER THREE

Did Aurangzeb ban music?

_The reign of Aurangzeb is infamous in popular music history... as a time when musical activity was ruthlessly suppressed by this fundamentalist ruler._

~ Allyn Miner

_There is no safer way to blacken a person’s reputation in the estimate of following generations than to attribute a wanton holocaust of wasted beauty to him._

~ Antonia Fraser on Oliver Cromwell

I

Introduction

It was towards the end of my research in India in 2001 that news began to filter in of the Taliban’s determination to obliterate the two ancient statues of the Buddha carved into the cliffs above Bamiyan, Afghanistan. The international condemnation that ensued was immediate, enormous, and surprisingly unified, including an attempt at intervention by leading Islamic jurists from al-Azhar University in Cairo (_Times of India_, 19/03/2001). In defiance of world opinion, the Taliban destroyed the statues in unswerving obedience to their narrow definition of the _sharı’a_ law. Virtually overnight the Bamiyan Buddhas became a powerful exemplar of the vulnerability of cultural heritage to hostile religious ideology empowered by the state. At the time I thought it somewhat ironic that a world so unmoved by the plight of thousands of Afghan refugees streaming into Pakistan to escape the worst famine in years could become so impassioned about the fate of two carved stones, however irreplaceable. But the reasons were bigger than that, more visceral; emotional and symbolic. Reading the world’s liberal media, it was as if the soul of humanity, embodied in its cultural expressions, had been permanently violated by an almost incomprehensible act of vandalism.

What intrigued me about the reaction of the Indian press and political bodies was how closely this event in Afghanistan seemed tied up with issues of Indian national

---

1 1993: 76.
The Indian government offered to take the statues, the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi declared that their destruction was in revenge for the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, and Hindu nationalist organisations like the Bajrang Dal threatened to blow up the shrine of Sheikh Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer in retaliation (Times of India, 08/03/2001; 05/03/2001). Most interesting from my perspective were the parallels that were consistently drawn between the actions of the Taliban and the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (e.g. Times of India, 04/03/2001). It was repeatedly stated in the Indian and international media that the last person who had tried to destroy the statues was Aurangzeb, despite the fact that such an assertion is without historical foundation⁴. It would seem that the very name of Aurangzeb acts in the popular imagination as a signifier of politico-religious bigotry and repression, regardless of historical accuracy.

Although it attracted less international anguish, it was almost certainly of more significance to the lives of ordinary Afghans that the Taliban also banned music. This action according to John Baily not only threatened the survival of the “rich Afghan musical heritage,” but had “deep and wide-ranging [effects] for the Afghan people” (2001: 8). It is in this area that the questions raised by the Taliban’s cultural policies in Afghanistan become relevant to a study of music under Aurangzeb. One thing that is impossible to ignore in any attempt to come to grips with North Indian musical life in the seventeenth century is Aurangzeb’s reputation for hostile policies towards music. The Taliban’s violent renunciations of the corrupting influences of music – the disembowelment of audio and video cassettes, the threats and beatings meted out to patrons and musicians, the burning and smashing of musical instruments (Baily 2001: 36-9) – are strikingly prefigured in Niccolao Manucci’s description of Aurangzeb’s ban on music in 1668-9:

> Not resting content with the above orders [prohibiting alcohol, drugs, long beards, etc.], Aurangzeb... ordered the same official [the muḥtasib⁵] to stop music. If in any house or elsewhere he heard the sound of singing and instruments, he should forthwith hasten there and arrest as many as he could, breaking the instruments. Thus was caused a great destruction of musical

---

³ Maps of India drawn up by the Hindu nationalist group the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) include Afghanistan as part of Akhand Bharat, or “unified India”, the eventual reunification of which is part of their ideological agenda.

⁴ e.g. Time Asia, 29/06/2001; Habib et al, 14/03/2001 (statement by the Aligarh Historians’ Society to the internet forum South Asia Social Change Circuit, signed by Irfan Habib, Shireen Moosvi, Iqtidar Alam Khan and Satish Chandra).

⁵ Official in charge of enforcing the shari’a.
instruments. Finding themselves in this difficulty, their large earnings likely to cease, without there being any other mode of seeking a livelihood, the musicians took counsel together and tried to appease the king in the following way: About one thousand of them assembled on a Friday when Aurangzeb was going to the mosque. They came out with over twenty highly-ornamented biers, as is the custom of the country, crying aloud with great grief and many signs of feeling, as if they were escorting to the grave some distinguished defunct. From afar Aurangzeb saw this multitude and heard their great weeping and lamentation, and, wondering, sent to know the cause of so much sorrow. The musicians redoubled their outcry and their tears, fancying the king would take compassion upon them. Lamenting, they replied with sobs that the king’s orders had killed Music, therefore they were bearing her to the grave. Report was made to the king, who quite calmly remarked that they should pray for the soul of Music, and see that she was thoroughly well buried. In spite of this, the nobles did not cease to listen to songs in secret. This strictness was enforced in the principal cities. (Storia 1907: vol. ii 8)

What happens to a musical culture and the people involved in it when music is banned? And how do the effects and the success or failure of such a ban act as a cultural indicator of the nature of the state in relation to its subjects? Discussions of the effects of Aurangzeb’s policies on the history of music are often uncannily similar because of an overwhelming reliance on just two contemporary sources, Manucci’s Storia do Mogor (begun 1699) and Khafi Khan’s Muntakhab al-Lubāb (begun 1718). Largely reflecting Manucci’s perspective, the majority of historians and musicologists regard Aurangzeb’s ban as both the “last word” on music during his fifty year reign, and as an indicator of the repressive nature of his regime (e.g. Richards 1993: 171-5). It is generally inferred from these two accounts that the ban was total and uncompromisingly enforced for the remainder of his reign (e.g. Wade 1998: 187). A straightforward reading of Manucci’s account certainly gives such an impression. One consequence of the ban is particularly emphasised here: the threat to the survival of the musical tradition, made more acute by the musicians’ economic ruin. As Baily points out, any hiatus that is forced on an oral system of transmission quickly leads to losses in that tradition (2001: 47). Other consequences are hinted at, such as the emotional and spiritual costs to a society that believed that “music is food for the soul,” as the Chishti Sufis of Afghanistan still teach.

---

7 e.g. Richards 1993: 173; Wade 1998: 185-7; Miner 1993: 76-9; Ahmad 1984: 3-7; Bor 1986/7: 84; and S N H Rizvi 1941: 337-8.
8 The obvious exception was the naubat, the military and time-keeping ensemble, which the primary sources describe repeatedly in military engagements and court ceremonial throughout Aurangzeb’s reign.
9 Miftāḥ al-Sarād SJ, f. 2b; Baily 2001: 22.
If Aurangzeb’s ban was as extreme as Manucci suggests, it would therefore have wrought enormous and possibly catastrophic changes to all aspects of musical life. Most secondary discussions of music in Aurangzeb’s reign extend no further than the ban, showing that historians and musicologists generally assume that musical activity was at best curtailed, and development prevented, from 1668-9 until the emperor’s death in 1707.\(^1\)

However, there are several problems with this reading of the burial of music. It is particularly hard to reconcile Manucci and Khafi Khan’s constructions of the story with conflicting evidence found elsewhere, both internally and in other contemporary sources. These discrepancies have proved impossible to synthesise convincingly in secondary accounts of the ban and its consequences. It needs to be remembered that Manucci and Khafi Khan were not at all interested in writing the history of music in Aurangzeb’s reign. Both authors are primarily concerned with political history, and musical information is placed entirely at the service of their main themes. This renders straightforward readings of their musical stories valueless without a consideration of the writers’ motivations, and the ends to which they directed their rhetoric and plot devices. In this chapter I seek to establish the extent and effectiveness of Aurangzeb’s ban on music during his reign, and what real effects his policy had on musical life in the empire. After a brief prologue, I will begin by retelling the story of Aurangzeb’s relationship with music from the most commonly used primary sources, followed by a look at how subsequent writers have tried to explain away the discrepancies in these accounts so they can be wedged into cohesive histories. I will then demonstrate how previously unused evidence and a more critical interpretation of the primary sources sheds new light on these events and their consequences for musical life in Aurangzeb’s reign. Finally, I will conclude with an examination of how music can be used as an indicator of the nature of his political regime. For this, I argue, explains the lasting universal appeal of the legend of Aurangzeb’s ban and burial of music. In the preface to John Baily’s report on the censorship of music in Afghanistan, Marie Korpe echoes my reflection on the meaning of the Bamiyan Buddhas, declaring: “When music is banned the very soul of a culture is being strangled” (Baily 2001: 6). Beneath the pens of Manucci and Khafi Khan, music becomes an elegy for freedom and tolerance crushed in the relentless grip of a bigoted despot.

\(^1\) e.g. Wade 1998: 187; S N H Rizvi 1941: 337-8; Veer 1986: 133.
II

Zainabadi: a prologue

Histories of music under Aurangzeb usually begin with his enthronement in 1658, with an acknowledgement that he tolerated musical performance during the early years of his reign (Wade 1998: 187). Scholars have therefore invariably overlooked perhaps the most telling musical episode of his life. Both music and love first entered the story of this austere prince in 1653, in the person of Hira Bai “Zainabadi”, a beautiful and accomplished singer and dancer who became the love of his life (Ma’âşir al-Umarâ’ 1999: 806). A faint memory of her survives in Manucci’s narrative, where she is forced to serve the travel writer’s vision of Aurangzeb as an extreme hypocrite, “good and holy to look at, but in reality an ill-doer and devil” (Storia 1907: vol. iii 253). She appears nameless as the woman who caused him to

[neglect] for some time his prayers and his austerities, filling up his days with music and dances; and going even farther, he enlivened himself with wine, which he drank at the insistence of the said dancing girl. The dancer died, and Aurangzeb made a vow never to drink wine again nor to listen to music. (vol. i 231)

As a number of other writers observed Aurangzeb listening to music long after this event, the musical significance Manucci attaches to Zainabadi’s death is misleading.11

However, the basic outline of the story is confirmed by other sources musicologists have hitherto neglected.

According to the Mughal author of the Ma’âşir al-Umarâ’ (1999: 806-7), Zainabadi was originally a singer and dancer in the household of Mir Khalil Khan Zaman, the husband of Aurangzeb’s maternal aunt12, and himself a skilled musician and well-known patron-connoisseur. In this more sympathetic retelling of the story, Aurangzeb met Zainabadi in Burhanpur, when he was viceroy of the Deccan, and immediately fell in love with her. However, in contrast to Manucci, Shah Nawaz Khan does not portray

---

11 It is not, however, entirely baseless, as it was customary to refrain temporarily from music-making throughout the period of mourning. Aurangzeb’s son, Muhammad A’zam Shah, for example, gave up listening to music on the death of his wife Jahanzeb Banu Begum in 1705, as did Shah Jahan on the death of Mumtaz Mahal (Sarkar 1989: 56-7). One reason the Iranian government and the Taliban gave in the past for prohibiting music is that their respective countries were at war and therefore in a constant state of mourning (Baily 2001: 28, 40).

12 Aurangzeb’s mother was the famous Mumtaz Mahal, for whom the Taj Mahal was built (Ma’âşir al-Umarâ’ 1999: 806).
Aurangzeb as the devil of the piece. Rather, although the prince struggles manfully to maintain his purity, he is led involuntarily astray by the beauty of Zainabadi, whose “movement was a heart-robbing one and it robbed the Prince of his self-control and his virtue” (806). The conflict between his love for her and the requirements of his sincere religious faith causes an intense crisis, eloquently portrayed in Zainabadi’s test of his love, whereby she induces him against his will to drink wine, only to save him from it at the last minute. Shah Nawaz Khan argues that it was Aurangzeb’s brother, Dara Shikoh, who maliciously transformed the story into evidence of Aurangzeb’s hypocrisy and unfitness to rule. In contrast, Shah Nawaz Khan presents the story of Zainabadi as a poignant representation of *firāq*, the intensity of feeling associated with separation from a loved one that is such an important theme in Indian and Persian literature. Zainabadi died only nine months after she became Aurangzeb’s companion (Sarkar 1912: 171). Shah Nawaz Khan portrays in tragic language a man devastated by her death, and “marked with the perpetual scar of separation”:

As the death of one’s beloved robs a man of his power, the Prince became altered on the day of her death and in his restlessness resolved to go out hunting. Mir Askari Aqil Khan was in his retinue, and when he had an opportunity of speaking privately to him he said: “Will it be advisable for you to go hunting when in this state (of mind)?” In reply the Prince recited the verse:

Laments at home comfort not the heart,
In the desert one can weep one’s fill.

Aqil Khan recited [his own] verse as suitable to the occasion:

How easy love appeared. Alas! how hard it was.
How hard was parting, what rest the beloved attained. (807)

In this version, there is no vow never again to listen to music on account of Zainabadi’s death, nor any hint of the pious aversion to music that characterise later episodes in other sources. On the contrary, Aurangzeb is portrayed here not as an antagonist of music, but as the devoted lover of a musician, the very embodiment of music. Intense first experiences of both love and death often have a profound effect on

---

13 For a discussion of the close association of wine, women and song and its potential for use by Indo-Persian and European writers as a symbol of debauchery or hypocrisy, see Brown 1999: 26-8 and 2000: 17-18.
future attitudes and behaviour. In Aurangzeb’s case, music was powerfully bound up with both. This important formative episode in the future emperor’s life suggests that at some level, Aurangzeb’s instinctive reaction to music was positive and powerful. It is significant that the only other woman believed to have captured Aurangzeb’s heart, the darling of his old age Udaipuri Bai (Sarkar 1989: 17), was likewise a musician. Moreover, although Manucci’s reading of the causal link between Zainabadi’s death and Aurangzeb’s future was inaccurate, he was arguably right in suspecting her life and death to be crucial in evaluating Aurangzeb’s later attitudes towards music.

**Sweet music in the divān: scene one**

In describing the War of Succession and the first ten years of his reign (1658-68), Manucci uses several musical anecdotes to establish Aurangzeb’s character. As already demonstrated in his treatment of Zainabadi, Manucci is unable to project any aspect of Aurangzeb’s relationship with music as benign, because he perceives the emperor’s attitudes wholly in terms of hypocrisy and intolerance. In Manucci’s hands, music becomes a weapon in the battle between good and evil, epitomised by the two main rivals for the throne, Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb. As a partisan of Dara Shikoh and a mercenary in his army, Manucci consistently refers to his lord as a compassionate, liberal martyr, symbolised by his support of music, and to Aurangzeb as a cruel religious hypocrite, symbolised by his repressiveness of it. After Dara’s extra-judicial execution while awaiting trial for treason, Manucci recalls that the “common people” composed a subversive protest song:

> about Fortune and the little durability of its glories, it having placed Aurangzeb on the throne, made Shah Jahan a prisoner, and decapitated Prince Dara. It said: ‘in turn it changed the faqir’s (Aurangzeb’s) cowl, and beheaded the prince in passing.’ When Aurangzeb heard about this ballad, he ordered an announcement to be made that no one should sing it under penalty of losing his tongue. But the song was so pitiful that almost everybody sang it in concealment. *(Storia 1907: vol. i 362)*

This anecdote cannot be read as evidence of repressive tendencies towards music so

---

14 See Brown 1999: 27-8 for the story of Dara’s faithful dancing girl Ra’nadil, who rejected Aurangzeb’s advances after Dara’s death *(Storia 1907: vol. i 222; see also Brown 2000: 20-1.).

15 This is a stab at Aurangzeb’s supposedly hypocritical piety, playing on the spurious rumour that he spent time as a faqîr. To kill one’s brother would presumably be inconceivable behaviour for a true faqîr.
early. For several years after this alleged episode, the official Mughal chronicler recorded male and female instrumentalists and dancers dominating the anniversary celebrations of Aurangzeb’s coronation, including rabāb, ṭanbūr and flute players, and the emperor’s notable bestowal of 7000 rupees on his principal musician, Khushhal Khan Kalawant. A number of dhrupads composed in Aurangzeb’s honour still preserved in oral and written forms bear witness to his active involvement as a patron of music. Writing after 1699 of a feast in Aurangzeb’s war camp in 1658, Manucci himself described Aurangzeb’s personal musicians performing all night “as is commonly the practice in Hindustan” (Storia 1907: vol. i 300-5). In 1665, the jewel merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier was similarly struck by the “sweet and pleasant” sounds of the court musicians performing in Aurangzeb’s presence at his daily darbār (Travels 1925: 81; xxi). That his patronage was not simply a concession to court ceremonial is demonstrated by Bakhtawar Khan in the Mi’rât-i ‘Ālam, which describes Aurangzeb as possessing a “perfect expert’s knowledge” of, and enjoying, the musical art (1877: 157). Faqirullah described Aurangzeb’s favourite singers and instrumentalists by name in 1666, and noted his enjoyment of their talents (Rāg Darpan 1996: 199, 207, 209).

The alleged proscription of this treasonous song should therefore be regarded as a political act. However, in terms of Manucci’s narrative structure, the protest-song story also acts as a “type”, or foreshadowing, of the burial story, designed to establish Aurangzeb’s fanatical character. Type refers to the narrative construction of an earlier event in the light of a later event, drawing attention to real or imagined similarities in order to reinforce the main point of both passages. Both stories have striking parallels: they both describe responses by the powerless to an action by the powerful portrayed as having dealt a devastating blow to freedom and tolerance; and both have nearly identical narrative structures. Widespread distress (the song was “pitiful”, the musicians in “great grief”) leads “everybody” (“the common people”, “the musicians”) to rise up in musical protest (the protest song, the burial march). In a display of repressive power, Aurangzeb dismisses the sentiments of “the people”, and silences their public expression (“Cut out

---

17 See below and N P Ahmad 1984: 104.
18 Again, Manucci is primarily using music in this anecdote as a metaphor. These musicians play an important narrative role as symbols of deceit in Manucci’s account of Aurangzeb’s betrayal of his brother Murad Bakhsh (Storia 1907: vol. i 300-5).
19 It is unlikely that the protest song would have been popular outside the circle of Dara’s supporters, who were not as numerous as Manucci suggests.
his tongue!” “Bury it!”). The correspondences in Manucci’s stories become clearer if we compare his version of the burial with the Indo-Persian account in the *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* (1977: 245). Missing from Khafi Khan’s narrative is the all-important moral of Manucci’s account – that “in spite of [the ban], the nobles did not cease to listen to songs in secret” (*Storia* 1907: vol. ii 8). In Manucci’s parallel narratives, “the people” (“almost everybody”, “the nobles”) thereafter engage in secret subversion, which neatly undermines Aurangzeb’s authority and dislocates power from the centre. Both of Manucci’s anecdotes are thus designed to make two seemingly contradictory points: that Aurangzeb possessed and exercised overwhelming might, but that his rule was in reality wholly unpopular, fragile, and ineffectual.

The picture of Aurangzeb built up in the story of the protest song is predicated on the widespread European view of him as a caricature villain, and the wishful thinking inspired by European imperial ambitions (Brown 1999: 12-13, 28)\(^\text{20}\). However, it also reflects Manucci’s personal antagonism towards Aurangzeb, and the difficulty in reconciling his vision of an intolerant despot with widespread evidence of musical activity in the first ten regnal years. All Manucci’s musical stories of this period are designed to prove Aurangzeb’s puritanical tendencies; for example, the anecdote about a *sarangī*-smuggling ring supplying Shah Jahan’s prison behind Aurangzeb’s supposedly censorious back (*Storia* 1907: vol. ii 78). In this case, Manucci’s “proof” of long-standing antagonism towards music is demonstrably false. François Bernier, a respected member of the court until 1668, noted that Shah Jahan continued to maintain all his “singing and dancing women” by Aurangzeb’s express permission (*Travels* 1891: 166), probably until his death in 1666. In other words, despite the evidence, Manucci cannot escape his rhetorical need to portray Aurangzeb as an ancient enemy of music. On the contrary, prior to the burial incident, there is little evidence of imperial hostility towards music outside the pages of Manucci’s journal\(^\text{21}\).

**That no echo of it may rise again? Climax and denouement**

While Manucci’s account does not provide a date for the ban, three Indo-Persian sources agree that a prohibition on music occurred in 1668-9 – Khafi Khan (*Muntakhab al-Lubāb* 20 At the time this anecdote was written (after 1699), Manucci was living in the English colony of Fort St George (Madras) and had been trying to curry favour with the English authorities in India for some time. \(^\text{21}\) See next section for the single exception to this.


1977: 245), Bakhtawar Khan (Mi:r’āt-i Ālam 1877: 157), and the Ma’āṣir-i Ālamgīrī by Saqi Musta’idd Khan (1947: 45)22. They also provide information on the extent and consequences of this event. However, the latter two sources present a very different view of the ban than the two canonical accounts (see below). Despite having been translated into English, the Mi:r’āt-i Ālam and the Ma’āṣir-i Ālamgīrī have been overlooked in the secondary literature23. This is significant, because it confirms that besides Manucci, only one near-contemporary version of the burial story is known to exist – that of Khafi Khan:

Distinguished and well-known musicians (kalawantan) and reciters of mystics’ verses (qawwals), who were in the service of the court, were ordered to desist from music and their mansabs increased. General orders were given for the prohibition of music and dancing. It is said that one day musicians collected together in a large crowd with great noise and tumult, prepared a bier with great dignity and carried it to the foot of the Jaroka Darshan, wailing in front of and behind the bier. When the matter was reported to Aurangzeb, he inquired about the funeral. The musicians said “Music (rag) is dead; we are going to bury it.” “Bury it so deep under the earth” Aurangzeb remarked, “that no sound or echo of it may rise again.” (Muntakhab al-Luba 1977: 245)

Khafi Khan’s account of the ban diverges from Manucci’s lavish tale of heartless destruction in several important respects. Firstly, there are no invasions of private houses, summary arrests, or destruction of instruments. As far as I am aware, Manucci is the only near-contemporary writer to record these details. More importantly, the musicians are not left destitute because they cannot pursue their vocations; rather the reverse, as their salaries and status24 are increased in return for compliance. Secondly, unlike Manucci, Khafi Khan places little religious significance on the episode, having the petitioners approach Aurangzeb at the jharoka-i darshan25 in the customary way, rather

---

22 This is really only one new source of evidence; the Ma’āṣir-i Ālamgīrī copies the Mi:r’āt-i Ālam here. A number of less likely dates have been suggested for the ban, including 1659 (Richards 1993: 174), 1665 (N P Ahmad 1984: 6), 1678 (Wade 1998: 187) and 1688 (Miner 1993: 76). However, the contemporary accounts indicate that 1668-9 is the most likely date for the extension of shari’a law. Other evidence suggests that the ban cannot have occurred earlier than 1668. François Bernier, who lived in Shahjahanabad until 1668, and whose journal of his intimate dealings with the Mughal court was published in 1670, makes no mention of a widespread prohibition against music during his residency in India.

23 Only two secondary sources acknowledge their account(s): Bhanu (1955: 27), and Miner, who alludes to it rather than directly citing a source(s) (1993: 76).

24 In the Mughal system, a man’s salary was normally commensurate with his mansab rank.

25 The daily public audience, in which the Mughal emperor would traditionally display himself at an open window of the imperial fort to the people below in order to hear their petitions.
than waylaying him on the way to the mosque (cf. *Storia* 1907: vol. ii 8)\(^\text{26}\). Finally, although Khafi Khan does refer to “general orders... for the prohibition of music and dancing”, it is clear that the story’s main concern is the fate of high-prestige court musicians and classical music. This is demonstrated by his emphasis on *kalāwants* and *qawwāls*, who at the time were the traditional exponents of *dhrupad* and *khayāl* respectively (*Tohfat al-Hind* (V) Bod, f.115b), and his use of the word *rāga*, which specifically indicates Hindustani art music. Manucci’s interpretation is far broader than this, implicating not only the male singers and instrumentalists of Hindustan, but the courtesans as well, whose long-abandoned palaces are described as falling into ruin (*Storia* 1907: vol. ii 8-9). In contrast, Khafi Khan arguably restricts Aurangzeb’s orders to high-prestige male performers of classical music, in the imperial court.

Nevertheless, with this climactic event all mention of music ceases in the *Muntakhab al-Lubāb*\(^\text{27}\). This act of silence may indicate that Khafi Khan wishes to give an impression contrary to his qualified narrative of the burial: that the ban was comprehensive, and effectively enforced. If so, we would expect references to music-making in Manucci’s journal to disappear as well. This is far from the case, and paradoxically the remainder of the *Storia do Mogor* contains some of the most informative European descriptions of musical life in the late seventeenth century. After describing categorically the banishment or forced marriage of all the female dancers in the empire, Manucci notes that Aurangzeb “nevertheless continued always to entertain in his palaces, for the diversion of the queens and his daughters, several dancing and singing women,” an expression of leniency which Manucci predictably interprets as hypocrisy\(^\text{28}\).

These passages are likely to refer respectively to two separate communities of female musician, *kanchanī*, a community of accomplished courtesans who performed in male space, and female musicians employed primarily in the *ḥarīm*, either *domnī* or “concubines” (Brown 2000: 19-20; see Chapter Four). However, it is likely in any case that Manucci’s story of the suppression of female performers is merely an exaggeration of an incident recorded by Bernier. The latter noted with approval that by 1663, Aurangzeb

---

\(^{26}\) Literally speaking, an appearance before the *jharoka-i darshan* in 1668 would have been impossible, as Aurangzeb had already abolished it, but this emphasises the political, rather than religious, nature of the petition.

\(^{27}\) With the exception of some brilliant descriptions of the *naubat* ensemble in the midst of battle campaigns, e.g. 1977: 267.

\(^{28}\) *Storia* 1907: vol. ii 335; Brown 2000: 20-1.
had revoked Shah Jahan’s permission for kanchanī to enter the imperial ḥarīm on his birthday, a practice widely censured as breaching the boundary between male and female space (see Chapter Four). They were nevertheless still permitted to visit Aurangzeb’s court on Wednesdays, although not to perform, in accordance with “long established usage” (Travels 1891: 273-4). Manucci also describes in detail musical performances at noble births, at Muslim weddings, in public processions, at private parties, and to ward off evil, in this case an eclipse of the sun. While Manucci’s anecdotes are rarely dated, many of these descriptions can be pinpointed to occurrences later than 1668-9.

The reports of other European travellers in India c.1670-1700 confirm this general picture. These include descriptions of Muslim weddings, funerals, public processions, Muslim and Hindu religious festivals, the eclipse, and female musicians and dancers. None of these writers mention any official restrictions on Indian musical life, and all of them witnessed performances by courtesans, in many cases commissioned by eminent Mughal officials (e.g. Carré Travels 1947: 232). If military music, religious music, music associated with life-cycle events, processional music, and other types of public music-making continued without hindrance, if public female musicians and dancers continued to play an integral part in both private and official Mughal entertainments, and if, as Manucci suggests, the male élite continued to patronise masters of classical music regardless, it is hard to imagine what sort of ban could possibly have been enforced, let alone how it could have had any effect on musical life or change. Even if we accept the veracity of Manucci’s and Khafi Khan’s narratives, we can only argue that the ban was restricted to certain types of music, or that it was short lived, or that it was poorly enforced and widely flouted. In all of these scenarios it would still be possible for Aurangzeb’s enemies to portray him as a fanatic with despotic tendencies, one who was either arbitrarily ruthless, a hypocrite, or a laughable failure. What cannot be said on the basis of these accounts is that a universal ban was successfully enforced.

III

The irresistible logic of stereotype

Yet despite occasional qualifications, this seems to be the view that most historians and musicologists wish to perpetuate. The accepted perception of Aurangzeb as a religious

---

fanatic whose banishment of music characterised the tyrannical nature of his regime – what I will call the “received view” – has acted as a serious obstacle to the study of music under his reign. Very little analytical work has been done on the history of music during this period, and this has in turn reinforced the assumption that there is nothing there to study. Several works have included brief digressions on music under Aurangzeb’s reign, but most of these treatments rely on popular stereotypes and face-value readings of Manucci and Khafi Khan. It seems to be largely unrecognised that the oral traditions of some of the most respected gharānās militate against this view of Aurangzeb. A few dissenting voices have been raised against the received view, but these seem to have gone largely unheard.

According to the received view, Aurangzeb, “the reverse of the Akbarian model of genius” (Veer 1986: 133), presided over “a period of disintegration and retardation of progress in all spheres of public life and fine-arts” (Perera 1994: 166). This is blamed on his “fundamentalism” (Miner 1993: 76). Most conventional discussions grudgingly acknowledge, deferring to Khafi Khan, that at the beginning of his reign “court life continued somewhat as usual” (Wade 1998: 185). However, “a gradually growing religious fervour” (Miner 1993: 76), supposedly fanned into flames by the orthodox ‘ulamā Shaikh Isa of Burhanpur and Mir Murtaza of Multan (e.g. Bhanu 1955: 28), led Aurangzeb to disband the court musicians, and eventually to outlaw the practice of music completely. The consensus inexorably reached is that “Aurangzeb’s reputation in music history was sealed forever. . . the prohibition against music applied to all” (Wade 1998: 187). The supposed consequences of this injunction are rarely speculated upon at length. Several accounts note without explanation the continuing role of music in Aurangzeb’s zanāna, largely because Manucci’s lengthy description of female ḥarīm musicians cannot be ignored (Storia 1907: vol. ii 312-4). A few writers, notably Miner, Bhanu and N P

---

32 My ustad’s father, Ustad Imrat Khan of the Imdad Khani gharānā, demonstrated for me in December 2000 a dhrupad composition in praise of Aurangzeb preserved in the family’s repertoire for over 300 years. Notably Delvoye (1994) and Sarmadee (Rāg Darpan 1996). Both base their dissenting views on the Indo-Persian primary sources rather than on Manucci and Khafi Khan. Satish Chandra (1986/7) also puts forward a perspective contrary to the received view, and Joep Bor has confirmed his view that the idea that Aurangzeb banned music is spurious (2002: personal communication).
Ahmad, briefly explore the potential implications, including the possibility of subversion and alternative sources of patronage. All use Manucci’s assertion that the nobles ignored the ban to argue that aristocratic patronage of music continued under Aurangzeb, or even, according to Miner’s nuanced thesis, expanded (1993: 78). Nevertheless, even they seem to feel obliged to restate unequivocally that under Aurangzeb’s unyielding control “music . . . suffered a setback . . . performance of music, except of a devotional nature, was prohibited” (N P Ahmad 1984: 6); “all musicians and singers [were dismissed] from his country” (Bhanu 1955: 28); and “music was ruthlessly suppressed by this fundamentalist ruler . . . [who] finally banned the practice of music altogether” (Miner 1993: 76).

Dealing with the discrepancies

Such unwillingness to challenge cherished assumptions about Aurangzeb has produced some curious distortions of primary source material in attempts to deal with clear discrepancies between the sources and the received view. An inability to accept that Aurangzeb might have been a willing patron of music in the first ten years of his reign leads a number of writers to misinterpret awkward evidence. More than one author attributes descriptions in the Rāg Darpan of current performers and musical innovations to the reign of Shah Jahan. This ignores the fact that the Rāg Darpan was written in 1666 and mentions Aurangzeb’s present-tense patronage of musicians several times (1996: 199, 207, 209, etc). Wade twice assigns Tavernier’s description of a classical ensemble performing for the emperor to Shah Jahan’s court (Travels 1925: 81). Tavernier was admitted to the imperial presence only once, on 12 September 1665 (xxi), well into the reign of Aurangzeb. This invalidates Wade’s subsequent interpretations of the passage (1998: 135, 165). Furthermore, in attempting to explain away Manucci’s conflicting statements about female performers, Wade chooses to locate his description of female musicians in the ḥarīm prior to the ban, prefacing it with “Though Manucci did not place his description of life in the harem into any specific time frame. . .” (1998: 186). Her position is untenable, given her subsequent acknowledgement that the paragraph immediately preceding Manucci’s description, which is in fact its introduction, clearly situates it in the period after Aurangzeb’s alleged ban (Storia 1907: vol. iii 312). Finally, despite arguably the best discussion of the ban’s potential consequences, Miner omits one word from her citation of Manucci – “He therefore ordered the same official” – to argue that Aurangzeb created a special anti-music department (1993: 76). On the contrary, the
context shows that the muḥtasib’s appointment was part of general moves against a number of practices deemed to be against the shari‘a.\textsuperscript{35}

It is in fact almost impossible to maintain the received view of Aurangzeb based on the two versions of the burial story, in the face of evidence from the same sources that Aurangzeb’s nobles and ḫarīm continued their patronage of music largely unhindered. Thus, while forcefully asserting the historicity of a complete ban on musical activity, all the main discussions of Aurangzeb’s policies contain caveats that undermine such certainty. The tensions thus produced in discussions of the ban’s consequences are invariably resolved by resorting to one of two solutions. The first is to argue, following Manucci, that a complete ban was enforced, but that the nobles secretly subverted it. The only explicit supporter of this view surveyed here, Miner states both that Aurangzeb’s “puritanical attitude” led to a “stoppage of support to music and a suppression of it to some degree”, and that his “repression had no real effect on the musical atmosphere of the court at all” (1993: 77)\textsuperscript{36}. She explains this seeming contradiction by arguing that in defiance of the emperor, the Mughal amīrs actually increased their patronage of music by taking on the large number of unemployed court musicians who remained in Delhi. She speculates that this shift in patronage led to large-scale musical change. Thus, while in her opinion Aurangzeb’s repressive policies had an undoubted effect on music in the seventeenth century, it was the opposite of what he had intended (78).

The second solution reflects Khafi Khan’s more restricted view of the ban, and allows for a level of legal music making while still accepting the burial anecdote. One suggestion advanced by Bhanu and Miner is that a number of court musicians sought to escape Aurangzeb’s sphere of influence by migrating to other (Hindu) courts, specifically Bikaner (Bhanu 1955: 29) and Alwar (Miner 1993: 78). Although some migration may have taken place\textsuperscript{37}, this argument is problematic. It ignores the fact that the Rajput rulers of such states were fully and closely integrated into the Mughal hierarchy as manṣabdārs,

\textsuperscript{35} Storia 1907: vol. ii 5-8; Muntakhab al-Lubāb 1977: 243-7. The office of the muḥtasib was hardly a radical new departure. Even Allaudin Khilji, a great champion of music and patron of Amir Khusrau, was noted for his similar repression of practices deemed unlawful under the shari‘a (Darbari 1982: 65).

\textsuperscript{36} Miner’s statement that a total ban only extended to the citizens of Delhi is unsubstantiated by the primary sources (1993: 76).

\textsuperscript{37} The migration of musicians between important centres of musical patronage seems to have been common before Aurangzeb; see for example della Valle’s Travels 1989: 243.
many of them of very high rank, with a tradition of loyal service to the Mughal emperor. Richards notes that loyalty was successfully maintained between Aurangzeb and his top 1000 mansabdârs by a system of extensive face-to-face encounters (1976: 243-4). It is more than likely that the rulers of Bikaner and Alwar, with their entire households including musicians, spent a large amount of time at the imperial court in Delhi, and in Aurangzeb’s camp during his thirty years of campaigning in the Deccan. Hence, by transferring allegiance to these lesser rulers, the erstwhile imperial musicians would nevertheless have remained fully under Aurangzeb’s eye. Another possibility suggested by Bhanu is that the ban only applied to the court of the emperor (1955: 29). This would legitimise musical activity outside the specific limit of the imperial darbâr. Bhanu and S N H Rizvi also believe erroneously that the manuscripts in Diyanat Khan’s collection show that Aurangzeb’s controversial policy caused an “increase” in the number of legal treatises written in support of music making. This idea is without foundation.

Nevertheless, a number of writers agree with the general premise that the undoubted increase in “intellectual music-related activity” at this time was the direct result of the suppression of practical outlets for musical creativity (e.g. Miner 1993: 77). In her monograph Hindustani music, N P Ahmad presents a great deal of information culled from the Indo-Persian musical treatises of Aurangzeb’s reign. In order to explain them away, she speculates that frustrated musicians were forced to channel their stifled musicianship into writing. Faced with this mass of primary evidence to the contrary, she nevertheless clings to the view that all non-devotional music was silenced during this period (1984: 3-7). This somewhat perverse argument can only be understood in the context of an inability to escape the received view.

---

38 Raja Anup Singh of Bikaner, for example, was granted a mansâb of 2500 zât, 2000 savâr on his accession in the ninth year of Aurangzeb’s reign (1667) (Ma’âşir al-Umarâ’ 1999: 287-91). The emperor increased this to 3500 as a reward for loyal service, ranking him among the top 150 nobles (Ali 1966: 228). His son, Swarup Singh, was also a mansabdâr (1500 savâr) (Ma’âşir al-Umarâ’ 1999: 291).

39 Mirza Nathan, a general in the armies of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, took his kalâwants and courtesans with his household on military campaigns (Bahâristân-i Ghaybi 1936: vol. i 512; vol. ii 144, 476), as did Ghaziuddin Feroz Jang during Aurangzeb’s reign (see below).
IV

Did Aurangzeb bury music?

Some of the answers to the question “what happened to music under Aurangzeb?” in the secondary literature have merit, particularly those of Bhanu and Miner. However, they are all predicated on the assumption that the ban and burial stories in Khafi Khan and Manucci are true, and that the information they present simply needs to be collated and explained. One solution that has not been considered by any proponent of the received view is that the burial anecdote, found in only two sources, is mythical. Most secondary accounts offer no assessment of the primary sources, treating them as fact, and those that do are largely uncritical. Richards, for example, merely states that Khafi Khan’s *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* is “the best narrative history of Aurangzeb’s reign” (1993: 306).

Wade believes that the Indo-Persian histories of the period are “lent further contemporary credibility” by Manucci’s *Storia do Mogor* (1998: lli), and Bor refers to it as a “masterly work” (1986/7: 63). However, seventeenth-century travel journals require particular care in their assessment as historical sources (see Brown 1999), and of all the travel accounts of this period, Manucci’s is the most controversial. Khafi Khan’s account, reflecting an Indo-Persian cultural milieu, is also not straightforward. As Delvoye suggests, in order to establish the historicity of the burial narratives, we first need to conduct “a thorough study of the personalities and the motivations of their authors, [which] would certainly lead to a serious questioning of this simplistic vision” (1994: 118).

The origins of the burial

Khafi Khan was born into an Irani family, and grew up in the Deccan. He took up a minor position in the Mughal administration as a revenue collector in 1684 after a brief stint in the imperial army, and towards the end of Aurangzeb’s reign worked as a news-writer in the region of Ahmedabad (1977: xiii-v). As Khafi Khan was only born in 1664, he was not, as Wade believes, “Aurangzeb’s [official] chronicler for the first ten years of his reign” (1998: 169). Nor is it quite correct to refer to the *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* as a “contemporary account” (214 n. 6), as this general history of the Mughal dynasty was compiled between 1718 and 1734. While the section of Khafi Khan’s history devoted to

---

40 S N H Rizvi 1941: 338; Bhanu 1955: 29. Diyanat Khan’s collection contains only one treatise on the legality of music (1663, Shahjahanabad); the rest are theoretical works on Arabic and Persian music.
Aurangzeb is based on contemporary records for the first ten regnal years, he complains that the lack of written sources after 1667 forced him to rely on his “memory” for subsequent events (1977: xiv). This would seem to place his account of the ban and burial at least fifty years after the event. In contrast, the Venetian adventurer Niccolao Manucci wrote his *Storia do Mogor* in Madras at the end of Aurangzeb’s lifetime, having spent some years in residence in Delhi. His version of the story would therefore appear to be earlier than Khafi Khan’s. Nevertheless, it was still only written down after 1699, after more than thirty years had elapsed.

Throughout his journal, Manucci emphasises his unique familiarity with Mughal society, and is keen to portray his account of the Mughal court as being trustworthier than all other travel writers (*Storia* 1907: vol. i 3). Certainly, Manucci presents some of the most extensive European descriptions of music during this period. These appear more valuable when the length of his residence in India (1653-1717) and his first-hand knowledge of the imperial capital are considered. He also gives the impression of having been well acquainted with members of the Mughal establishment, primarily those who had been partisans of Dara Shikoh. However, he regularly exaggerates the extent of his influence, portraying himself as indispensable to Mughal society, even giving the impression that he personally wielded more power than either the emperor or Islam:

> It was so common to drink spirits when Aurangzeb ascended the throne, that one day he said in a passion that in all Hindustan no more than two men could be found who did not drink, namely, himself and ‘Abd-al-wahhab, the chief *qazi* appointed by him. . . But with respect to ‘Abd-al-wahhab he was in error, for I myself sent him every day a bottle of spirits (*vino*), which he drank in secret, so that the king could not find it out. (*Storia* 1907: vol. ii 4)

The sense of his being central to the imperial court, with a privileged understanding of its inner workings, is also conveyed in many of his descriptions of music. His detailed description of female musicians in the *ḥarīm*, for example, is presented as the eyewitness account of one who has “a special acquaintance with all these secrets and of many others, which is not in place for me to state” (*Storia* 1907: vol. ii 334).

---

41 See Maiello 1984: 623-9; Sarkar 1912: xxi-ii; Devra 1984: 351; and William Irvine’s introduction to the *Storia do Mogor* (1907).
Manucci’s claim to be an eyewitness in this case is questionable. It is highly unlikely that he ever observed Aurangzeb’s zanāna. Like many of his other “observations”, this description is almost certainly second hand, and possibly even invented – the same names appear in more than one of his lists, including Hira Bai who had been dead since 1654. Even François Bernier, Dara Shikoh’s personal physician and an intimate of some of the leading nobles, entered Aurangzeb’s ḥarīm only once, blindfolded. He wrote “I now wish I could lead you about in the Seraglio, as I have done in the rest of the Fortress: but who is the Traveller that can speak of that as an eye-witness?” (Teltscher 1997: 42). Perhaps to bolster his claim of possessing such information, Manucci gave his fellow traveller John Fryer the impression that he had been chief physician to Aurangzeb for forty years (Teltscher 1997: 42). This is simply not true. Manucci was a self-educated Venetian adventurer and mercenary whose patchy contact with Mughal society was supplied by a series of the least desirable military jobs and a three-year stint as “physician” to the wife of Shah ‘Alam (later Bahadur Shah, r.1707-12)⁴⁴. While in the princess’ service, Manucci may have had contact with female slaves in Shah ‘Alam’s residential quarters (and during 1678 those of Aurangzeb’s sister Jahanara (Storia 1907: vol. i 220)). However, these slaves did not belong to the imperial ḥarīm, as none of the royal princes lived within the walls of the imperial fort (Blake 1993: 45, 75). Moreover, Manucci was not even living in Shah ‘Alam’s palace (Storia 1907: vol. iii 393), and he specifically states that it was only through the prince’s female slaves that he gained information about life within this household (397). It is also clear from Manucci’s descriptions that all his dealings with the princess were conducted through a curtain (398). Despite this, he claims that Shah ‘Alam allowed him freely to wander about the ḥarīm whenever he liked:

It is the custom in the royal household, when a physician is called within the mahal, for the eunuch to cover his head with a cloth, which hangs down to his waist. They then conduct him to the patient’s room, and he is taken out in the

---

⁴³ Gordon argues that firearms were “relegated to the infantry. . . held in such contempt that they were listed along with litter-bearers, carpenters, woodcutters, and cotton-carders in the military pay records. . . No Mughal cavalryman was ever ceremoniously presented a jewelled gun for valorous service. . . Likewise, the artillery branch had little prestige or chance of advancement, and was mainly staffed by Portuguese and other foreigners on contract” (1994: 188).

⁴⁴ In 1656 the seventeen-year-old Manucci enlisted in Dara Shikoh’s army as a despised artilleryman. After Dara’s execution he became captain of artillery for Raja Jai Singh of Amber, and went to the Deccan in his service in 1664, deserted, returned to Delhi and attached himself to the entourage of Jai Singh’s son. Somewhere along the way he picked up some medical knowledge and set himself up as a “physician” in Lahore, c. 1670, which eventually provided his entrée into Shah ‘Alam’s court.
same manner. . . The prince. . . ordered them to uncover me, and that in future I was to be allowed to come in and go out without being covered. He said that the minds of Christians were not filthy like those of Mahomedans. (400)

This passage is quite implausible, and appears to have been designed to draw attention to Manucci’s superiority over his literary archrival, Bernier. Bernier witnessed many of the same events as Manucci, from a much more privileged position\(^{45}\), and published his travels (1670) to great acclaim thirty years before Manucci began writing. Manucci frequently sneers at Bernier’s supposed shortcomings when compared with his own superior understanding of the situation (e.g. vol. i 220; vol. ii 65-75). However, it is well known that Manucci relied heavily on Bernier’s published journal, not merely for the form of his observations, but also for their contents and perspective. Maiello argues that “Manucci’s work often seems an artificial elaboration of Bernier’s comments. . . given Bernier’s accurate and detailed description, Manucci’s observations not only appear redundant but also somewhat insipid.” Furthermore, his attempt to outdo Bernier “leads the Venetian traveller. . . to give undue credit to sordid hearsay information” (1984: 625-6). Even William Irvine, who suggests more kindly that Manucci merely used Bernier as a memory aid, argues that his “supposed extracts from the Mogul official chronicles are for the reigns preceding that of Shahjahan a tissue of absurdities” (Storia 1907: lxxii-iii). Manucci’s reliance on “bazaar rumours” for the rest of his narrative is also proverbial (Sarkar 1912: xxi-ii).

In short, Manucci did possess extensive experiential knowledge of Mughal India, and served various members of the Mughal establishment over some years. It would be unwise summarily to dismiss his descriptions of musical events in Aurangzeb’s reign as similarly being a “tissue of absurdities”. However, rather than being a trusted and close servant of the court with personal access to Aurangzeb’s \(\mathit{harim}\) and extensive influence among the nobles, not only did Manucci have no more than a marginal position in Shahjahanabad, but his observations and even his opinions are often based on Bernier’s account, many of those that are original are second-hand anecdotes of dubious origin, possibly poorly remembered, and his claims to be a privileged eyewitness sometimes collapse under scrutiny. Moreover, Manucci’s travel journal demonstrates a hatred for Aurangzeb that verges on the irrational. Maiello argues that this fierce antagonism

---

\(^{45}\) After Dara Shikoh’s death, Bernier was appointed personal adviser to Danishmand Khan, Aurangzeb’s secretary of state for foreign affairs.
created “the most blatant distortion present in his narrative” (1984: 629), a distortion that I have shown to be present in many of his musical anecdotes.

Given Manucci’s hostility towards Aurangzeb and his treatment of music primarily in symbolic terms, it is very difficult to verify the extent of historical accuracy in his account of the ban and burial. In this case, he did not use Bernier as a source, as Bernier makes no mention of the ban. On the grounds that there is evidence independent of the two burial stories to confirm that some sort of restriction was placed on music in 1668-9, I would suggest that the ban itself has some basis in fact. However, the burial story is of more dubious genesis. Manucci certainly seems to have been resident in Delhi c. 1668-9, and could potentially have witnessed the burial in person. However, this is most unlikely. Firstly, if Manucci had been an eyewitness, he almost certainly would have said so. He is usually eager to claim eyewitness status whenever possible, and there is no indication in the narrative that he was present. Secondly, this event is not located in historical time, demonstrating that Manucci was uncertain when it occurred, which further suggests that he was not there. Hence, Manucci’s version of the ban and burial is arguably at best second-hand gossip written down at a distance of thirty years. Given his treatment of other musical anecdotes, it is probably also embellished to portray Aurangzeb in the worst possible light. In the absence of an earlier version of the burial than Manucci’s, it would be tempting to dismiss it as a product of his fertile imagination.

However, a closer inspection of Khafi Khan’s narrative shows that his burial narrative was copied almost word for word from a significantly earlier source than Manucci, attributed to an Aurangzebi manṣabdār, “Ma‘muri” (Muntakhab al-Lubāb 1977: 245; cf. “Ma‘muri”, f.139b-40a). ‘Abdul Fazl Ma‘muri supposedly entered imperial service c.1655 and lived to record Aurangzeb’s death in 1707. However, Syed points out that such a lengthy period of service would have been unlikely. Furthermore, the only manṣabdār by the name of ‘Abdul Fazl Ma‘muri listed anywhere in the records died in 1655. Syed argues that “Ma‘muri” was a pen name for at least three imperial officers who wished, on account of their opposition to Aurangzeb, to remain anonymous. Although “Ma‘muri” seems to have had contact with various courtiers, as well as Aurangzeb himself, Syed states that the account is chronologically inaccurate and contains many other errors. However, “Ma‘muri” may have begun writing as early as the twenty-third regnal year (Muntakhab al-Lubāb 1977: xii-xxv). This means that Khafi Khan’s account of the ban and burial represents an earlier version of the story than
Manucci’s, borrowed from an author who claimed to be an eyewitness. Given the mystery surrounding “Ma’muri”, however, this claim is difficult to rely on; the author also gives himself a fictional background, positions, and manṣab rank (xxiii-vi). In addition, any story told by “Ma’muri” is likely deliberately to portray the emperor in a negative light. The historicity of the burial story therefore remains doubtful. All that can be said with any degree of certainty is that Manucci was not its originator, and that, at least among Aurangzeb’s enemies, the story was in circulation thirteen years after the event.

**Disposing of the body**

My conclusions on the trustworthiness of the burial story have several implications in assessing the nature of Aurangzeb’s restrictions on music. Firstly, if Khafi Khan’s account is the earlier version of the story, we should disregard as fictional any information or interpretations that appear only in Manucci. Secondly, there is no evidence that the story of the burial protest is anything other than a myth propagated by Aurangzeb’s enemies. This is not to downplay its contemporary significance as a metaphor of the anxieties and frustrated ideals of one faction of Mughal society. However, its status as music history, and especially its claims of totality, should be rejected. We need to dismiss both accounts of the burial protest, and to accept the priority of Khafi Khan’s interpretation of the ban itself. By integrating this perspective with a discussion of the lesser-used primary sources, a very different picture to the received view of Aurangzeb begins to emerge.

**Reinterpreting the ban**

Khafi Khan’s understanding of the ban suggests that Aurangzeb’s restrictions may only have applied to qawwâls and kalâwânts in the service of the imperial court. Furthermore, these restrictions were designed to minimise any hardship the musicians might otherwise have endured. This picture corresponds with the record of the ban in the *Mir’āt-i ‘Ālam* by Bakhtawar Khan (written 1658-1684), and the *Ma’āṣir-i ‘Ālamgirî* by Saqi Musta’idd Khan (1711) which cites Bakhtawar Khan. This account also resembles Bernier’s view of the restrictions placed on the kanchanî. In 1668-9, “as the Emperor had no liking for

---

pleasure, and his devotion to duty left him no time for festivity, he ordered that the chief musicians Khushhal Khan, Bisram Khan, Ras-bin, and others might come to the Court, but must not make music” (Ma‘āšir-i ‘Ālamgīri 1947: 45). The Mir‘āt-i ‘Ālam confirms Khafi Khan’s statement that the musicians’ mansabs were increased if they chose to renounce their vocation (1877: 157). What is most interesting about this account is that it portrays Aurangzeb’s restrictions purely as an act of personal piety with no wider implications for public policy. It is important to note that Aurangzeb personally authorised the publication of the Mir‘āt-i ‘Ālam. Historians commonly state that he banned the writing of historical chronicles along with everything else in the eleventh year of his reign (e.g. Richards 1993: 173). On the contrary, after Bakhtawar Khan’s death in 1684, Aurangzeb gave the author’s disciple Saqi Musta’idd Khan permission to publish the Mir‘āt-i ‘Ālam. This work echoes the official line so closely that some scholars say it might as well have been written by Aurangzeb himself (S A A Rizvi 1986: 275-7). Hence, the interpretations of the ban found in the Mir‘āt-i ‘Ālam and the Ma‘āšir-i ‘Ālamgīri are most likely to represent Aurangzeb’s official stance on music:

Though he has collected at the foot of his [throne]. . . singers who possess lovely voices and clever instrumental performers, and in the commencement of his reign sometimes used to hear them sing and play, and though he himself understands music well, yet now for several years past, on account of his great restraint and self-denial, and observance of the great Imam. . . he entirely abstains from this amusement. If any of the singers and musicians becomes ashamed of his calling, he makes an allowance for him or grants him land for his maintenance. . . Mirza Mukarram Khan Safavi, who was an expert in the musical art, once said to His Majesty “What is your Majesty’s view of music?” The Emperor answered (in Arabic) “It is mubah [permissible], neither good nor bad.” The Khan asked, “Then what kind of it is in your opinion most worthy to be heard?” The Emperor replied, “I cannot listen to music without [instruments47] especially pakhawaj, but that is unanimously prohibited (haram); so I have left off hearing singing too.”48

Exactly what genres Aurangzeb regarded as ḥarām is unclear. From the names of the musicians who were requested to stop performing in his presence, it seems that

---

47 Sarkar translates mazāmīr here as “flutes”; this is incorrect. In the context of legal debates on samā’, from which Aurangzeb’s statements ultimately derive, the word mazāmīr means “instruments” generically.

Aurangzeb no longer allowed himself to listen to dhrupad or instrumental music. Khushhal Khan, a descendant of Tansen, was the greatest dhrupad specialist of his generation, and Ras Bin was a “superb” bīn player⁴⁹. The forbidden pakẖāwaj may also have been used to accompany khayāl at this time (Risāla dar Mūsīqī R, f. 170a-b). This suggests that Aurangzeb’s restrictions would have applied to most genres of art music, as well as to other accompanied singing. However, it is also clear that his abstinence was a private matter, undertaken at personal cost to one who was obviously a connoisseur, for reasons of religious conscience and dedication to weightier matters (Ma‘āṣir-i ‘Ālamgīrī 1947: 45). The idea that music should not be permitted to interfere with a man’s serious duties was the consensus of Mughal male culture from at least Akbar’s reign (see Chapter Four). However, Aurangzeb’s declaration that music is permissible indicates that his personal renunciation was not intended to be forced upon other patron-connoisseurs. The Mir‘āt-i ‘Ālam also suggests that the court musicians were encouraged rather than forced to give up performing. In short, the semi-official account depicts Aurangzeb as a benign, cultured ruler who personally gave up listening to art music out of religious conviction, but who did not translate his act of personal piety into public policy.

There are two possible ways of interpreting this portrayal of Aurangzeb’s official stance. It may be that in 1668-9 he did attempt more general restrictions on music that were extensively flouted and therefore became unenforceable. This account may represent a face-saving exercise aimed at maintaining the integrity of Aurangzeb’s public persona, while covering up the failure of his attempts at prohibition by retrospectively transforming public orders into unofficial encouragement and voluntary renunciation. However, this seems improbable. Instead, on the evidence of Saqi Musta‘idd Khan and Bakhtawar Khan, I would propose that there was no public prohibition of music in Aurangzeb’s reign, and that the only music that was prohibited was élite, accompanied genres performed in the presence of the emperor himself. It may be that this did precipitate the departure of some musicians from the court, which could have been construed as evidence of an increasingly Islamic public agenda. Nevertheless, as Dargah Quli Khan shows with respect to Muhammad Shah, the personal abstention of the

⁴⁹ Shams al-Ąswāt SJ, f. 3a-b; Faqirullah 1996: 209.
emperor from musical life had no negative impact outside the imperial darbār
(Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1993: 102)50.

Musical life in Aurangzeb’s empire
This last point is born out by evidence from other primary sources. The Mīrzānāma of
Mirza Kamran, written no earlier than 1672, shows that musical patronage continued as
customary amongst the Mughal amīrs (1913: 6, 11). A large number of Aurangzeb’s
amīrs are remembered as patrons of music during his reign, including many who were his
close associates and relatives. The father of Aurangzeb’s principal wife, Shah Nawaz
Khan Safavi, is described in the Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ as having “given his heart to rāga. . .
He gathered together singers and instrumentalists, the like of which were not to be found
in any other place at that time” (1888: vol. ii 685). As previously noted, Aurangzeb’s
uncle by marriage, Mir Khalil Khan Zaman (d. 1684), was similarly renowned for his
patronage of music, and also for his own musicianship (Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: vol. i
806). Aurangzeb’s powerful prime minister Asad Khan (appointed 1686, d. 1717)
likewise maintained a company of singers and musicians of legendary proportions (vol. i
279), and the important manuscripts on Hindustani music known to have been
commissioned by Diyanat Khan (d.1713) indicate that he too was an important patron.
There seems to have been no shortage of other patrons willing to fill the gap left by
Aurangzeb’s withdrawal from musical patronage, in the shape of the governors of
provincial capitals such as Lahore, Srinagar, Patna, Thatta, Allahabad, Amber, Bikaner,
Bundi, etc. (Chandra 1986: 208). Several paintings produced c.1680-1710 at the court of
Udaipur depict musicians performing for Maharana Jai Singh (5000 zāt, 5000 savār) and
Maharana Amar Singh (also 5000/5000), who were publicly (at least) loyal to
Aurangzeb51.

50 After Nadir Shah’s invasion of Delhi in 1739, Muhammad Shah “abstains himself from the musical
soirees and has suspended them at court” (Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1989: 122). This had no observable impact on
musical life – Dargah Quli Khan’s Muraqqa’-i Dehlī is a byword for vibrant descriptions of musical culture
in eighteenth-century Delhi.
51 Paintings: Andrew Topsfield 1980: 57-8, 60; 1995: 189. Mewar (Udaipur) was one of the Rajput states
that rose unsuccessfully against Aurangzeb in 1679-80, under Jai Singh’s father Raj Singh, who submitted
to Aurangzeb before his death in 1680 (Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: vol. i 763-4). Jai Singh’s and Amar
Singh’s mansābats placed both among Aurangzeb’s top fifty noblemen (Ali 1964: 220).
However, Delhi in particular seems to have continued as a centre of cultural patronage under the governorship of Aurangzeb’s intimate companion, Mir Askari Aqil Khan (d. 1696)\textsuperscript{52}, after the emperor left for the Deccan in 1679, never to return. Chandra suggests that “a small leisured class had emerged at Delhi which had both the means and the desire to offer patronage to cultural activities” at this time (1986: 209). Patronage seems to have centred around the royalty and the upper echelons of the nobility, and on circles of Sufi adepts. It is likely that the great patrons of the day, notably Aurangzeb’s sister Jahanara (d.1681), his favourite daughter Zebunnissa (\textit{Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’} 1999: vol. ii 612), and Aqil Khan himself, continued to provide employment for musicians who remained in Delhi (Chandra 1986: 208). The imperial capital was also a major centre of Chishti Sufism, with an important patron in the princess Jahanara. S A A Rizvi states that both Naqshbandi and Chishti Sufis in Delhi engaged in the practice of \textit{sama’} throughout Aurangzeb’s reign (1983: 250, 272). The celebrated Persian poet of India, Mirza ‘Abdul Qadir Bedil (d. 1720), who lived in Delhi from 1684 and was intimate with Aqil Khan through their mutual interest in Sufism (Chandra 1986: 209), was also famous for his musicianship (\textit{Safīnā-i Khūshgu}, f. 72a). His poetry is full of musical metaphors associated with mystic practices and \textit{sama’}. The \textit{Safīnā-i Khūshgu} indicates that Mirza Bedil was a key member of overlapping circles of nobles and adepts, patrons and artists in the capital, linked together by mysticism, music and poetry (see Chapter Four).

It could perhaps be argued that Aurangzeb’s absence from Delhi led to a renaissance of musical life there, nourished by a select group of patrons away from the emperor’s reproving eye. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that musicians continued to attend their patrons in Aurangzeb’s war camps and temporary capitals in the Deccan. Aurangzeb’s personal friend, the Mughal general Ghaziuddin Feroz Jang (d.1711), who was responsible for the successful siege of Bijapur in 1687 and was rewarded for his loyalty with one of the highest \textit{manṣab} ranks (\textit{Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’} 1999: 589), brought élite musicians with him on campaign. Their performances “brought the hearts of listeners to ecstasy with sweet melodies, singing and playing the \textit{tambur} and other instruments” (Digby 1993: 264). The English ambassador to Aurangzeb, William Norris (1699-1702), used a Flemish musician in the service of Osman Dara as a translator in the imperial camp (\textit{Norris Embassy} 1959: 211). The traveller Careri witnessed Holi

---

\textsuperscript{52} Who was with Aurangzeb on the day of Zainabadi’s death
celebrations in the Mughal camp in 1693 that included a formal performance of singing and dancing to entertain the Mughal governor (Travels 1949: 210-11). It is also reasonable to suggest that Raja Anup Singh of Bikaner, who spent most of his life campaigning for Aurangzeb in the Deccan, may have included in his entourage his most famous imperial trophy, the musician and theorist Bhava Bhatta. Under these circumstances, it is hard to imagine that Aurangzeb, lying in his tent at night, would never have heard faint strains of dhrupad or the belled feet of dancers carried on the wind from the tents of his loyal generals all around him.

Significantly, by far the most important patron of music in the late seventeenth century was Aurangzeb’s third son, Muhammad A’zam Shah (1653-1707). He was a widely popular figure (Safina-i Khūshgū, f. 36a), and for much of his life, A’zam was also Aurangzeb’s favourite son, and the only one whom he trusted. As he was only fifteen years old in 1668, and died in the same year as his father, his entire career as a patron coincided with the years of Aurangzeb’s supposed “ban”. A’zam was famous for his superior musicianship. According to Bindraban Das, he was unequalled in his knowledge of the fundamentals of music and dance, and even the great masters asked his advice. He possessed a perfect command of many genres of Hindavi poetry, and he was above all famed for his excellent musical compositions (Safina-i Khūshgū, f. 36a).

A’zam was also renowned as a patron of great discernment, demonstrated in his crucial involvement in establishing the career of Bedil (who was in his service until 1684). His mehfils were remembered well into the eighteenth century for attracting the greatest connoisseurs, and musicians of all kinds (Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyan-i Hindūstān 1961: 30-1). Not only did he commission one of the most influential musical treatises of the seventeenth century, the Toḥfat al-Hind (V) (see Chapter Two), but he was responsible for nurturing the early career of one of the greatest musicians of the next century, Ni’mat Khan Kalawant “Sadarang”, as well as patronising his father Nirmol Khan (Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyan-i Hindūstān 1961: 30-1). It seems likely that the critical role of the imperial patron in nourishing musical life and inspiring new trends devolved onto

---

53 Bhava Bhatta was a member of Aurangzeb’s court before going over to Bikaner (Bhanu 1955: 29).
55 Miner incorrectly states that it was Muhammad Mu’azzam – i.e. Bahadur Shah – who was Ni’mat Khan’s first patron (1993: 79). She bases this on Haider’s published edition of the Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyan-i
Muhammad A’zam Shah after his father renounced it. If this was the case, it is conceivable that A’zam inherited the patronage of the musicians who once adorned Aurangzeb’s mehfil.

**Aurangzeb and the kalāwants finally speak**

Nevertheless, exactly what happened to Khushhal Khan Kalawant and the other kalāwants and qawwāls in Aurangzeb’s service remains unclear. It seems fairly certain from Bakhtawar Khan and Saqi Musta’idd Khan that, contrary to Miner and Chandra, the imperial musicians were not dismissed, and could comfortably have remained in Aurangzeb’s service with their increased manṣabs had they so wished. However, Dargah Quli Khan suggests that the emperor’s personal musicians (in the case of Muhammad Shah) were employed to perform exclusively in his assemblies, severing all other performance opportunities unless they were released from his service (Muraqqa-i Dehlī 1993: 102). It may be that Aurangzeb’s qawwāls and kalāwants effectively felt “encouraged” to choose between never performing again, or leaving his service. Because of the religious motivations behind his actions, the musicians and Aurangzeb’s enemies could conceivably have construed this as constructive dismissal. Nevertheless, if the best musicians were indeed released from imperial service, instead of being a disaster, Chandra agrees with Miner that this would have led to “a wider diffusion of the culture developed at the Mughal court” (1986: 207-8).

There are two insurmountable problems with this scenario. The first is that there is simply no evidence of a mass departure of kalāwants and qawwāls from Aurangzeb’s service, or even, apart from the accounts above, of an order to keep silent in the emperor’s presence. One would expect such a major event in music history as the cessation of imperial patronage to warrant at least some commentary in the Indo-Persian musical treatises of the period. Yet not one treatise written between 1660 and 1750 mentions any restrictions on music during Aurangzeb’s reign, or any large-scale departure or dismissal of musicians from the imperial court. Furthermore, all of them make significant references to current music making. Most crucially, there is no mention

---

_Hindīstān_ (1961). However, Haider’s edition definitely states that Ni’mat Khan’s first patron was Muhammad A’zam (1961: 30), as do all the manuscript copies I have seen.

56 The “female kalāwant” Kamal Bai could only be heard in public after Muhammad Shah suspended the patronage of his musicians (1993: 102).
of any politically-inspired musical crises in the *Shams al-ʿAwāt*, written in 1698 by the son of Khushhal Khan Kalawant. In his lengthy introduction, Ras Baras Khan Kalawant describes his father’s life and career at length, including such detailed information as the fact that he had weak blood and died of an apoplexy (*Shams al-ʿAwāt* SJ, f. 3b). There is no record of him either ceasing to perform on Aurangzeb’s request, or leaving imperial service. Furthermore, the introduction includes a lengthy dedication to Aurangzeb, demonstrating that he was still Ras Baras Khan’s patron (*Shams al-ʿAwāt* SJ, f. 11a-12a)\(^{57}\).

Ras Baras Khan’s extravagant dedication to the emperor suggests that Aurangzeb continued to encourage theoretical discourse on music as late as 1698. Moreover, the *Shams al-ʿAwāt* includes some of the most original descriptions of current musical practice in the Indo-Persian corpus. Most importantly, however, an early eighteenth-century treatise names Ras Baras Khan as the greatest performing musician of his generation (see Chapter Two). It does not necessarily follow that Aurangzeb himself reverted to his earlier engagement with live music, although it does show that he consented to its perpetuation. Nevertheless, the *Shams al-ʿAwāt* demonstrates that some *kalāwants* at least remained under Aurangzeb’s patronage throughout his reign.

Furthermore, the evidence indicates that they were permitted to continue performing.

Secondly, the scenario of a mass departure from the imperial court is predicated on Bakhtawar Khan’s suggestion that Aurangzeb encouraged his companions and servants to renounce music. However, a letter to his son Muhammad A’zam Shah dated c.1690 demonstrates that, at least in private, the exact opposite was the case. In praising his own father’s way of life, Aurangzeb wrote:

> After sunset he retired from the “Divan-i-Am”, offered evening prayers and (then) entered his special private chamber. There were present sweet-tongued historians, eloquent story-tellers, sweet-voiced musicians [*qawwālān-i khūsh al-ḥān*]. . . In short, His Majesty passed, till midnight, the hours of day and night, in this manner, and (thus) did justice to life and sovereignty. As (my) paternal love regarding (my) son is from the heart (i.e. true) and not from the pen (i.e. false), I was obliged to write and

\(^{57}\) According to Faqirullah, the presence of the emperor’s name in the preface of a treatise signified that he was not just the patron in name, but that he had seen the finished product and approved it (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 225).
inform (my) dear son what was good and valuable. (Ruka’at-i ‘Âlamgirí 1972: 19; Râg Darpan 1996: xli)

This does not necessarily imply that Aurangzeb himself continued to listen to performances by qawwâls, who were the pre-eminent exponents of khayâl at this time (see Chapter Six)\(^{58}\). Nevertheless, it conclusively demonstrates contrary to expectation that he considered the patronage and performance of music, at least in relation to the qawwâls, to be essentially “good and valuable”. In this letter he strongly recommends Shah Jahan’s practice to his son. On this basis, it is impossible to argue that Aurangzeb actively discouraged his subjects from listening to music. It is equally difficult to believe that he would have forbidden the qawwâls who remained under his patronage from performing. The story of the banning of music would therefore seem to be wrong about both the kalâwânts and the qawwâls.

The two faces of Aurangzeb

These final and most authoritative clues to what happened to music in Aurangzeb’s reign not only refute the received view of a universal ban, but also seem to conflict with the “authorised” version of a personal renunciation. Listening only to the voices of the actors in the drama, it would be possible to conclude that even the stories of Aurangzeb’s personal abstinence from music have been exaggerated for political reasons. It could be argued that Aurangzeb never requested his musicians to stop playing in his presence, or if he did, the stories refer to a temporary situation or a trivial incident. However, instead, I would propose that the discrepancies between the constructed historical narratives, and Aurangzeb’s private letters and the writings of his musicians, represent the difference between Aurangzeb’s public persona, deliberately constructed to serve political ends, and his private persona, a more nuanced figure. The face Aurangzeb needed to show the world was clear-cut; pious but reasonable, someone whose commitment to the strictures of Islamic orthodoxy was demonstrated in his personal renunciation of music, which was pursued with integrity and fairness to those affected. Privately, however, his beliefs were altogether less black and white. I would argue it is possible to reconcile the two faces of Aurangzeb. To do so, however, we need to return to Zainabadi.

\(^{58}\) This passage has no specific religious connotations, and I have therefore taken it to include the range of music performed by qawwâls (see Chapter Six).
Zainabadi: an epilogue

With the substantial support of later evidence, Aurangzeb’s experience with Zainabadi demonstrates that he fundamentally enjoyed music. But it also showed him how much power music had to lead him astray, to make him lose control over his emotions and his body (Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: 806). The power of music to move the emotions and to heal the body is extensively addressed in the Indo-Persian treatises. According to Muzaffar Husain, physician to Muhammad Shah, if the sick are occupied with singing from morning until night, they find relief from sorrow, sickness, disease and the burden of troubles (also Shams al-ʿAṣwāṭ SJ, f. 8b). This is partially to do with the beneficial physical effects of the expulsion of breath from the body that accompanies the act of singing. However, it is mainly related to the fact that music touches the human soul and produces beneficial emotions that give physical strength to the weak (Jām-i Jāhān-numā, f. 230a-1a). Music was believed to arouse tranquillity, melancholy, longing, grief, regret, attachment and desire in the heart of the listener. It was also able to produce truth, discernment, and even enlightenment in the seeker of righteousness. However, above all, music was believed to induce profound feelings of joy and love, human as well as divine⁵⁹. The emotional power of music made it highly controversial in Islamic writings, and music was portrayed as potentially having the power to make a man lose control. In seventeenth-century Indo-Persian texts, the power of women and music to destroy men’s self-control and political power was taken for granted, and was transformed into cautionary tales about the dangers of falling in love with a courtesan (Brown 2000: 18). It is this trope that haunts the story of Aurangzeb and Zainabadi.

Aurangzeb’s doomed relationship with Zainabadi did not turn him against music. However, his desperate attraction to her arguably acted as a warning to him. In order for a sincerely religious man to regain control over himself, the orthodox solution was clear: as ‘Abdul Haqq Dehlavi so succinctly put it, “Some have said that listening to music increases passion. The way of piety is not to listen to it” (Risāla-i Tāliṣa-i Qur’ ʿ us-Samā’, f. 62b). Finding visible ways to maintain his integrity as a pious Muslim was critical to Aurangzeb in the first part of his reign, because his dubious claims of political legitimacy relied on his adherence to religious orthodoxy⁶⁰. Moreover, in Mughal male society at this time, the ability to control one’s passions was not just a religious

---

⁵⁹ Tohfat al-Hind (V) KB, f. 303b; Shams al-ʿAṣwāṭ SJ, f. 8b; Kulliyāt-i Bīdīl, f. 56a; Sarūd al-Bahr, f. 2b.
imperative, but was central to the maintenance of princely adab, or mîrzâ‘î. There were significant connections between the realms of religion and princely etiquette. O’Hanlon notes that élite male adab in Mughal India “shared much in common with sufi spirituality, and many sufi mystics were known for their qualities of mîrzâ‘î” (1999, 71).

According to O’Hanlon, élite manliness in Aurangzeb’s court was signified and maintained by a careful disciplining of the body:

A man’s spiritual and emotional states were most powerfully affected by techniques of the body, and by careful control of his physical environment. But this was now a much more individuated body, marked out as such by carefully chosen forms of knowledge and consumption, and deployed more self-consciously as an instrument to perfect the soul. (1999: 85)

It is striking, therefore, that Faqirullah should choose to describe Aurangzeb in these very terms: as a Sufi whose discipline was bodily to perform his adab as emperor, in order to attain spiritual perfection:

He wears the crown to shake off the shackles (as a Şûfî does in sheer ecstasy); and he sits on the throne to discipline his soul (as again a Şûfî does in Chilla: forty days’ course of self-purification). (Râg Darpan 1996: 217)

In this way Mughal ideals of manliness were grafted onto Islamic notions of piety to determine how Aurangzeb displayed himself publicly as a good Muslim ruler. The mastery of princely self-discipline included the negotiation of highly detailed rules for the patronage of music (see Chapter Four). These established a repertoire of behaviours within defined limits of decency and deviance, between which a patron could chart his own course according to his personal ideology. In order to maintain his integrity as an orthodox Muslim, Aurangzeb had to discipline his passions and behaviour to conform to his chosen ideology. Because his public piety helped maintain his sometimes fragile hold on power, and because music had in the past dramatically affected his self-control, the demands of his public persona now required Aurangzeb to abstain from music.

I am not suggesting that Aurangzeb’s renunciation of music was cynical and insincere, designed purely for public consumption. Rather, much as a heavy drinker

---

60 Richards 1993: 172; Chandra 1986-7: 89-90.
might renounce alcohol in order to live a life consistent with their private beliefs and achieve their public ambitions, Aurangzeb may have felt that giving up music was a sacrifice worth making to maintain his public piety and therefore his political power. It is unlikely that Aurangzeb hypocritically listened to music in private while at the same time maintaining public abstinence. Even Manucci believed that Aurangzeb was consistent in matters of practical piety, such as abstaining from alcohol (*Storia* 1907: vol. ii 5). Whether at some stage later in his reign Aurangzeb began to listen to his musicians again is not clear; the increasingly liberal religious ideology Chandra notes in the latter half of his reign might suggest an accompanying relaxation of his stance on music (1986-7: 98-9, 101). It may be that he simply continued to allow the musicians in his service to pursue their vocations, privately acknowledging to his companions and children the value of listening to music. No matter how long Aurangzeb maintained his abstinence from music, all the evidence suggests that his private attitudes were more supportive of musical practice than his public persona implies, and that he acquiesced in the continuance of aristocratic patronage outside his darbār. In any case, it seems most likely he would have continued to sustain in public the benignly neutral stance towards music described in the *Mir‘āt-i ‘Ālam* and the *Ma‘āṣir-i ‘Ālamgīrī* throughout his reign.

**V**

**Conclusions**

In this discussion of Aurangzeb’s policy towards music, I have been seeking to establish the extent and effectiveness of his ban on music, and the real effects of his policy on musical life. Manucci states that Aurangzeb banished all music from his empire, destroying instruments and livelihoods and creating great distress, only to have his policy undermined by the subversive activities of his amīrs. Khafi Khan argues that the ban was restricted to the top classical musicians in the imperial court and had much less severe consequences for them, after which music disappears from his narrative as if Aurangzeb really did kill rāga. Not only do the two sources of the burial story contradict each other, but Manucci contradicts himself, the evidence of other Indo-Persian and European sources substantially refutes Khafi Khan and Manucci, and their credibility is further undermined by exaggeration, plagiarism, and their antagonism towards the emperor. The majority of scholars nevertheless read them uncritically, and then have immense trouble
piecing together what are, after all, two entirely different jigsaws. When Aurangzeb himself suggests that listening to the singing of *qawwāls* is “good and valuable”, and a leading *kalāwant* devotes three pages of his musical treatise to praising his imperial patron, the contradictions between a rather bewildering array of primary sources become overwhelming. They only begin to fall into place once we come to the conclusion that there was no ban at all, unless it was so brief as to be meaningless. Instead, I have argued that for reasons of personal religious integrity, Aurangzeb felt it necessary to abstain from an activity that he enjoyed, while maintaining an attitude of benign neutrality towards music in public, and of impersonal support in private. As a result, his withdrawal from active engagement with music had no negative effects on musical life during his reign. The real impact of Aurangzeb’s entirely personal, voluntary renunciation of music was symbolic.

This is why the persuasive myth of the burial of music endures as “history” amongst musicologists, historians, journalists, and men and women on the street. The story of the ban and burial is a “musical parable” (Delvoye 1994: 118) of the supposedly devastating effects of Aurangzeb’s Islamic orthodoxy on the liberal and tolerant culture of India. It is transformed into a cautionary tale to remind readers of the dangers of allowing regimes like the Taliban to go unchecked61. Or it becomes a convenient brick to be used in the construction of a national identity on the ruins of a mosque. It has credibility and power because there is a grain of truth in it. Although the widely believed anecdote of Aurangzeb’s becoming or pretending to be a religious ascetic in his youth is unlikely to be true62, his strictness in the area of personal piety is beyond question. From this, it has often been argued that his personal devotion to Islam was manifested in the public arena in an increasing Islamisation of the state that, when coupled with over-centralisation, led to widespread repression of the non-Muslim majority (Richards 1993: 171-5). This in turn began a vicious circle of acts of resistance by various Hindu groups, followed by further repressive and iconoclastic measures, which eventually led to the breakdown of the empire (Pearson 1976: 221). Lists of Aurangzeb’s offences are often mustered from older secondary sources, such as Jadunath Sarkar and Sri Ram Sharma63,

---

62 e.g. Aziz Ahmad 1964: 197. See Sarkar 1912-26: 78).
63 *Religious policy of the Mughal Emperors* (1940).
to demonstrate the extent of his religious obsession. It is in this context that the story of the burial of music is usually retold as evidence that:

the goal of the new Islamic ideologies were simply defined: the Mughal Empire must become a Muslim state governed by the precepts of the Sharia for the benefit of the Indian Muslim community. The regime would make every possible effort to encourage conversion of the infidel population (Richards 1993: 171).

In this way, the banning of music is transformed into a cultural indicator of the intolerant and repressive nature of Aurangzeb’s regime.

How then should our understanding of the nature of the Mughal state be affected by the fact that the ban never occurred? Firstly, it indicates that the empire was less centralised and its cultural life less dictated by the predilections of the emperor than has often been suggested. As Alam and Subrahmanyan have pointed out, this perception of Aurangzeb’s regime is based on the idea that history is shaped solely by powerful individuals whose personality flaws have the potential to destroy civilisations (1998: 56). Not only is this simplistic, the evidence I have found that Aurangzeb’s personal religious views did not necessarily interfere with his public policies also contradicts it. My understanding of Aurangzeb’s laissez-faire relationship with his nobles on the issue of musical patronage particularly militates against Stephen Blake’s hyper-centralised understanding of the Mughal state as a “patrimonial-bureaucratic empire”. Blake argues that:

the patrimonial ruler tried to assimilate state to household: he attempted to administer, control, and finance the entire realm as if it were part of his own private domain. . . the patrimonial-bureaucratic emperor dominated the social, economic, and cultural life of the city. . . the sovereign city was an enormously extended patriarchal household, the imperial palace-fortress writ large. . . The emperor intended that his command of the city. . . be symbolic and paradigmatic of the control he and his subordinates exerted over the empire. (1993: xii-iii)

In other words, Aurangzeb’s personal stance on music was the cultural policy of the empire, and therefore must have precipitated a mass withdrawal of musical patronage from the royal princes right down to the small householder on the imperial border. It would also have signified the immediate application of a stricter Islamic agenda throughout the empire. However, the musical evidence suggests that the relationship
between Aurangzeb and his subjects was looser than this. He did not impose his stance on anyone, and his personal abstinence had little effect on musical patronage or practice. This evidence opposes Blake’s thesis, and suggests that not only did Aurangzeb abdicate control over cultural life (and there is no evidence he ever possessed it), in the case of music the emperor’s personal ideology was not synonymous with Mughal cultural policy.

More importantly, though, the fact that Aurangzeb did not order a universal ban on music lends support to the idea that his regime was less intolerant and repressive than has been widely believed in the past. Many accounts of Aurangzeb’s architectural iconoclasm have recently come under attack. As is the case with the burial story, they are often based on uncritical readings of primary sources, particularly panegyric Indo-Persian descriptions in Elliott and Dowson’s controversial English translation (Metcalf 1995: 954). Catherine Asher points out that many of the stories of Aurangzeb’s wanton destruction of Hindu temples and monuments are wrongly ascribed to religious zeal, and are sometimes false. She provides a number of examples to argue that temples were nearly always destroyed for political and not religious reasons as a punishment for rebellion, and that Hindus who remained loyal were rewarded (1992: 254). Aziz Ahmad demonstrates that the destruction of religious sites as a political act was a long-established practice amongst Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike (1964: 89) and was often perpetrated against co-religionists (Metcalf 1995: 958). Citing Aurangzeb’s widely alleged destruction of the caves at Ellora as one example of false attribution, Asher notes that, on the contrary, he praised them in his own writings and attributed them to the work of Allah. Moreover, she states that “decrees (farman) testify that imperial support was provided for temples throughout Aurangzeb’s reign” (1992: 254-5). Barbara Metcalf points out that Aurangzeb built far more temples than he destroyed (1995: 958). Furthermore, Jalaluddin provides incontrovertible evidence, in the way of farman, of tax-free grants Aurangzeb bestowed on Hindu temples as late as 1691, notably those of the Jangam Bari Math at Benares and Balaji’s temple at Chitrakoot (1978: 44-7). The

---

65 The extracts published by Elliott and Dowson were deliberately chosen because they purported to demonstrate Mughal “intolerance” compared with enlightened British rule (Metcalf 1995: 954). Such interpretations ignore the fact that the language of jihād and the textual “evidence” of discriminatory laws and destruction of infidel property may be nothing more than hyperbole employed to portray the Emperor as a good Muslim (Metcalf 1995: 957), or to win the allegiance of a recalcitrant Muslim community (Chandra 1986: 89-90). According to Metcalf, “in the defeat of Vijayanagar in 1556, the Qutb Shahi ruler himself claimed that he established a mosque on the remains of a temple. Yet inscriptions show that five years later that same Qutb Shahi was granting villages to support the same temple” (1995: 957)!
contents of the latter farman deserve to be noted for the record.  

Thus, the overwhelming evidence against a ban on musical practice in Aurangzeb’s reign suggests that the nature of his state was less orthodox, tyrannical and centralised than has previously been thought. The fact that Aurangzeb’s iconoclasm did not translate into a ban on music, however, means that the other question I raised in relation to the Taliban – what happens to a musical culture and the people involved in it when the most important thing about it is that it has been suppressed? – cannot be answered with reference to Aurangzeb. In this case parallels between him and Oliver Cromwell become more relevant. In terms of seventeenth-century European and particularly English portrayals of Aurangzeb, it is not insignificant that Cromwell died in the same year that Aurangzeb usurped the throne, nor that Manucci spent his formative years under the protection of an escaping Royalist. Furthermore, modern analogies between the two rulers were first drawn by Sri Ram Sharma and Jadunath Sarkar, whose works have proved perhaps the most influential studies of Aurangzeb’s religious policies to date. Antonia Fraser points out that as Puritans, Cromwell’s soldiers were particularly vulnerable to accusations of iconoclasm, merited or unmerited, by Royalist propagandists:

From . . . sparse stories have sprung the much more formidable body of legends and folklore on the subject which surround and tarnish his name. . . . Very many of the pieces of vandalism now popularly attributed to Oliver Cromwell, whether castles knocked down, churches defiled, statues broken, are on examination so ludicrously misdated or occur in areas so far from any point he personally visited as to be hardly worth repetition. (1973: 102)

This statement applies equally to the charge of musical iconoclasm so often levelled at Aurangzeb. It is high time the story of the burial of music was finally laid to rest.

66 “The famous temple of Balaji had got the reverence of Emperor Aurangzeb who, in due recognition of the religious sanctity of the place, issued a farman in A.D. 1691 conferring a big grant on its Mahant Balak Das Nirvani. The grant comprises of eight villages as mu‘affi and 330 bighas, situated in Sarkar (District) Kalinjar Suba Allahabad, for the purpose of meeting the expenses of ‘Puja and Bhog’ of Thakur Balaji. . . . All the aforesaid grants have been allowed to be enjoyed generation after generation and no tax whatsoever was allowed to be realised from the income of the said grants. The present custodians of the temple [in 1978] have preserved this farman with utmost care because they are still enjoying the grant on the basis of this farman.” Jalaluddin then provides an English translation (1978: 44-5).

67 e.g. Chandra 1986: 88; Sarkar 1989: 19.
CHAPTER FOUR

Music, masculinity, and the Mughal mehfil

Every heart beats restlessly, intoxication flows from the sound the gourd of the tānbūr tips, spilling its wine through the veins.
~ ‘Abdul Qadir Bedil¹

Mīrzā-hood is to be mīrzā-khān or mīrzā-beg, not to be a mīrzāda-begum or mīrzāda-khānum.
~ The British Library Mīrzānāma²

I

Introduction

Aurangzeb did not ban music during his reign. Nor did he informally discourage its performance or patronage. Instead, the emperor maintained an official attitude of tolerance towards music, and knowingly acquiesced in its continuing patronage by the royal princes and the Mughal nobility. Aurangzeb did, however, personally withdraw from musical life. In previous reigns, the music performed in the emperor’s public darbār and private mehfil set the musical fashions for Mughal society. As Miner points out, Aurangzeb’s closure of the imperial darbār and mehfil as musical spaces would have had a significant impact on the direction of musical trends in his reign (1993: 78). Aurangzeb’s abdication of his role as the arbiter of musical fashion after 1668-9 opened up the leadership of musical trends to the Mughal male élite more widely. The primary sources demonstrate that musical practice thrived under their patronage. During Aurangzeb’s reign, neither imperial policy nor the personal taste of the emperor determined what music was deemed worthy of élite support. Instead, the wider cultural imperatives of Mughal male élite society dictated the directions of Hindustani music in the late seventeenth century.

In this chapter I will be investigating what these imperatives were, and how they affected Mughal decisions about which genres and communities of musicians were suitable for princely patronage. In particular, I will be looking at the social construction

¹ Savād-i A’zām (Kulliyāt-i Bēdil 1376AH: 116).
of the most prestigious and exclusive musical space in Aurangzeb’s empire, the private princely *mehfil*. It was here that the hegemonic cultural standards of musical patronage were established for aspirants to élite status throughout the empire. Dictated by Mughal discourses of gender and social status, these codes were instrumental in catalysing and shaping long-term processes of change in Hindustani musical culture. It was in the princely *mehfil* that some of the genres and communities still considered authoritative today were first awarded prestige. The *mehfil* was by no means the only space in which music was performed in the empire, nor was musical patronage restricted to men, or to the Mughal nobility. However, a detailed discussion of the music performed in female space and in the bāzār, or outside the sphere of Mughal influence, is beyond the scope of this chapter, except insofar as these worlds impinged on the Mughal princely *mehfil*.

**A brief overview of Mughal social and musical space**

Élite social space in Mughal India was physically demarcated on two grounds: that of gender, and that of social status. There was a strongly policed separation between male/public space and female/domestic space, and a less visible but still sharp segregation of male space according to a hierarchy of social statuses from high to low. This two-way partition was manifested in domestic and public architecture, in the first place by the wall of the ḥarīm, and in the second by the division of male space in the imperial fort into the *daulat-khāna-i khās* (Hall of Private Audience), the *daulat-khāna-i ḍām o ‘āmm* (Hall of Public Audience)\(^4\), and the world of the bāzār beyond its walls (see fig. 1). Special events celebrating the movement of men and women from one stage of life to another, such as birth and wedding festivities, created a liminal space in which otherwise segregated social worlds came together temporarily. Music was performed in all of these spaces. However, the gender and status restrictions of social space, established and


\(^3\) The Indo-Persian sources of this period sometimes use *majlis* as a synonym for *mehfil*. However, in modern parlance the word *majlis* is customarily used to refer to the Sufi assembly, and *mehfil* to courtly performances of music. To avoid confusion I will differentiate *mehfil* and *majlis* according to modern usage.

\(^4\) These are more often known today as the *divān-i khās* and the *divān-i ‘āmm* respectively (Asher 1992: xxvi). Aurangzeb’s Public and Private Audience Halls in Agra, Lahore and Delhi were all built by his father Shah Jahan along very similar lines. The Public Audience Halls for example are all in the form of a *chehil sutun*, or 40-pillared hall, with identical allocation of space according to a finely graded social hierarchy (see Asher 1992: 178-200; Blake 1993: 91).
controlled by the Mughal male elite, determined which communities of musicians could enter each space. Some musicians possessed corporeal liminality to perform in more than one realm, but none were given freedom to cross all gender and social barriers.

The private princely mehfil belonged to the highest status male social space. As such it was the most prestigious musical space in seventeenth-century Mughal India. The princely mehfil was an invitation-only gathering of elite male friends who were musical connoisseurs, and musicians, in which the full mental, emotional, and bodily engagement of both listeners and performers was necessary to achieve the ideal effect of musical performance, emotional release (Rāg Darpan 1996: 79). By the beginning of Aurangzeb’s reign, the patronage of elite music had become a key signifier of a man’s
high social status as a mirzā, or nobleman. This is demonstrated by the appearance of
detailed rules for the conduct of the mehfil in the mirzānāma literature. The carefully
differentiated yet complementary roles of patron and musician were embedded in Indo-
Persian discourses of gender and social status, and the mirzā’s successful negotiation of
his prescribed role in this relationship signified his mastery of élite male codes. But the
mirzā’s patronage of music was also highly paradoxical, because the mehfil
simultaneously subverted these codes. It acted as a space in which high and low status
groups, and masculine and feminine forms of power, converged and interacted in the
emotionally charged moment of performance. The mehfil was therefore a unique, liminal
space in which Mughal conceptions of masculinity were both performed and transformed.

The mehfil’s high prestige and its potentially subversive liminality are
metaphorically underscored by the physical space in which the emperor traditionally held
his mehfps – the divān-i khaāṣṣ. The divān-i ʿāmm (daulat-khāna-i khāṣṣ o ʿāmm) was
the hall in which the emperor held his public darbār. All manṣabdārs were required to
attend, and it was open to foreign ambassadors, merchants, and other visitors, as well as
their entourages (Blake 1993: 92) – as long as they could demonstrate a legitimate
connection to the proceedings of the darbār. The common people “of the bāzār” were
excluded, and had to rely on the institution of the jharoka-i darshan to present their
petitions to the Emperor. The divān-i khaāṣṣ (daulat-khāna-i khāṣṣ), on the other hand,
was much more exclusive and could only be entered on the invitation of the emperor (see
fig. 2). It was here that more delicate consultations with the princes and chief officials
took place (92). The most secret discussions frequently took place in the bath-house
(hammām or ghusal-khāna), which was connected to the Private Audience Hall (Asher
1992: 185, 196)5. Although the divān-i khaāṣṣ and ghusal-khāna functioned as the most
prestigious male space, they were situated within the emperor’s private apartments and
therefore physically attached to female space. Furthermore, noblewomen were
occasionally permitted to enter the ghusal-khāna unveiled to enjoy the company of their
male relations (Manrique Travels 1926-7: 215-7). Thus, the Private Audience
Hall/ghusal-khāna complex was sometimes part of the world of the darbār and at others

5 In Agra and Delhi at least.
emporer

princes

great amīrs (+2000 zāt)

amīrs and manṣabdārs 200-2000 zāt

manṣabdārs -200 zāt, cavalrymen, artillrymen

footsoldiers, servants

naqqāra-khāna

The divān-i ʿāmm and courtyard, Shahjahanabad (Blake 1993: 91)

The divān-i khāṣṣ and courtyard, Agra (Asher 1992: 185)

Figure 2: The halls of public and private audience
part of the ḥarīm. It was therefore a liminal space between public/male and domestic/female worlds. It was here that the mehfil customarily took place. In the households of lesser noblemen, a single space known as the dīvān-khāna often combined the functions of dīvān-i ḥāṣṣ and dīvān-i ‘āmm (Blake 1993: 47). Nevertheless, the liminality of the space created by the mehfil, and its difference from the rest of male space, are highlighted by the roles taken by patrons and performers of music within its boundaries, whether or not these were physical.

II
Élite masculinity and the gendering of musical space

Before we can look directly at the princely mehfil in Aurangzeb’s reign, we need to address the question of who the Mughal élite were, and what their conception of masculinity was. According to Athar Ali’s definition, the Mughal male élite were the umarā’ or noblemen (plural of amīr). The term umarā’ was effectively commensurate with officers in the military hierarchy holding mansabs of 1000 zāt and above (1966: 2). Another term used to describe a Mughal nobleman was mīrzā. The British Library Mīrzānāma confirms that a mīrzā should ordinarily possess “a mansab commanding at least one thousand dhāt and one thousand horses” (1975: 100). Although this was not an absolute requirement, membership of this upper echelon of Mughal society was nevertheless closed to the ordinary subject.

In other respects, however, the Mughal élite was egalitarian. The mansabdār system brought together in a relatively meritocratic system of advancement hereditary and foreign nobles, local autonomous rulers, public officials and scholars; Turanis, Iranis, Afghans, Indian Muslims, Rajputs and Marathas; Sunnis, Shi’as and Hindus (Ali 1996: 11-15). This was true even of Aurangzeb’s reign. Proportionally, twice as many high mansabs were awarded to Hindus under Aurangzeb than under Akbar (31). According to Richards, Mughal amīrs of all religious and ethnic backgrounds aspired to a common culture, based on refined Indo-Persian norms of masculine etiquette:

Wherever they were posted, whether at court or in the provinces, the patrimonial households of the nobles were a focal point for aristocratic life and culture. To the extent his resources permitted, each nobleman emulated the style, etiquette, and opulence of the emperor. Each held near-daily audiences or durbars, essentially public events, seated on his elevated cushion in the royal style, in which all manner of business was conducted. . . Noble households were the setting for lavish banquets and other gatherings where the male guests were offered a wide variety of music, dance, poetry, or other entertainments. (1993: 61)

The intermingling of ethnic and religious loyalties through strategic marital alliances further facilitated the development of a shared Indo-Persian culture (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002: 16-7). This culture acted as a source of identity for the amîrs, simultaneously setting them apart from the common people, and ideally drawing them together in common loyalty to the Mughal throne (O’Hanlon 1999: 55, 84).

This shared culture as performed in the male/public arena was based on a distinctly masculine ethic. Mughal conceptions of manliness during Aurangzeb’s reign were embedded in many contemporary discourses, including codes of martial honour, idealised figures in Persian literature, writings on kingship, ethics, and ādāb, and interlinked beliefs about the body, the emotions and the soul derived from Unani physiology and Sufism. The latter two developed in ongoing dialogue with their Hindu counterparts, Ayurveda and bhakti (O’Hanlon 1999: 51-3). Late seventeenth-century Mughal codes of masculinity were expressed most elaborately in the mîrzânâma literature. That these codes were a “self-consciously gendered conception” (71) is demonstrated in the anxiety this literature betrays to distance mîrzâ’i (“mîrzâ-hood”) from perceived femininities. As the British Library Mîrzânâma emphasises, “Mîrzâ-hood is to be mîrzâ-khân or mîrzâ-beg, not to be a mîrzâda-begum or mîrzâda-khânun” (1975: 101). Khân and beg (“lord, prince”) were titles given to Mughal noblemen, and khânun and begum (“lady, lady of rank”) designated their wives; a mîrzâda was the son of a prince or nobleman, here implying an adolescent. In other words, to be a mîrzâ was to be

---

7 Several of the Mughal emperors, for example, including Aurangzeb, married the daughters of high-ranking Rajput manşabdârs.

8 O’Hanlon however suggests that the further refinements of mîrzâ’i in the late seventeenth century heralded the beginning of a breakdown in loyalty to the imperial centre (1999: 86).
a man, not a lady-boy! Thus the masculinist agenda of the mīrzānāma literature is laid bare.

The musical mehfīl in the reign of Aurangzeb was unequivocally a site for the performance of Mughal masculinity, as the inclusion in the mīrzānāma literature of rules for musical gatherings shows. A concern with these codes also permeates works of contemporary Indo-Persian musicology, particularly the work of the high-ranking mīrzā Faqirullah. Thus, as an important signifier of a man’s status as a mīrzā, musical patronage was fully implicated in Mughal discourses of masculinity.

What then was manliness to the Mughal nobleman? A distinction firstly needs to be made between two types of Indo-Persian source for masculine behavioural codes during this period – the prescriptive literature and the descriptive literature. The prescriptive literature pre-scribed ideal norms of masculine knowledge, behaviour, dress, and consumption, which may or may not have been acted upon in practice. With regards to masculinity in the mehfīl, the British Library Mīrzānāma (c.1660) is the most detailed example of prescriptive discourse. The descriptive literature, by de-scribing real examples of patron-client relationships, shows how these norms were enacted or rejected in reality; a particularly good example is the tazkira in Faqirullah’s Rāg Darpan. Perhaps most instructive are stories of transgression in the historical chronicles, which de-scribe real situations, but construct them as cautionary tales to make a pre-scriptive point. A comparison of the prescriptive and descriptive literatures on musical patronage for the late seventeenth century demonstrates that the specifics of acceptable masculine comportment in the British Library Mīrzānāma were contested at this time. But on the level of general principles, the two perspectives were largely in agreement.

Masculinity was synonymous with the public display of power and control – over knowledge, over material commodities, over women and people of lower status, and over oneself (see O’Hanlon 1999). To possess high status was to be a man. But masculinity was also defined in opposition to all things feminine (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101). To be a woman was to lack social power and to be controlled, not merely by men, but by the irrational whims of the lower self (nafs) (O’Hanlon 1999: 53). Thus, it was also to wield a kind of raw, irrational power – erotic power – that was a potential threat to masculine control. The separation between masculine and feminine worlds embodied in the wall of the ḥarīm was necessary for a man to maintain control over himself, and for the political
and social order to be maintained. Equally, the maintenance of Mughal political power required the male élite to distance themselves from men of low social status (Chatterjee 2002: 67), both literally, and bodily in their rejection of personal behaviours that identified men of low status, lest they be mistaken for one of them. What is interesting in the British Library Mırzânâma is its frequent conflation of gender and social status, something seen in the construction of musicians’ social identities in the mehfil (see below). Because masculinity was synonymous with power, gender difference could also be used as a signifier of status differentiation between men. Thus to be a man of inferior social status was to be analogous to a woman; and to demonstrate unmanly or “feminine” attributes was to be categorised amongst those of low social status. For the mîrzâ to adopt “feminine” modes was highly transgressive, potentially threatening to subvert the established social order.

The gendering of high status men as “masculine” and low status men as passive or “feminine” was at least partly concerned with élite ascriptions of sexual difference (irrespective of how men of low status saw their own sexuality). It is important to note that the Mughals did not consider masculinity synonymous with heterosexuality, nor femininity with homoeroticism (Chatterjee 2002: 63). Romantic and erotic liaisons between noblemen and both men and women of lower social status were widely tolerated in Mughal society. This is made clear in the Mırzânâma, which considers it undignified for a mîrzâ to run after a beloved (ma’shûq) – male or female – who belongs to someone else (‘âshiq, lover) (f.95b). What was unmanly was to be penetrated. Passive sexuality in a man was heavily stigmatised in Indo-Persian discourse, and passive erotic behaviours were customarily considered tolerable only in men of low social status (Chatterjee 2002: 65-6).

A mîrzâ therefore needed to shun behaviours and relationships that signified erotic passivity, because they also symbolised political impotency and low social status. According to the Mırzânâma, he should avoid the effeminate signifiers of the ma’shûq because “it is a blemish for the mîrzâ, who is a masculine lover [‘âshiq]”. Pace O’Hanlon (1999: 80), the bastard mîrzâs stigmatised as lady-boys in the British Library

---

9 see also O’Hanlon 1999: 49.
Mīrzānāma were not condemned for homosexuality, but for their public aping of mannerisms associated with the passive sexual partner, the catamite. In this way, both gender and sexual difference were mapped onto the male élite’s understanding of social status. In comparison with their own “masculinity”, defined as power and symbolised in the act of penetration, the Mughal male élite ascribed sexual passivity and powerlessness to both women and low status men. If the status quo was maintained, erotic relationships could embody and reinscribe the social order. Nevertheless, all beloveds, whether male or female, still had the potential to exert erotic power over the nobleman to gain political or social power. Thus the real threat to the social order was unrestrained love. Excessive attachment threatened to blur the mandatory class and gender separation between mīrzā and beloved. Both women and lower status men were therefore a danger to the mīrzā’s masculinity if their erotic power was not kept firmly under control.

Central therefore to the maintenance of élite masculinity, and enacted prominently in the mehfil, was the reinforcing friendship of one’s princely peers. O’Hanlon argues that “wherever manhood is associated with power... it becomes also a public social status which must be striven for and maintained in specific social contexts.” Masculinity is “inherently relational”, because it defines itself not just in opposition to femininity, but also requires “the recognition and affirmation of other men” (1999: 48-9). Mughal masculine discourses focused on the search for intimate companions who would not merely stand by the mīrzā through good and bad, but who bolstered his masculinity, by acting as a mirror reinforcing manly qualities and discouraging the unmanly (61). The musical mehfil was an ideal venue in which Mughal men could display to their most intimate male companions their command of Indo-Persian codes of masculinity in dress, comportment, conduct, and knowledge. This collective reinforcement of masculine norms was strengthened through behaviour which enacted for each others’ benefit the mīrzās’ difference from and power over the lower status musicians also present in the mehfil. As such, the mehfil was an ideal space to observe relations of power, gender, and sexuality in action.

10 The author uses the masculine ma’shūq. It is possible to use ma’shūq to imply both male and female beloveds, but if the author wanted to specify that the beloved was female, he would need to use the feminine ma’shūqa. In context, he is most likely to be describing a male beloved.
III

Poetry, music, and the network of patronage

The Indo-Persian sources testify to a network of intimate circles of high-ranking amīrs who patronised music during Aurangzeb’s reign. Two contemporary tażkiras, one of poets and the other of musicians, are particularly revealing: the third volume of the Safīna-i Ḵūṣgū by Bindraban Das “Ḵūshgu”, a poet and close friend of Mirza Bedil11, and the last chapter of Faqirullah’s Rāg Darpan. Also invaluable is Shah Nawaz Khan’s tażkira of Mughal noblemen, the Maʿāṣir al-Umarā’. These three authors’ perspectives are limited by the narrowness of their foci. Nevertheless, together they expose a few of the nodal figures in this network: Mirza Bedil, Faqirullah, the governor of Delhi ‘Aqil Khan, Aurangzeb’s son Muhammad Aʿzam Shah, and an absent node, the emperor himself12. They also demonstrate how these nodes were connected to each other through a series of significant friendships. Close friendships amongst the Mughal élite were pursued with like-minded men (O’Hanlon 1999: 68), and were usually formed on the basis of common interests. For example, one important friendship in the network was that of Mirza Bedil and ‘Aqil Khan, which developed through their shared interest in Sufi mysticism (Chandra 1986: 209). Their connection extended much further than this, however, because ‘Aqil Khan was also a renowned poet, and according to Bindraban Das he was Mirza Bedil’s ustād (Safīna-i Ḵūṣgū, f.20b). Several patrons are known to have had a deep interest in both music and poetry, often thereby revealing a significant overlap between two or more circles of amīrs. In this way the worlds of music, poetry, and Sufism were knitted together through overlapping circles of intimate companions. These circles formed the social basis of the mehfils (see fig. 3).

Despite his later renunciation of music, Aurangzeb was for much of his life a knowledgeable and enthusiastic connoisseur. Taking the emperor as a nodal point, it is evident that many belonging to his intimate circle were also music lovers who continued to hold mehfils after 1668-9, including his wazīr Asad Khan (7000/7000 d.171713) and Aurangzeb’s uncle Khan Zaman (5000/4000 d.1684). Of the emperor’s close

11 The third volume is rare; the only copy I have seen is in the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna.
12 No doubt there were many other important figures in this network, but the sources are limited in scope.
13 For comparison, I will give the mansāb rank (ḡāl/savār) for each nobleman along with his date of death (taken from Maʿāṣir al-Umarā’ 1999, and Athar Ali 1966).
Figure 3: Network of patronage circles
companions, at least three are known to have belonged to Mirza Bedil’s circle (500 źāt
d.1721) – Muhammad A’zam Shah (d.1707), and two of Aurangzeb’s closest friends,‘Aqil Khan (4000/1000 d.1697), and Mukhlis Khan (3500/3000 d.1701). The friendship
of Mirza Bedil and Muhammad A’zam Shah is particularly important in demonstrating
how the worlds of music and poetry overlapped.  Mirza Bedil was in Muhammad A’zam
Shah’s service for twenty years, until 1684, and both men were known for their shared
interest in music.  The latter particularly was renowned for his extensive patronage of
poets and musicians, and especially his famous musical mehfil (Risāla-i Zikr-i
Mughhaniyān-i Hindūstān 1961: 30-1).  Similarly, Mirza Bedil’s writings testify to his
extensive knowledge of music in Sufi contexts. Several amirs and lesser “men of the
pen” in Muhammad A’zam Shah’s circle also belonged to Mirza Bedil’s circle, including
the satirist Danishmand Khan (d.1711), Hifzullah Khan (2000/1500 d.c.1700), Mir
Muhammad Zaman (1000/200? d.1696), Haji Muhammad Islam, Hakim ul Mamalik
Shaikh Husain (d.1737), and Khwajah Abdullah (d.1742). This testifies to a significant
overlap of interests and social circles.  Given the social influence of Muhammad A’zam
Shah and Mirza Bedil, it is likely that their musical interests would have extended to their
companions.

This argument is strengthened by a significant personal connection revealed in the
Indo-Persian sources between Mirza Bedil and the well-known connoisseur of music, Saif
Khan Faqirullah (3000/2500 d.1684).  Like Mirza Bedil, Faqirullah was a Sufi adept who
was well versed in poetry and especially music.  As well as possessing extensive
knowledge of Indian music theory, and being himself a composer, Faqirullah patronised a
large number of musicians. His treatise also provides insight into the wider musical
culture of his circle, describing a number of professional musicians he had heard perform
beyond his own mehfil, and giving details of several noble patron-practitioners,
including Ghulam Mohiuddin, Muhammad Baqi, ‘Idul Singh, and Mir ‘Amad. Faqirullah
was also interested in poets. The Rāg Darpan is full of Persian couplets, and

14 Safina-i Khūshgū, f.73a.
15 Safina-i Khūshgū, f.36b-37b, 20b-21a, 46a.
16 How stereotypical his allusions to music in the Sufi context are is open to question. Nevertheless, his
poetical and prose writings arguably testify to music’s ongoing centrality in the majlis at this time.
17 Safina-i Khūshgū, f.47b, 22a-b, 17b, 34a-b, 129a, 147b-8a; Ma’āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: 519-20, 324.
18 See Rāg Darpan 1996: 73, 191, 197, 201, 207.
he names a poet Sayyid Tayyib “Budh” in his *tazkira* who was an exceptional composer of music (1996: 205). However, his most profound poetical connection was with the poet Miyan Shah Nasir ‘Ali (d.1697). Shah Nawaz Khan draws attention to a close, homoerotic relationship between the two men, unusually singling out Nasir ‘Ali as the man who was Faqirullah’s life-long “devoted companion” (*Ma’āṣir al-Umarā*’ 1999: 686). He includes a couplet written by Nasir ‘Ali for Faqirullah that intimates the depth of their companionship:

\[
\text{The parrot speaks from the clear heart of the mirror, ‘Ali}
\]

\[
\text{Without Saif Khan, my life would be empty.}^{20}
\]

Bindraban Das reveals that Nasir ‘Ali was also a close friend of Mirza Bedil (*Safina-i Khūshgūl*, f.15a). Thus it is reasonable to assume that Faqirullah, and patrons of music in his circle, had other significant contacts with members of Mirza Bedil’s circle.

The connection between Mirza Bedil and Faqirullah highlights a strong correlation in all three *tazkiras* between personal affiliation to Sufism, and the patronage of poetry and music in the courtly *mehfil*. Several important patrons were known to be Sufi adepts or devotees, including Faqirullah, ‘Aqil Khan, Muhammad A’zam Shah, Mukhlis Khan, Ghaziuddin Feroz Jang (d.1710)\(^{21}\), Diyanat Khan (d.1713)\(^{22}\), and the chief princess Jahanara (d.1681). I am not suggesting that non-Sufi *amīrs* of Aurangzeb’s time were insignificant in the patronage of the musical arts, particularly Rajput *mansabdārs* like Raja Anup Singh of Bikaner. The attention paid to patrons with Sufi leanings in these *tazkiras* merely demonstrates their particular bias. Nevertheless, even amongst Rajput patrons of music, Sufi devotional culture seems to have been a source of interest.

\(^{20}\) More literally “The parrot’s speech arises from the mirror, ‘Ali/If Saif Khan did not exist, life to me would be pointless.” Beveridge translates it “‘Ali extracts from the mirror this parrot speech/‘But for Saif Khan my life were vain.”

\(^{21}\) Ghaziuddin Feroz Jang was successively married to *three* of Hifzullah Khan’s sisters (*Ma’āṣir al-Umarā* 1999: vol. ii 592)! Hifzullah Khan belonged to Mirza Bedil’s circle, and was connected with Muhammad A’zam Shah. Ghaziuddin Feroz Jang also had significant contact with Muhammad A’zam Shah (587-92), and Aurangzeb esteemed him as a personal friend (see his letters in *Ruka’āt-i ‘Ālamgīrı* 1972).
and an influential point of contact with fellow aspirants to mîrzâ’î. Faqirullah, for example, lists a Rajput prince, ‘Idul Singh, whose father Raja Roz Afzun, ruler of Kharagpur near Bihar, voluntarily converted to Islam (Ma’âşir al-Umâra’ 1999: vol. ii 609). ‘Idul Singh was a Sufi devotee, an expert singer of the qawwâl specialties khayâl and tarâna, whose performances in the Sufi majlis “[added] joy to the hours of devotion of the derveshs” (Râg Darpan 1996: 205). Even Rajput amîrs who did not convert would have felt at home in the Sufi majlis, because many of the songs performed in Sufi contexts borrowed from Vaishnavite devotional traditions (see Chapter Six). Sufi mystical thought and Indo-Persian poetry were equally closely linked during this period (Chandra 1986: 207). The connection suggested in the tazkiras between the patronage of poets and musicians and an adherence to Sufism fits this picture.

The other significant impetus to cultural patronage in Aurangzeb’s time was its importance in masculine codes of etiquette. The patronage and composition of poetry had long been part of the âdâb of male élites throughout the Islamic world. According to Blake, the Mughal amîr was required to know “the Gulistan and Bustan of Sa’adi, the poems of Hafiz, and the Shah-Namah of Firdausi” (1986: 197). Faqirullah amply demonstrates his mastery of such knowledge in the Râg Darpan (e.g. 1996: 81, 109)23. The amîr was expected to compose poetry himself to a high standard, and to this end the Mughal educational syllabus included “ma’ani (rhetoric, the theory of literary style), bayan (clearness of speech), badi (beauty), uruz (prosody), quwafi (syllables), and adab (literature and learning)” (Blake 1986: 199). Despite significant parallels with poetry, the patronage of music in Islamic societies was not traditionally regarded as necessary to princely adab. Nevertheless, all the Mughal emperors before Aurangzeb unhesitatingly bestowed their patronage on musicians, thereby setting the cultural agenda for the Mughal amîrs. The British Library Mîrzânâma shows that by the time of Aurangzeb the patronage of music was considered inherent to the most distinguished expressions of mîrzâ’î. Furthermore, its author stipulated that a knowledge of “âhang (consonance), maqâm (melodic modes), lafz (words) and ma’na (meaning)” was highly prized in a mîrzâ

22 Diyanat Khan as dîvân of the Deccan had formal contacts with Ghaziuddin Feroz Jang, and was also connected with Muhammad A’zam Shah (Ma’âşir al-Umâra’ 1999: vol. ii 473-4).
23 Faqirullah quotes couplets from Amir Khusrau (1996: 61-3), Sa’di (81), Hafiz (109), Jami (189), ‘Attar (193), and many other poets as yet unidentified.
By the late seventeenth century the ability to compose music may also have been a desirable accomplishment. Faqirullah, for example, boasts of his innovation of several new rāgas (Rāg Darpan 1996: 73), and Muhammad Aʿzam Shah was renowned for his composition of new musical works (Safīna-i Khūshgū, f.37b). Thus the involvement of this wide network of mîrzās in the patronage of music and poetry during Aurangzeb’s reign was a fulfilment of their adab.

IV

Patrons, performers, and the construction of the mehfil

How then was the mehfil constructed as a space in which Mughal élite conceptions of masculinity could be performed? The British Library Mîrzānāma (c.1660) is our primary source of prescriptive information on the “proper” conduct of the mehfil from the point of view of the patron (see fig. 4). Its extensive pronouncements on the ideal mehfil are supported by prescriptive statements in the Indo-Persian musical treatises, and elsewhere in the Indo-Persian literature; for example Abul Fazl’s cautionary tale about Baz Bahadur, the ousted ruler of Malwa who was famed as a musical performer (Akbarnāma 1873-87: vol.ii 211) (see fig. 5), and the late seventeenth-century Mîrzānāma of Mirza Kamran (1913: 6, 11). It is important to distinguish the hypothetical construction of the ideal mehfil from the conduct of real mehils held in historical time. Descriptive accounts, particularly in the writings of Faqirullah, and to some extent miniature paintings24, provide insight into how the codes of the ideal mehfil were negotiated and transcended in real musical spaces.

I have identified five general principles that both prescriptive and descriptive discourses agreed were fundamental to the successful mehfil – one that moved the heart, but also enacted the gender and social differences of Mughal society. These five principles were based around three philosophical questions: the purpose of music, its place in the life of an Indo-Muslim prince, and the problem of music’s potential for transgression. The first two principles – the need for knowledge and the need to pursue

---

24 Miniature paintings, as Doubleday points out, “depict a fictional or mythological poetic world.” Nevertheless, at the same time they “contain naturalistic details of everyday life [that] provide clues about [real] musical practices” (1999: 114).
[The mírzā] should know the requirements of musical recital [khvāndan-i múšiqi], so that he does not sing automatically in every gathering or assembly [majlis o mehfīl]. Perfection [kamāl] in the art (of music) is very difficult to achieve; and if he sings badly, his listeners will be disgusted. This noble science (of music) [‘ilm-i sharif] was formerly held in great esteem; now, with the passage of time, it has declined. If he decides to listen to musical songs or instrumental music to dispel the oppression of his spirits [daf‘-i kudūrat], the singers and musicians should sing and play in plaintive tunes [āvāz-i hażīn]. For his musical assemblies [sāz-majlis], held at day or night, he should choose the qānūn, chang, dā‘ira and tanbūr as musical instruments. Of the Indian musical instruments, he should prefer the rubāb and bīn. He should regard pakhāvaj as...appropriate for festivities and weddings; and he should not favour the use of the dhokī (a kind of drum) and the khanjārī, which are musical instruments more suited to the assemblies of widows [bazm-i bayōgān]. Of the Indian musical modes [naghmār], he should listen to and understand, the dhurpad of Tānsēn and [Nayak Bakshsu]. If he likes the khayāl, he should appreciate the [qa‘l] of Amir Khusraw and [the heart-consuming tarānas also] in his style. He should abstain from listening to the khayāl of Shaykh Shēr Muḥammad Hindi, and the tappa of Shaykh Ḥusayn Faqīr and the chutkula of Shāh Ḫusayn Jawnpūrī, which though perfect works of art [tamāmshī hunar aṣr], can be sung well by very few singers; also, because of unjustified interpolations, they are not what they used to be. The...Khayrābādī khayāl and other such compositions [should be shunned]. He should rather avoid the company of those who enjoy Khayrābādī khayāl and chutkula and dholak and khanjārī; for such people are shallow and ignorant and lack dignity [sa‘fīd o sabuk, waqārī nadārānd]. He should avoid the shows of bhānds and jesters, but he should well enjoy the performances of the bhūyā who realistically satirize all sorts of people. If one wants to learn about one’s own faults, one should once in a while sit in one’s own ambush. Knowledge and understanding of [the science (‘ilm) of] music is a great art, but the mírzā must confine himself only to the knowledge of the harmony [āhang, consonance] and musical tones [maqām, modes], words [laft] and their meanings [ma‘na], which cannot be regarded as disgraceful [qabḥī]. He should under no circumstances [zinbār, beware!] indulge himself in singing, but leave this rather to the professional musicians [muqhasmiyān]. Singing can lead to dancing, and that necessarily to other disgraceful and ignominious actions [faẓiḥat o ruswā‘ī]. He should totally abstain from giving a chance to his male friends and companions [muqāhhībān] to listen to the singing of his private concubines [khwānandeha-yi khānegī, domestic singers]; otherwise, it will amount to pandering, and may lead to a great deal of mischief [daiyūīsi – to his being cuckolded].

Figure 4: British Library Mirzānāma (1975: 101; f.90b-1a; my translation in brackets)

---

a Aziz Ahmad erroneously believes the pakhāvaj to be a “musical mode”.

b This should be “brides” not “widows”, especially given the context; bayīg and bayōgān both mean “bride” according to Steingass, but bēvāt is “widowhood”.

c Ahmad has “the compositions of Amir Khusraw and other moving compositions in his style.”

d Ahmad has “The same can be said about the Khayrābādī khayāl and other such compositions,” this is misleading, because the Khayrābādī khayāl etc. are in no way acceptable.

e In the original this is a unified style “Khayrābādī khayāl and chutkula.”
perfection – were designed to ensure that the purpose of listening to music – the attainment of emotional release – was achieved. However, because music was controversial not only in Islam but in its emotional power over men, the third principle concerned legitimising the place of music in the life of a Mughal nobleman. In setting restrictions on the proper place of music, the Indo-Persian sources sought to diffuse music’s latent potential for subverting the status quo. The fourth and fifth principles therefore tackled the problem of maintaining gender and social difference in the mehfil, by creating distance between patrons and performers. This was done by differentiating their roles within the mehfil, and restricting the types of performer that could enter élite musical space. It is in the implementation of these last two principles that a gulf opens up between the prescriptive and descriptive literature. These discrepancies demonstrate that the normative codes of the prescriptive literature were contested at this time, and that two different conceptions of masculinity coexisted amongst Aurangzeb’s amīrs.

**Principle 1: Knowledge**

The first principle of musical patronage laid down in the British Library Mīrzānāma was that the mīrzā should be fully knowledgeable in the science (fan or ‘ilm) of music. Alongside music theory, this included the practical art of singing, and knowledge of the correct procedure of the mehfil. According to Mirza Kamran, knowledge generally should be pursued to free oneself “from the deception. . . of ignorance, and not with an aim. . . to gain eminence” (Husain 1913: 3). This, however, was a meaningless distinction, because in all the relevant literature of the period, eminence was synonymous with knowledge, and inferiority with ignorance. Knowledge of the ‘ilm of music was a great accomplishment in its own right. However, as part of the Mughal nobleman’s adab, it was simultaneously proof of the mīrzā’s superior intelligence and refinement. It also served a practical purpose, in that should the mīrzā sing for his companions, his expertise would enable him to avoid the embarrassment of disgusting his listeners. Similarly, he would be able to correct any faux pas his musicians might make in front of his company (Sarūd al-Bahr, f.3b). However, the most important reason for possessing expert knowledge was that it enabled the patron to discern between musicians and genres that

---

25 All following references to the British Library Mīrzānāma are taken from Aziz Ahmad’s 1975 English translation (101), and from the Persian MS in the British Library (f.90b-1a).
were worthy of patronage, and those that were not. Moreover, it would thereby enable
him to discern which of his peers were worthy of his companionship. The main purpose
of knowledge therefore was to protect the mīrzā from being shown up in front of his peers
as “ignorant and undignified”, and therefore a false and unworthy mīrzā. Thus, for
example, the British Library Mīrzānāma stipulates that any genres that were slightly
unorthodox, like the “khayāl of Shaykh Sher Muhammad Hindi” (see Chapter Six),
should not be patronised, even though they were “perfect works of art”, because they
were invariably performed badly. This would reflect badly on the patron. The detailed
exposition of Indian music theory embodied in Indo-Persian treatises, and the specifics
provided in the British Library Mīrzānāma, were designed to give the mīrzā the requisite
knowledge to avoid embarrassing transgressions of his status.

Principle 2: Perfection

A second, related principle was the idea that music was a very difficult art, in which the
achievement of perfection was both elusive, and the entire goal of musical performance.
On one level, the quest for perfection was mandated by the social reasons outlined above.
On a deeper level, however, perfection in performance was indispensable to the desired
outcome of the mehfil. In this way, the patron’s adab was inextricably bound up with the
fulfilment of the performer’s adab. Several Indo-Persian treatises repeat Ibn Sina’s
dictum that “music is the most difficult science”. Many also express concern that the
musicians of the day were no longer attaining the standards of perfection set by the
masters of old, because they were ignorant of the correct rules for performance,
particularly of rāga. This somewhat stereotypical complaint may have had little to do
with the actual standards of seventeenth-century musicians. Faqirullah admits that many
musicians still knew “how to uphold the principles laid down by the seers of the past”
(Rāg Darpan 1996: 79). Nevertheless the concern was deeply felt, because performances
that failed to achieve perfection were believed to have negative spiritual, emotional and
physical consequences for both listener and performer.

26 Many Indo-Persian musical treatises illustrate the quest for perfection, e.g. Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod,
f.109b.
27 Avicenna, the Arab mathematician, philosopher, and music theorist.
28 e.g. Rāg Darpan 1996: 75; Mir’āt al-Khayāl BL, f.140a.
The Mughal *mehfil* involved an intense reciprocal relationship between listener and performer whose aim was to bring together the right ingredients in order to achieve a particular effect. Music, according to Indo-Persian philosophy, was capable of having spiritual, emotional, and physical effects on the listener. It existed primarily for three reasons: to facilitate union with the Divine, to arouse and satisfy the emotions, and to heal body and soul. The entire purpose of a performance of Hindustani music from the connoisseur’s perspective was to affect the listener and achieve one or more of these ends. According to Faqirullah, the desired effect of the courtly *mehfil* was to “charm the listener,” to engender in the listener a sense of emotional release. In the Sufi *majlis* music’s purpose was to “excite ecstasy” (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 79). Although perfection was not essential in the devotional context, in the courtly *mehfil* the desired effect was only achieved if the performer attained perfection in the execution of *rāga* and in all other aspects of his *adab* (79, 81). The performer’s *adab* is beautifully summarised in a passage from the *Tohfat al-Hind (V)* setting out “the virtues of singers with respect to the perfection of their craft, apart from the areas of form and vocal quality”. Although it is inserted amongst several other traditional lists of “virtues and defects”, this particular list seems to be original. Given that it also resembles modern ideas about performance etiquette, Mirza Khan’s list is likely realistically to represent Mughal conceptions of the performer’s *adab*. His qualifications for an ideal singer were:

1) Clear pronunciation when singing, singing correctly and with deliberate meaning, so that the meaning [of the words] may be understood without trouble or need for careful thought. 2) Knowing the varieties of *rāga*, their names and characters, and being able to perform them. 3) Knowing the varieties of *tāla*, their names and characters, and being able to perform them. 4) Knowing all three *kara* [hand gestures?] and being able to perform them [knowing the subdivisions of *tāla* (*sam*, etc.) and how they are used in the vocal composition]. 5) Being able to sing with superlative intelligence, modesty, and majesty. 6) Perfection in *ālāp*. 7) Singing heroically. 8) Being able to sing long phrases without drawing breath. 9) One who has learnt his manner of performing *naghma* from the master musicians.

---

29 See “Zainahadi: an epilogue” in Chapter Three for a more detailed description of the purported effects of music on the human being.
30 See also *Tohfat al-Hind (V)* Bod, f.114b.
31 Also found in the *Rāg Darpan* and the *Saṅgītarāpanā*, for example.
32 It bears some resemblance to a passage in the *Saṅgītaratnākara* on the *uttamgāyaka* (best singer); however the few specifics the two lists have in common are fairly obvious, such as expertise in *rāga* and *tāla*. 
(perfect ustāds). 10) Perfect execution of naghma in both [private] practice and [public] performance. 11) Remembering the compositions of the ancient masters and being able to sing them equally well. 12) Proficiency in mixing pardas and in mixing naghmas [possibly a reference either to being able to compose, or to improvise on the rāga]. 13) The ability in performance to arouse pleasure and complete enjoyment in one’s listeners. Being able to please the listeners by one’s sureness, agility and beauty of execution. Creating musical shape through skilful manipulation of the rāga. Possessing a calm demeanour when performing, and an open and cheerful countenance. 14) One whose meaning can be understood, and who pleases (the connoisseurs) with his understanding of rhetoric, idiom, satire, wit, cleverness, and intellect. 15) One who is a muṣannīf33 – whose compositions have strength and genius, and who is perfect in his mastery of both text and music, including metre, elegance of language, and rhetoric; who has learnt from the leading masters, who knows well the etiquette of the majlis, and can extemporise [in speech]; and who is also proficient as an instrumentalist and dancer. 16) Freedom from the following specified faults. . .34 (Paraphrase of Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.109b-10a)

If the performer deviated from his adab, the desired effect of the courtly mehfil would be destroyed. The perceived consequences of this for listener and performer could be disastrous, ranging from undesirable emotional and physical effects in a single mehfil (Miṣṭāḥ al-Sarūd SJ, f.9b) to the loss of barakat (blessings, fortune) from one’s entire household (f.12b). For this reason, a major part of the patron’s role was to encourage the performer to achieve perfection through his own knowledge of “best practice”, and through active, discerning listening. Faqirullah urged patrons “to understand that to know all about the virtues of elegance in a musical voice is a sacred responsibility” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 165). The quest for perfection was therefore intertwined with Indo-Persian beliefs about the spiritual and emotional purposes of music.

Principle 3: Place

The third principle at work in the mehfil concerned the proper place of music in the life of a Mughal nobleman. It was not a coincidence that the one place in which perfection was

---

33 Muṣannīf is Faqirullah and Mirza Khan’s translation of Sanskrit vāggeyakāra (Saṅgītaratnākara 1989: 147), meaning master composer/musician. Both descriptions of the muṣannīf (Rāg Darpan 1996: 173-7; Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.112a) are based on Sārīgadeva’s definition of the vāggeyakāra (Saṅgītaratnākara 1989: 147-8), but they are even more similar to each other and were arguably derived from the Saṅgītadarpaṇa. However, Mirza Khan’s insertion of the muṣannīf into this list of virtues is unique.
His name was Bayazid and he was son of Shujâ’at K[han] who was generally known in India as Sajjâwal K. When Sher Shah [Sur] took Mâlwa from Malû K. who was known as Qâdir Shah, he made Shujâ’at, who was one of his officers and of his clan, the governor of that country [. . .] In the year 962, 1555, he died a natural death, and Bâz Bahâdur succeeded him. In 963, he defeated most of his opponents and hoisting the umbrella over his head recited the khuṭba in his own name. He brought the whole of Mâlwa in subjection to himself and led an army against the extensive country of Garha. He was defeated by Râni Durgâvati, who was ruler of that country, and did not attempt to retrieve himself, but occupied himself in pleasure and dissipation. He let the foundation of his power go to the winds and waves, that is, he became so addicted to wine and music that he made no difference between night and day, and gave heed to naught except these two things.

Physicians have prescribed wine according to fixed quantities and seasons with reference to the bodily frame and certain constitutions, and prudent and wise persons have sanctioned music at the time of care and melancholy – such as are produced by engrossment in worldly matters [-] with the object of recruiting the faculties, but have not approved of making these two things the great objects of life and of ever sacrificing to them precious hours for which there is no exchange. Bâz Bahâdur who was himself the teacher of the age in music and melody, employed all his energies in collecting dancing girls (pâtârân). They were famous all over the world for music. The head of the troop [sic] was named Rûpmati. They say that she was a “Padmini” which is the first class of the four kinds of women, according to the division made by Hindu sages, that is, the class which is compounded of excellent qualities. Bâz Bahâdur was wonderfully attached to her, and continually wrote Hindi love-songs about her, and emptied his heart for her. Stories about their love and beauty are still upon people’s tongues.

In the sixth year [of Akbar’s reign], 968, 1560-61, Adham K. and other officers were sent to conquer Mâlwa. Bâz Bahâdur had made a fortification two kos distant from Sârangpûr, which was his capital, and he showed fight. His men were vexed and did not show alacrity. At last there was a stubborn battle, and he was defeated. As he had left some trustworthy men with his women and dancing girls in order that if news of his defeat should arrive they should put them to death as is the custom of India, when his defeat was known, some were put to the sword, and a large number were wounded, and still had some flickerings of life, while others were yet untouched. The imperial army came to the city and there was not much time to kill the rest. Adham K. got possession of everything and made search for Rûpmati, who had been severely wounded. But when this news (“naghma” melody) came to her ears her fidelity grew ardent and she quaffed the cup of poison and manfully died for love of Bâz Bahâdur [. . .] Bâz Bahâdur gave way before the arrival of the imperial army and fled. At the sound of the pursuit of the victorious army he threw himself into the mountain-defiles, and spent his days in wretchedness. For some time he went to Baharji the landholder of Baglâna, and from there he went to Gujarat to Cîngez K. and Sher K. Gujarati. After that he went to Nizâmul-mulk in the Deccan, and being unsuccessful everywhere, he took refuge with Râ나 Udai Singh. In the 15th year Akbar sent Hasan K. Khazânci to make him hopeful of favour and to bring him into service. At first he received the rank of 1000, and finally got the rank of 2000 zat u sawâr (personal, and cavalry). Bâz Bahâdur and Rûpmati both sleep on a ridge in the middle of the wide lake of Ujjain.

Figure 5: The cautionary tale of Baz Bahadur (Ma’âshir al-Umara’ 1999: vol.i 394-6)

---

34 The following two lists of faults are identical to the Râg Darpan, but taken from a third source, probably the Saṅgītadārpana (Râg Darpan 1996: 169, 151-9; see also Saṅgītaratnâkara 1989: 156, 168-9).
not the primary goal was the Sufi majlis, nor that physical and emotional wellbeing was such a central concern of the courtly mehfil. For it was in the areas of devotional religion and medicine that music was considered a beneficial, or at least a legitimate, activity for Muslim men. It was, after all, music’s centrality in the Sufi practice of samā‘ that was its primary justification in the Islamic polity of the Mughal state (see Chapter Two). However, the long-held Indo-Persian belief in the efficacy of music as a medical cure was also a prominent justification for the mehfil. The British Library Mirzâna mâ emphasises music’s power “to dispel the oppression of the spirits” as its primary raison d’être. Abul Fazl tempers his criticism of Baz Bahadur’s immersion in music (see “Principle 4” below) by noting that:

Physicians have prescribed wine according to fixed quantities and seasons with reference to the bodily frame and certain constitutions, and prudent and wise persons have sanctioned music at the time of care and melancholy — such as are produced by engrossment in worldly matters [—] with the object of recruiting the faculties... (Abul Fazl quoted in Ma‘âšîr al-Umârâ’ 1999: vol.i 395)35

The idea that music was a legitimate cure for melancholy, which was caused by an excess of the humour black bile, connected music explicitly with the Unani medical system. In the seventeenth century, the Indo-Persian writers explained the rāgas’ aesthetic effects on the listener as the result of their relationship with the four Unani humours (see Chapter Five).

Hindustani music therefore had a legitimate place in the lives of Mughal amîrs — as a means of displaying their mastery of elite codes of masculine etiquette, as a way of restoring the emotional equilibrium and physical well-being necessary to fulfil more arduous official duties, and, for adherents to Sufism, as a vehicle for attaining union with the Divine. However, the benefits of music only outweighed its risks when pursued in strict moderation, and then only for medical and spiritual purposes, never for reasons of pure entertainment, or worse, licentiousness. The moral of Abul Fazl’s cautionary tale about Baz Bahadur is that although “prudent and wise persons have sanctioned music at the time of care and melancholy”.

35 Shah Nawaz Khan quotes here directly from the Akbarnâma (cf. Akbarnâma 1873-87: vol.ii 211). I have used the Ma‘âšîr al-Umârâ’ in preference, because although Henry Beveridge translated both for the
. . . [they] have not approved of making [wine and music] the great objects of life and of ever sacrificing to them precious hours for which there is no exchange. (Ma‘āṣir al-Umara‘ 1999: vol.i 395)

While music could be justified if pursued for a higher purpose, listening to music either for its own sake, or to excess, was unacceptable. In this way, the place of music in élite Mughal etiquette was firmly circumscribed.

**Principles 4 and 5: Gender and social difference**

If musical patronage was a legitimate part of the *adab* of the Mughal male élite, why did they feel the need to justify it, and to circumscribe it so heavily? It is here that the paradox of the *mehfil* becomes apparent. Music has always been highly controversial in Islamic cultures. It is no accident that those who played the roles of courtesans and catamites in the Mughal empire were often musicians and dancers. Because the emotional power of music was considered raw and uncontrolled, music was deemed, like love, to have the potential to rob a man of his self-control and virtue. It was believed to possess the same, subversive erotic power as the beloved. Because of its potentially destabilising feminine power, music *itself* threatened the mīrzā’s masculinity. Moreover, the whole point of the *mehfil* according to Faqirullah was to seduce the listener and excite ecstasy – an emotional power knowingly possessed and purposely exercised over the mīrzā by men and women of low social status, often in songs of love and longing. The *mehfil* was a space in which the cherished themes of Indo-Persian high culture – love and the grief of separation from the beloved – could safely be performed, in an aesthetic rather than a political space. Moreover, if the mīrzā performed his role as listener and connoisseur correctly, he successfully enacted for the benefit of his peers, who were his political and social judges, his power over people of lower status, and over manifestations of feminine power as music. But the *mehfil* had unusual potential to transgress gender and status boundaries, and the danger was ever present.

---

Bibliotheca Indica, his translation of this passage in the *Ma‘āṣir al-Umara‘* is considerably less virulent than the Akbarnāma, and arguably more accurate.

37 Hindustani music is deemed to possess extraordinary affective power over listeners (see Chapter Five). Silver notes that musicians knowingly possess and purposely exercise this power over their listeners in the modern context: “Musicians feel that music has its own inherent power to charm. . . ‘Abd al-Karim Khân.”
The fourth and fifth principles guiding the conduct of the *mehfil* are therefore preoccupied with the avoidance of transgression. They concern the need for the *mîrzâ* to preserve a proper distance between himself and musicians, in order to ensure that the gender and social status quo was maintained. O’Hanlon argues that the late seventeenth-century *mîrzânâma* literature in general demonstrates an “intense concern to establish spatial and physical boundaries with the culture of servants, menials and the bazaar” (1999: 68, 84). Uniquely in Mughal society, the private *mehfil* was a space in which men and women of low social status enjoyed close physical and emotional proximity to men of the highest status. Contrary to the traditional assumptions of music historiography, the Mughal élite viewed all musicians, including the *kalâwant*, as being of low social status (Jahândârnâma, in Chandra 1986: 211). The roles of patrons and musicians in the seventeenth-century *mehfil* were therefore deliberately codified to create distance between them, thereby avoiding transgressions of status boundaries. This distance was effected in two ways. Firstly, the role of the patron was severed from that of the musician. Secondly, distance was maintained by strict controls on which communities of musician were permitted to enter the *mehfil*. While these two techniques of distanciation were generally agreed in the Indo-Persian sources, it is in the specifics of their implementation, particularly of the latter, that the descriptive accounts begin to part company with the prescriptive literature.

**Principle 4: Distanciation through role separation**

The first technique of distanciation is demonstrated in Abul Fazl’s denouncement of Baz Bahadur, the ruler of Malwa during Akbar’s reign. Baz Bahadur was not, as Wade suggests, lambasted for his love of music (fig. 5 above) “to justify the conquest of Malwa” (1998: 97). Rather, he was condemned for the unforgivable sin of performing music in public, which signified his unfitness to rule. The prohibition on the *mîrzâ* performing music in public is the most universally agreed injunction in the Indo-Persian literature. At first glance, the advice in the British Library *Mîrzânâma* seems contradictory. On one hand, the *mîrzâ* is enjoined to “know the requirements of musical recital, so that he does not sing automatically in every gathering or assembly. Perfection

---

is said to have subdued a school full of unruly boys with his singing, knowing as he did that ‘music
in the art of music is very difficult to achieve; and if he sings badly, his listeners will be
disgusted.” On the other, he is instructed that:

The mīrzā must confine himself only to the knowledge of the harmony and
musical tones, words and their meanings, which cannot be regarded as
disgraceful. He should under no circumstances indulge himself in singing, but
leave this rather to the professional musicians.

The more satirical Mīrzānāma of Mirza Kamran provides a likely solution to this
conundrum. In a play on the verb khvāndan, “to sing”, he advises:

If a mīrzā is handsome and has a (good) voice (saut), he may sing (khvāndan)38 a
verse before his fellow companions (muṣāḥibān) without stepping over the line39.
However, if he sings a lot, he should separate his cups and jugs40 because he has
become a professional singer (khvānanda). (1913: 11; my translation)

Hence, it was considered acceptable for a mīrzā occasionally to display his expertise in
the art of singing in the company of his social equals (muṣāḥibān). However, the
evidence suggests that it was considered disgraceful for a mīrzā to sing either too often,
or when professional musicians were present, lest he be mistaken for one of them.
Nowhere is it ever suggested that it was acceptable for a mīrzā to play an instrument in
public. A sharp role distinction was thus constructed between patron and musician in the
mehfil. In this way a clear social distance could be maintained between high-status and
low-status participants in this intimate musical space41.

38 Husain’s translation “recite” is incorrect here (1913: 6), and he translates all other instances of khvāndan
as “sing”. Khvāndan can mean “to recite”, but the sense is made plain here by the use of saut and
khvānanda, which in this period are customarily used of the singing voice and singers.
39 Gunjāvish dāşhtan, which has the sense “to be able to contain”, “to have room within constraints”.
40 The meaning of this is somewhat obscure. The expression kāsā o kāţa “cups and jugs” refers to a “poor
man’s goods and chattels” (Aryanpour-Kashani) or simply “household furniture” (Steingass). It may mean
that if the mīrzā behaves like a professional singer, he may as well take on the professional singer’s
accomplishments, and renounce his princely lifestyle, because he has taken on the musician’s status.
41 The social difference between patron and performer is visibly constructed in the mehfīl even today.
According to Silver, performances of Hindustani music in the modern concert hall mimic the adab of the
mehfil as far as possible. He notes that “the front one or two rows are reserved for the cognoscenti and
special guests of the patron who, it is interesting to note, will almost never sit on the platform with the
musicians, unless he is very clearly in the subordinate role of shāgird” (1984: 320; emphasis mine).
The perception that singing in the mehfil was “disgraceful” for a mīrzā largely emanated from anxieties about social status. However, the stigmatisation of such practices as transgressive also had a significant gender dimension. Because the function of music in the mehfil was largely to move the emotions, music in Mughal culture was often associated controversially with feminine sexuality; hence, as in the story of Zainabadi, the ubiquity of the female musician in Indo-Persian literature to signify the power of erotic love to lead men astray. Abul Fazl takes particular note of Baz Bahadur’s fondness for his large bevy of dancing girls. It is certainly possible to argue that feminine sexuality was only associated with music performed by women and catamites. However, Abul Fazl portrays Baz Bahadur’s love of courtesans not as the source of his woes, but as the outcome of a more fundamental problem:

He brought the whole of Malwa in subjection to himself... but occupied himself in pleasure and dissipation. He let the foundation of his power go to the winds and waves, that is, he became so addicted to wine and music that he made no difference between night and day, and gave heed to naught except these two things. (Ma‘āṣir al-Umarā’ 1999: 394-5)

In other words, it was Baz Bahadur’s excessive love and performance of music itself that sapped his power and made his defeat by Akbar inevitable. His addiction to courtesans was merely symptomatic of music’s draining of his potency, as a ruler and as a man.

More conclusively, the main reason the British Library Mīrzānāma gives for forbidding the mīrzā to perform in the mehfil is that “singing can lead to dancing, and that necessarily to other disgraceful and ignominious actions.” Professional male dancers in Indo-Muslim culture were stereotyped as objects of erotic desire42. Other than in the Sufi assembly – often an exception to the rules – for a man to dance was to indicate his receptivity to erotic attention, a passive erotic behaviour that was unacceptable for a mīrzā. Erotic objectification was clearly a risk appropriate to the status of the professional musician, but definitely not to the patron. It seems that the social distance mandated in the British Library Mīrzānāma between patron and musician was also designed to avoid transgressions of the mīrzā’s masculine sexuality. It is difficult to

---

42 See for example Dargah Quli Khan’s descriptions of male dancers in the Muraqqa’-i Dehli.
avoid the conclusion that the Mughal élite viewed the act of singing in public, or even excessive love of music, as somehow feminising.

Faqirullah’s description of *mehfils* he personally attended sounds a potentially dissonant note, however. He names four noblemen – two Mughals, a Rajput prince, and an Afghan Sayyid – who were known for their vocal compositions and who sang before others. Two of them were noted for singing in the Sufi *majlis*, which may, like ecstatic dancing, have been considered a legitimate exception to normative codes. Moreover, it is not possible to tell from Faqirullah’s *tazkira* whether or not these men sang when professional musicians were also present. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Faqirullah’s *mehfils* did deviate in other respects from the prescriptions of the British Library *Mīrzānāma*. The possibility that more liberal factions of the male élite tolerated noblemen singing in front of the musicians they patronised cannot entirely be ruled out.

**Principle 5: Distanciation through exclusion**

Wider anxieties about maintaining gender and social differences were reflected in the *mehfil* not only in the gendering of the performer’s role as comparatively feminine, but in social, gender, and sexual distinctions between communities of musicians. These anxieties manifested themselves as restrictions on which musicians could enter the *mehfil*. In this case, prestige differentiations between musicians were of decisive importance in establishing which performers would enhance a mīrzā’s masculinity, and which would make him look vulgar or effeminate. It is here that Faqirullah’s descriptions of *mehfils* he himself organised and attended disagree most pronouncedly with the prescriptive *Mīrzānāma*.

Once again they agree on the principles. Only the two most prestigious and “masculine” communities of musician, the *kalāwants* and the *qawwāls*, were uncontroversial entrants into the *mehfil*. With one exception in Faqirullah’s *tazkira*, the

---

43 I use the term “status” to differentiate between communities across the whole of Mughal society; thus the nobles were high status and musicians low status. I use the term “prestige” to differentiate between communities of musicians; thus *kalāwants* were of low social status relative to the *amīrs* but of high musical prestige, and therefore permitted into the *mehfil*. Male dancers from the *būzār*, on the other hand, were low status and low prestige, and therefore excluded.

44 The only genres thoroughly approved by the author of the British Library *Mīrzānāma* were the “*dhūrupad* of Tansen and Nayak Bakhshu”, which was the musical property of the *kalāwants*, and the “*khayāl* . . . of Amir Khusrau”, which belonged to the *qawwāls* (see Chapter Six).
celebrated seventeenth-century kalōwants and qawwāls were all men. Male musicians were patently awarded higher prestige than female musicians in the seventeenth century, even when they belonged to the same community. Koch argues that female rather than male musicians predominate in the painting of Aurangzeb’s wedding in the Windsor Castle Pādishāhnāma because it was deliberately painted to convey Shah Jahan’s political marginalisation of Aurangzeb (Beach and Koch 1997: 210) (see fig. 6). Apart from notorious courtesans and the noteworthy female kalōwant Basanthi (Faqirullah 1996: 199)45, the names and biographies of female musicians are absent from the contemporary sources, as are those of male bāzār musicians. In contrast to the kalōwants and qawwāls, musicians who belonged to the vulgar space of the bāzār, or the female space of the ḥarīm, were unequivocally excluded from the mehfīl. In between, however, lay several communities whose acceptability in the mehfīl was contested. What Faqirullah and the Mīrzānāma disagree on is precisely where the boundary between masculine and feminine, high and low musical prestiges lay.

Exclusion or inclusion of erotic bodies? The case of male dancers and courtesans
The first minor controversy in the literature concerns the acceptability of courtesans. This question is difficult to address because references to women who performed erotic roles are often oblique in Indo-Persian literature, unless directly condemning a public scandal. However, with the possible exception of the British Library Mīrzānāma, most references to courtesans even in the prescriptive literature indicate that their appearance in the Mughal mehfīl was commonplace. On the other hand, some communities of male musician were considered unsuitable for the mīrzā’s patronage. The British Library Mīrzānāma singles out the bhānds, for example, as a community to avoid.

Given the clear boundaries drawn between male and female space in Mughal élite society, why is it that certain female musicians possessed the liminality to enter private male space when some male musicians did not? If the seventeenth-century bhānds resembled their sixteenth-century ancestors and eighteenth-century descendents, the

---

45 Sarmadee incorrectly states that her name was "Kalawati", which is simply the feminine of the title Kalawant (1996: 199).
reasons why the British Library *Mīrzānāma* stigmatised them are obvious. According to Abul Fazl, in a passage Blochmann censored from his translation⁴⁶:

The *bhānds* play *dhūl* and *tāl*, sing, and mimic people (*mardom*) and other creatures (*jānvarān*). They dance, moving all their limbs to the rhythm [of the beat] (*usūl*)⁴⁷. They snort water up their noses into their mouths, put iron skewers down their throats, swallow marbles and bring them up one by one, and accomplish [many] other wonders. (Â’īn-i Akbarī 1876-7: 143)

The *Mīrzānāma* stigmatised the *bhānds* alongside communities patronised by men who were “shallow and ignorant and lack dignity.” This censure must partly have been due to the fact that the amazing feats they performed had no conceivable higher purpose; they could hardly be justified on the grounds of medicinal or spiritual value! The *bhānds* were therefore disqualified from the *mehfil* in part for their perceived vulgarity.

However, as male dancers noted for the physicality of their dancing, they were also objects of erotic desire, a connotation emphasised by Blochmann’s bowdlerisation of this passage. In the mid-eighteenth century, their dancing and mimicry were deliberately effeminate and homoerotic. The *bhānds* who came to Lucknow from Delhi in the eighteenth century:

introduced [in their performances] a young boy who wears his hair long like a woman and dances with such animation and vivacity that his activities arouse the spectators. . . in these performances, a handsome adolescent boy with long hair in the chignon style, wearing gaudy-coloured male clothes and with bells on his ankles, dances and sings. (Sharar 1994: 142-3)

In Delhi during the reign of Muhammad Shah, the circumstances under which the *bhānds* performed were explicitly sexualised. According to Dargah Quli Khan, Taqi was:

the head of a troupe of boys who mime, dance and perform conjuring tricks. . . Like flowers of many colors, young men are always present in his gardenlike home. . . The slender, well-proportioned beauties capture hearts with their graceful strutting, and the dark-eyed send out messages with their looks.

---

⁴⁶ Blochmann only translates the first sentence, rendering *mardom*, “people”, which is inclusive of women, as “men” (Persian *mard*): “The *Bhānd* play the *Duhul* and *Tāla* and sing and mimic men and animals” (Â’īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 272).

⁴⁷ *Usūl* is also used to mean “rhythmic cycle”, and is the Persian equivalent of *tālā*. 
Wherever there is a boy who is unhappy with the male garb, Taqi’s searching eyes spot him and wherever he sees a soft and tender boy, the gardens envy his discovery. [Taqi] is the master and patron of all sorts of catamites because they know that he has carried this art to new heights. He is the leader of all the eunuchs and they feel proud to be his disciples. In short he is... a patron of pimps. (Muraqqa’-i Dehlī in Kidwai 2001: 180)$^{48}$

In embracing effeminate erotic behaviours, the bhānds were performing the prescribed role of male dancers in Mughal society as men of low status and low prestige. In other words, their sexual status was not transgressive in itself. However, in the same way that painting female rather than male musicians into Aurangzeb’s wedding scene degraded his status, the bhānds’ effeminacies may have reflected badly on the mîrzā’s masculine/high status. More importantly, the combination of erotic bodies and music’s emotional power doubled the possibility of blurring the distinction between masculine/high and feminine/low statuses, through erotic attachments between participants in the mehfil. Hence the British Library Mîrzānāma may also have excluded the bhānds from the mehfil on the grounds of their explicit eroticism.

Anxiety about overt eroticism is equally reflected in the British Library Mîrzānāma’s attitude towards female singers. It is possible that the censorious reference to Khairabadi khayāl in the British Library Mîrzānāma refers to a variety of khayāl sung by courtesans or female ghâdhīs (see below); if so, the Mîrzānāma may be censuring their entry into the mehfil. It seems that in the ideal world of the Mîrzānāma, the main threat to the social order represented in the patronage of music was eroticism, and any musicians, male or female, who embodied an erotic function were to be avoided. However, with respect to courtesans, this attitude is not representative of the majority of the Indo-Persian literature, prescriptive or descriptive. Mirza Kamran’s Mîrzānāma, for example, presents a contrasting picture in which courtesans were accepted as part of male space (1913: 6, 12). Faqirullah’s non-censorious reference to Basanthi also shows that one female singer at least was an accepted entrant into some élite male mehfilis. What

$^{48}$ Dargah Quli Khan calls Taqi’s troupe bhāṣat-bāzān, but his description (see Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1993: 97) indicates they were almost certainly not bhāṣat-bāzān at all, but bhānds. Writing in the same period, the Urdu poet Mir also confuses different communities of male dancers whom he perceives as objects of erotic desire (Zikr-i Mîr 1999: 71 n.128). The fluidity of these authors’ terminology represents an inability to see beyond Mughal élite preconceptions about male dancers to significant differences between gender-transgressive Muslim dancers, and Hindu actors who performed scenes in the life of Lord Krishna!
was universally agreed is that musicians belonging to the female space of the ǧarīm could not enter male space. In the case of the courtesans, it was arguably their transgression of Mughal norms of femininity that enabled their legitimate presence in the mehfil.

Mughal norms of femininity were primarily concerned with seclusion and male ownership. The mīrzānāma literature discusses two kinds of female musician: the “private concubines” of amīrs (khvānandahā-yi khānegī – “domestic singers”), and the courtesans (lālī). Numerous communities of female musicians and dancers are named in the Indo-Persian literature, so it is difficult to be more precise about which the authors are referring to here. In any case, both terms can be understood generically. The mīrzānāmas draw a categorical distinction between the roles of courtesans and “concubines”. The two groups are polarised, with the courtesans generally accepted as part of male space, and the concubines exiled from it to the enclosed female space of the amīr’s domestic world.

Through his lack of censorious comment, Mirza Kamran reveals the extent to which the courtesans were considered established participants in the mehfil. He notes that the mīrzā “must not bring courtesans [lālī] to other people’s house [sic], especially if the master of the house happen [sic] to be richer than he” (Mirza Kamran’s Mīrzānāma 1913: 6, 12). This arguably implies that the host of the mehfil routinely provided courtesans for his guests’ entertainment49. It was also customary for amīrs to attend mehfils held by the courtesans in their own houses (Chandra 1986: 208)50. Given that these were attended entirely by men, the courtesans’ mehfilis were an extension of male space. In sharp contrast, the concubines were unequivocally prohibited from entering the male mehfil. According to the British Library Mīrzānāma, the mīrzā “should totally abstain from giving a chance to his male friends and companions [muṣāḥibān] to listen to the singing of his private concubines; otherwise, it will amount to pandering, and may lead to a great deal of mischief.” The word Aziz Ahmad euphemistically translates as “a great deal of mischief” is daiyüüşī – to be cuckolded51. Thus the courtesans and concubines had

49 And would therefore have been insulted by a lesser man’s unspoken suggestion that his provision for his guests was inadequate.
50 Whether this continued to be possible after 1668-9 is difficult to ascertain; Chandra’s information is based on chronicles of Shah Jahan’s reign. However, in the light of Chapter Three, his assertion that Aurangzeb banished the dancing girls should be viewed with scepticism (1986: 216 n.11).
51 Literally “cuckoldom”, the state of being cuckolded.
something significant in common apart from their musicianship – both were engaged in
sexual exchange with the amırs who employed or owned them. Neither category
therefore includes the dhādhīs and domnīs, the liminal community of female performers
who primarily performed before women, but were permitted to enter public male space
on liminal occasions such as wedding celebrations. This community probably did not
perform sexual roles until at least the eighteenth century52 (see “Alternative
masculinities” below).

Given their similar sexual as well as musical roles, why then were the courtesans
permitted to enter male space when the concubines were not? The distinguishing factor
was the basis upon which they negotiated their sexual relationships with the amırs, and
the different social spaces they were thereby forced to inhabit. The activation of a female
musician’s sexuality seems to have precluded her liminality, her ability to move between
male and female space. The sharp polarisation of the courtesans and concubines in the
mīrzānāma literature was thus an argument about sexual, and therefore social, status.

Precisely who the “concubines” were is open to question. However, the nature of
their sexual relationships with the amırs dictated that they be confined to female space.
They would almost certainly have included women originally employed in the ḥarīm as
“dancing girls” who later became contracted to the head of the household through mut’a
marriage, or legal concubinage53. Such relationships seem to have been commonplace in
Mughal society. At least three of Aurangzeb’s official concubines had been ḥarīm
musicians: Hira Bai Zainabadi; Ra’nadil, who was originally a courtesan and whose entry
into Dara Shikoh’s ḥarīm as his legal concubine caused a scandal (Storia 1907: vol.i 222;
vol.ii 33454); and Udaipuri Bai, who had previously been a Circassian dancer in Dara
Shikoh’s ḥarīm (Sarkar 1989: 17). It is possible that ḥarīm musicians were generally
made available for the amīr’s sexual entertainment. Because all such women belonged to
the amīr’s domestic household, they were effectively his sexual property. Furthermore, at

---

53 Mut’a is the term used for temporary marriage under Shi’a law; in this case it refers to the legal marriage
of a Muslim man to any number of women, slave or free, under a legally-binding contract considerably less
onerous and more temporary than nikāh. Nikāh is the more formal, orthodox marriage contract under
which Muslim men marry up to four wives, and which is restricted to Muslim, Christian, and Jewish
women. Nikāh is obviously a higher-status marriage than mut’ar; the latter can last as little as a few days.
least in the case of legal concubines, their sons were regarded as his rightful heirs. The royal prince Kam Bakhsh, who was the son of Udaipuri Bai, is a prime example. It would have been a serious breach of etiquette and religious precepts for the amir to allow his male companions to see the mothers of his heirs, let alone to watch them perform. The strong sexual anxiety revealed here over concubines enacting the courtesan’s role is perfectly understandable.

It does not, however, explain why the courtesans were equally forbidden to enter female space. The spatial limits of the courtesans’ world are primarily revealed in the literature through real examples of transgression. The story of the scandalous marriage of an amir to a courtesan is a common trope in Indo-Persian literature. Such marriages are customarily considered shameful, because they display a lapse of the nobleman’s self-control and his metaphorical enslavement to the beloved (Chatterjee 2002: 63, 66)\(^\text{55}\). The cautionary tale of Aram Jan in the Akbarnāma and the Muntakhab ut-Tāwārīkh could not be more salutary. It clearly demonstrates how the separation between male and female space was inscribed on the bodies of the courtesans and the concubines. According to the story, the Akbari manṣabdār ‘Ali Quli Khan (Khan Zaman) fell in love with a courtesan, Aram Jan, and against protocol married her. In keeping with the stories of Ra’nadil, Lal Kunwar, the beloved of Muqbil Khan\(^\text{56}\), and so on, the authors denounce this as disgraceful. However, making matters much worse, ‘Ali Quli Khan then proceeds to allow the newest incumbent of his ḥarīm to perform in his mehfil. Thus Aram Jan transgresses the boundary between male and female space not once, but twice – as a courtesan who enters female space by becoming a concubine, and as a concubine who acts the courtesan by reentering male space. Just as the British Library Mīrzāna mac warns, ‘Ali Quli Khan’s permissiveness leads to him being cuckolded by his intimate companion Shaham Beg (who was also his beloved). According to Badauni, “when news of the Khān Zamān[’s misconduct] came to the court, the Emperor’s wrath knew no bounds” (Muntakhab ut-Tāwārīkh in Wade 1998: 85). This story reveals the disparity in

\(^{54}\) Despite Manucci’s insistence that Ra’nadil managed to stave off Aurangzeb’s attempts to take her as his wife, she nevertheless appears at the head of Manucci’s list of Aurangzeb’s concubines (Storia 1907: vol.i 361, vol.ii 334). His lists of concubines and musicians are, however, dubious and possibly fictional.

\(^{55}\) However, extraordinary instances of the courtesan’s fidelity to her noble husband can raise her to the status of an exemplary figure, even to the extent of gaining honorary masculinity; see the stories of Rupamati and Baz Bahadur, and Ra’nadil and Dara Shikoh.

\(^{56}\) See Wade 1998: 86 for details.
sexual status between courtesans and concubines. Although both transgressions are censured, the entry of a courtesan into female space as a concubine was hardly unprecedented. By far the greater weight of disapproval falls upon Khan Zaman’s reintroduction of his concubine into male space. This demonstrates that the sexual, and therefore the social, status of the courtesan was lower than that of the concubine, even when the two roles were enacted in a single body.

Nor could the courtesans enter female space in their capacity as performers without controversy. By the reign of Aurangzeb, one particular community, the kanchanî, reigned supreme as the principal courtesans of Mughal society. According to Abul Fazl, they belonged to a group called the kanjarî: “The men of this class play the Pakhawaij, the Rabāb and the Tāla, while the women sing and dance. His Majesty calls them Kanchanis” (Ā’in-i Akbārī 1873-94: 271). François Bernier described the kanchanî as “handsome and well dressed, and sing to perfection” (Travels 1891: 273-4). The kanchanî enjoyed imperial patronage under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, and until 1663 were required to perform in the imperial darbār twice a week (Manucci Storia 1907: vol. i 189; Bernier Travels 1891: 273-4). Outside their royal duties, the kanchanî performed at “the grand weddings of Omras and Mansebdars” (Travels 1891: 273-4), and danced “in the principle [sic] open places in the city... [from which] they earn a good deal of money” (Storia 1907: vol. i 189). They seem to have possessed a great deal of autonomy, living outside the court and being free to offer their services to whomever could afford them. However, Shah Jahan’s decision to allow the kanchanî to enter the ḥarīm on particular occasions seems to have created widespread disapproval. Bernier, who was well acquainted with Mughal court etiquette, argued that Shah Jahan “transgressed the bounds of decency” in doing so. He approved of Aurangzeb’s measures to repair the barrier between male and female domains by restricting the kanchanî once again to the imperial darbār (Travels 1891: 273-4).

Thus, as the story of Aram Jan shows, the real problem with allowing the courtesan to enter female space was that she belonged to male space. Her transgression

---

58 Veena Oldenburg notes that the nineteenth-century courtesans of Lucknow were the only women who appeared in the tax records. Not only were they in the highest tax bracket, their names also appeared “on lists of property [–] houses, orchards, manufacturing and retail establishments” (1997: 136).
of female space opened up the dangerous possibility that she would return to male space. By simultaneously enacting the antithetical roles of courtesan and concubine in this way, she would not so much blur the boundary between male and female worlds, as erase it completely. As Petievich points out:

> a basic assumption of [Late Mughal] gender segregation [was] that respectable women and courtesans are essentially different kinds of women with very different concerns, and that the “protection” offered veiled women is that they will not be mistaken for women of questionable repute. (2002: 51)

As women who were therefore restricted entirely to male space, the courtesans were an anomaly in the segregated world of Mughal society. Their performance of music in male space was not the cause of their isolation from the female world (see “Alternative masculinities” below). Rather, their autonomous performance of female sexuality outside the harim, divorced from Mughal conventions of male ownership and the spatial restrictions that implied, permanently exiled them from female space.

Moreover, for centuries courtesans in Indian society were trained to master many of the accomplishments restricted to the male élite (e.g. Kamasutra 2002: 14-16), and possessed many other attributes reserved for men, such as independent wealth, property, patronage, political influence, and male respect (Oldenburg 1997: 139-40, 51). It would not be correct to conclude that the courtesans were considered “masculine”; they were on the contrary the highest-prestige embodiments of feminine eroticism in more liberal mehfilis. Rather, in their sexual conduct and educational accomplishments, their subversion of the codes of femininity mandated by the male élite arguably enabled the courtesans to transcend gender norms (see Oldenburg 1997: 138). It was this that made their acceptance into the male mehfil possible, and their exile from the female world complete. As highly accomplished women who made their living dancing in the male world, the transgression of their feminine identity bodily manifest in the unfettered sexual entertainment they offered, they were something both less and more than “women”. Thus, paradoxically, the acceptance of the courtesans in the mehfil did not signify a blurring of the boundary between male and female worlds.

V

Alternative masculinities by proxy: the case of the qhadhis
To summarise: in order to preserve the mîrzâ’s portrayal of himself as the ideal Mughal man, the élite male mehfil was constructed in such a way that the entry of elements considered compromising to his masculinity or sophistication was minimised. This affected which classes of musician were permitted to enter the mehfil. In particular it led to the stigmatisation of musicians, instruments and genres too closely associated with female space. Gender was also a trope for social status; hence these restrictions extended to music associated with the world of the bāzār. That the bhānds and incumbents of the ḥarīm should be excluded from the élite male mehfil seems to have been generally agreed, although the fact that the British Library Mîrzânâma needed to draw attention to this suggests that transgressions did occur. However, the status of other communities was disputed in the literature. The British Library Mîrzânâma seems to have been wary of all overt manifestations of eroticism in the mehfil, and for this reason disallowed the entry of courtesans. In other mehfils, both ideal and real, the courtesans’ display of eroticism does not seem to have been a problem.

This dispute exposes a bifurcation of élite masculinities in the late seventeenth century into more conservative and more liberal groups. The contest between these two masculinities is most strongly symbolised musically in a disagreement over the gender status and social prestige of one of the most important communities of male musician in the empire, the ḍhāḍḥīs. In the seventeenth century, the male ḍhāḍḥīs performed some of the most prestigious genres, and in many respects they were very similar to the kalāwants and qawwâls. Nevertheless, in contrast with these unexceptionable entrants into the mehfil, the prestige of the ḍhāḍḥīs is contested in the literature. As I will demonstrate, the British Library Mîrzânâma recommended they be avoided. In contrast, the descriptive accounts of other writers and painters show that the ḍhāḍḥīs entered élite male space freely, and at the highest social levels.

At issue is the British Library Mîrzânâma’s stigmatisation of the instruments dholak or dholkī and khanjarī. The mîrzâ:

should regard the pakḥāvaj as... appropriate for festivities and weddings; and he should not favour the use of the dholkī (a kind of drum) and the khanjarī, which are musical instruments more suited to the assemblies of widows [bazm-i bayōgān].
He should rather avoid the company of those who enjoy Khayrābādī khayāl and chutkula and dholak and khanjarī; for such people are shallow and ignorant and lack dignity. He should avoid the shows of bhānds.

Given the consistent pairing of the dholak/dholkī with the khanjarī, I am assuming firstly that they were played together, and secondly that dholak and dholkī were the same instrument. Both mean “small dhol” (also transliterated ḍhol or duhul). According to Alastair Dick, dhol is “a term for different types of large cylindrical or barrel drum” (2001: 274). The Indo-Persian musical treatises name two types of small dhol, the ḍhaḍha and the dholkī. Of the dhol proper Abul Fazl merely says “ān ma‘rūf – it’s famous.” He describes the ḍhaḍha, as “a dhol, but very small” (Â‘īn-i Akbarī 1876-7: 141). Faqirullah adds a new name to Abul Fazl’s list, the dholkī, which he describes as “half a dhol” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 128). Given their similar descriptions, the names dholkī and ḍhaḍha are arguably describing the same instrument. The khanjarī, according to Abul Fazl, was a variety of daf. His “description” of the daf is even more cursory than that of the dhol – “mashhūr – famous” (Â‘īn-i Akbarī 1876-7: 141). Bor defines the daf (also known as dā’ira) as a circular frame drum with or without attached cymbals. Abul Fazl describes the khanjarī as “a small daf with cymbals [jalājil – small bells], equal (in size) to the mouth of a pitcher” (1876-7: 141). Hence, this stigmatised community was characterised by its playing of small varieties of the dhol and daf.

The first reference above suggests that the dholak and khanjarī were considered inappropriate for the mīrzā’s assemblies because they were identified with women.

Instruments of the dhol and daf type are widely portrayed in Mughal miniature paintings as the instruments of choice for female space and women musicians (see Doubleday

---

59 Apart from added instruments like the dholkī, Faqirullah’s descriptions are copied straight out of Abul Fazl.

60 2002: personal communication. Doubleday confirms this, and notes that “the terminology for frame drums [in the Islamic world] is imprecise and sometimes confused” (1999: 102). Wade is incorrect that the daf was a “relatively large frame drum constructed without any complementing idiophone”, whereas the dā’ira had attached cymbals. Even she admits that the names were used interchangeably (1998: 143-7).

61 pace Wade, khanjarī خماجی is a Persian name, not an Indian name (1996: 147). Both dhol and khanjarī are Persian words denoting instruments known in West Asia prior to the Mughal period. There is no basis for Wade’s assertion that dhols in Mughal miniature paintings were necessarily “Indian” (for which read “non-Muslim”) rather than West or Central Asian (e.g. 186).
1999: 101). The Mīrzānāma describes a specific context, however: the community it censures traditionally played the dholak and khanjari at wedding celebrations. As always, élite social space at Mughal wedding festivities was physically divided into male and female gatherings (Pelsaert Travels 1925: 81). The mīrzā is instructed that the pakhāvaj, and not the dholak and khanjari, should be played in male space on the occasion of “festivities and weddings”. The word bayōgan, translated by Aziz Ahmad as “widow”, is here more likely to mean “bride” (see fig. 4). In other words, the British Library Mīrzānāma is arguing that the dholak and khanjari were unsuitable for men’s wedding assemblies because the instruments were intimately associated with the women’s side.

The most obvious candidate for the Mīrzānāma’s censure is therefore the female dūhādīs (“dūhāha players”), whose role in Mughal society was precisely this: to play the dhol and the daf, and to sing dhrupad and sohila, at wedding and birthday celebrations, traditionally for gatherings of women (Â’in-i Akbarī 1873-94: 270). The female dūhādīs were known by more than one name; Abul Fazl called them the dafzan (“daf women”). The literature suggests that they were related to the ḍomnīs, or female ḍoms, and were arguably the same group. The nomenclature is unusually fluid, but it seems that until the early nineteenth century, dūhādī, dholi and ḍom or ḍūmanā were used interchangeably to refer to the same group of nomadic rural bards from the Himalaya, Punjab, and Rajasthan (see below). The dūhādīs and ḍomnīs are linked together in a performative context as early as the pre-Mughal Rajasthani epic of Dhola and Maru, in which the (male) dūhādīs and a ḍomnī act as musical messengers of the heroine, Maruni (Vaudeville 1963: 225; 1996: 304-9, 330). The ḍomnīs’ primary role in the seventeenth century was identical to that of the female dūhādīs: to perform inside the women’s quarters at wedding

---

62 See Wade 1998: figs. 18, 19, 39, 54-9, 63, 79, 80, 87, 102-3, 105-8, 116, 134; pls. 4, 8, 11-4, 16. The daf is widely played by male musicians also. A number of paintings also portray male dhol players.
63 According to Doubleday, the isolation of a particular drum, usually the daf, as a woman’s instrument played most prominently at wedding festivities, is a pan-Islamic pattern (1999: 118-9, 125)
64 Vaudeville 1963: 225 and 1996: 291-2; 1811 Marwar Census in Neuman 2003 forthcoming. Vaudeville argues that the dūhādīs, dholis, and ḍoms are still closely related; she notes that ‘the ḍholi are included in the fourth class of the ḍom as ‘professional mendicants and nomad musicians’. . . The relationship between the Dūhādī and the ḍom-Mīrāsī is not clear. . . [but] there is no doubt that popular opinion identifies the Dūhādīs with the Dūm-Mīrāsīs. The relationship of the Dūhādīs with the ḍom or Dūm of the Himalayas. . . [is] well established” (1996: 291-2)
celebrations and other festivities, singing “Hindustani songs” and dancing (Pelsaert
Travels 1925: 81). Like the  dhādhīs the ḍomnīs were explicitly identified with the dhol
(Sharar 1994: 145). At the very least the ḍomnīs and dhādhīs must have performed
together.

While they were associated most strongly with celebrations within the Ḫarīm, the
ḍomnīs and dhādhīs did indeed perform before men on festive occasions that brought
together male and female worlds (Â’īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 270; Brown 2000: 20). It is
possible that the British Library Mīrzānāma is therefore objecting to the entry of female
dhādhīs and ḍomnīs into male space at weddings because they were considered “women’s
musicians”. However, identifying them as the community censured here is problematic.
Firstly, the female dhādhīs were overwhelmingly identified with the daf, not the khānjārī
(although there is possible pictorial evidence that they played both in Shah Jahan’s reign,
see below). Moreover, despite the fact that female dhādhīs and ḍomnīs were primarily Ḫarīm musicians, there is no evidence in the primary literature that their appearance in
male space was regarded as unacceptable; rather the reverse. They were instead the
traditional harbingers of auspiciousness at Mughal life-cycle celebrations, early examples
of a long South Asian tradition of female “auspicious singers” whose music facilitates the
movement from one life state to another (Tingey 1993: 59). Their descendents may still
perform the same function today. According to Tingey, in Rajasthan “women of the
dholī musician caste. . . attend Rajput courts on festival days and for family occasions to
sing folk songs appropriate to the event.” A female community of singers, the damini,
still perform auspicious songs on the occasion of weddings in the Nepali Himalaya (56,
59-60).

The Mughal historical chronicles and miniature paintings consistently portray the
participation of female dhādhīs and ḍomnīs in wedding celebrations as customary, and
auspicious (Muntakhāb al-Lubāb 1977: 19; Â’īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 272). The painting of
“Shah Jahan honoring Prince Awrangzeb at his wedding” in the Windsor Castle
Figure 6: Female musicians at Aurangzeb’s wedding (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.45)
Padishāhnāma shows a large group of what are almost certainly female dhāḍhīs singing in the élite male space of the dīvān-i khāṣṣ (Kippen 2003: 162-3). One woman on the left plays a large daif, and another a daif which may be a khanjari although it does not have cymbals, and on the right a woman plays a dhol (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.45). Khafi Khan’s written description of the same event, in line with Indo-Persian convention, portrays the female musicians and dancers at Aurangzeb’s wedding as bringers of good fortune and happiness (Muntakhab al-Lubah 1977: 19). Until some of the ḍomnīs became courtesans in the mid eighteenth century65, I have found no descriptive evidence of female dhāḍhīs and ḍomnīs performing outside the ḥarīm on occasions other than liminal life-cycle events. All the contemporary sources suggest their primary role was to entertain in the bride’s quarters, and secondarily to come out of the ḥarīm and perform in male space when tradition dictated, as if on behalf of the bride. In a similar religious context in modern Afghanistan, Doubleday notes that:

Weddings provide the most significant lawful context for women to play frame drums. It is incumbent on the bridegroom’s women to drum, sing and dance, unless they hire female professional musicians to fulfil that role for them. . . Women may even play the drum in public space, albeit fully veiled, in wedding processions. (1999: 117; emphasis mine)

Given their culturally-sanctioned role as auspicious singers in male space at wedding celebrations, I would argue the female dhāḍhīs and ḍomnīs are not the object of the British Library Mīrzānāma’s censure.

The key to the mystery is the Mīrzānāma’s second reference to the dholak and khanjari, which condemns listening to them in any context as “shallow and ignorant and lack[ing in] dignity”. In other words, the dholak and khanjari had wider connotations of low social contexts above and beyond their gender associations. There is no evidence in either passage that the author is referring specifically to female dholak and khanjari players. I would argue that the gendering of the dholak and khanjari as “feminine” mapped onto preexisting associations with low status, which to the writer of the British

65 Most notably the peerless Nur Bai (Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1989: 110-1).
Library *Mīrzānāma* doubly disqualified players of these instruments from princely patronage.

The answer lies in the only other community of musician known to have specialised in the *dhol*(ak) and *khanjarī* in the mid seventeenth century. Moreover, their playing of these instruments betrayed both low social origins and a close affiliation with weddings and women’s music. This community was the male *ḍhāḍhīs*. The *ḍhāḍhīs* derived their name from the instrument traditionally associated with them, the *ḍhaḍgha* or small *dhol*. Bor identifies as *ḍhāḍhīs* the *dhol* players in Mughal paintings who characteristically accompanied *sārangī* players in rural devotional settings66 (1987: 55, 62). He argues that because the *dhol*, *sārangī*, and other “folk” instruments they played betrayed rustic origins67, the court élites often considered *ḍhāḍhīs* to be of low prestige, and unsuitable for élite patronage (Bor 2003: 112)68. The *ḍhāḍhīs* first appear on the literary stage in the sixteenth century69. Who they were originally is a matter of confusion. However, the sixteenth-century *ḍhāḍhīs* known to the Mughal élite were wandering rural singers who “chiefly chant the praises of heroes on the field of battle and lend fresh spirit to the fight” (Â’īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 271). In this incarnation the seventeenth-century *ḍhāḍhīs* sang *bār*, and *kaṛkhā* or *kaḍkā*, both designed to eulogise famous battles and war heroes70. Other *ḍhāḍhīs* at this time performed as devotional musicians, and were pictured in Mughal paintings as “a bard who sings and plays for a holy man, Muslim or Hindu, in a rustic surrounding.” They were particularly associated with Sikh traditions (Bor 1987: 57).

The *ḍhāḍhīs* were also closely linked to the *qawwāls* of the Delhi region; so closely that Abul Fazl thought the *qawwāls* were a sub-class of the *ḍhāḍhīs* (Â’īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 271). Given that the *qawwāls* of Delhi, the embodiment of Amir Khusrau’s

---

66 Bor notes that the *dhol* and the *ḍhaḍgha* may have been indistinguishable (2002: personal communication).

67 Bor is specifically talking about the *sārangī*, but it applies equally to the *dhol*.

68 One fascinating indicator of their low status is that *ḍhāḍhīs* are frequently painted with prominently displayed bad teeth, compared with the *kalāwants* whose teeth are kept demurely behind their lips. Bad teeth signified low status generally in Mughal paintings, but exposing the teeth while singing was also a breach of musical etiquette (*Tohfat al-Hind* (V) Bod, f.110b). I am indebted to Jeevan Deol for pointing this out.

69 In the earliest written recension of the Dhola-Maru epic, that of Kuśallabh (c.1561), which in its oral form is much older; and in the poetry of Sur Das (Vaudeville 1996: 276, 293)
musical traditions, appeared in the literature centuries before the ẓhāḏhīs (see Chapter Six), Abul Fazl was arguably incorrect. Nevertheless, Faqirullah’s taṣkira shows that the ẓhāḏhīs were deeply integrated into Sufi contexts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although several ẓhāḏhīs appear in the Rāg Darpan as singers, none are remembered for singing Sufi genres; the only genre named in association with them is dhṛupad (1996: 193-7). However, several of the instrumental specialists Faqirullah lists were ẓhāḏhīs (207-9). Most notable is their specialisation in instruments linked to devotional genres, like the sārangī, and Sufi devotional genres in particular, such as the daf and the rabāb (see Chapter Six). It is possible that the Allah Dad Rababi noted as a frequent visitor of the Sufi shaikh, Bahauddin Barnawi (Rizvi 1983: 277; see Chapter Six), was the same person as the Allah Dad Dhadhi whom Faqirullah described as the greatest sārangī player of his day (Rāg Darpan 1996: 209). No qawwāl is listed in the literature as an instrumentalist, despite the fact that some of their genres were definitely accompanied (215; Wade 1998: pl.114). This indicates the likely connection between the qawwāls and the ẓhāḏhīs. I would argue that at the seventeenth-century Mughal court, the ẓhāḏhīs were the instrumental accompanying the qawwāls.

This is important, because it provides a link to the khanjarī. The male ẓhāḏhīs are known to have taken up the daf in this period, most notably Tahir Daf-nawazi (Rāg Darpan 1996: 208) At least one miniature painting of Aurangzeb’s reign shows male instrumentalists playing what Wade has identified as the khanjarī to inspire ecstasy in the Sufi majlis (147; pl.114). Hence, amongst their large repertoire of other roles, the male ẓhāḏhīs played both the small ḍhol and the khanjarī.

Most significantly of all, if the painting of Dara Shikoh’s wedding in the Windsor Castle Pādīshāhnāma is any indication, it seems that in Shah Jahan’s reign, male ẓhāḏhīs played the ḍhol and the khanjarī to accompany female ẓhāḏhīs at wedding celebrations. The painting, “Shah Jahan honoring Prince Dara-Shikoh at his wedding,” is a double folio that portrays a large number of musicians performing in the forecourt of the dīvān-i khāṣṣ (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.25-6) (see fig. 7). Beach points out that the later setting of

---

70 Toḥfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.115b; Rāg Darpan 1996: 117-9.
Aurangzeb’s wedding (above) is identical to this one; he argues it was deliberately copied from the right-hand folio (209). On the right-hand folio, a group of female dancers are accompanied by three women playing a large daf with cymbals, tāla, and kath-tāla (fish-shaped castanets of stone or wood (Â’in-i Akbarî 1873-94: 271)) On the left, preserving the separation of male and female space but clearly still part of the same scene (209), are two male singers accompanied by several male instrumentalists. The first four instrumentalists arguably form a unitary group. The dhol player and the bīn player are quite distinctive (fig. 8):

Figure 8: male musicians at Dara Shikoh’s wedding (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.26)

In the preceding processional scene (pl.22), which was painted by a different artist, the same dhol and bīn player can be identified sitting together in the same cart (see figs. 9

---

71 The wedding scene is by the artist Bulaqi (Beach and Koch 1997: 183); the procession by the artist Bishandas (181).
Figure 9: Delivery of gifts for Dara Shikoh’s wedding (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.22)
and 10). Significantly, the other two musicians in the wedding group (pl.26) are a sārangī player and the player of a tiny daf without cymbals. Whether the latter is a khanjarî or not is a moot point. In any case, there is definitely a khanjarî player sitting behind the dhol player in the preceding processional scene (see fig. 10). Comparing the size of these frame drums with the dafs played by female musicians in the same scene (see fig. 9), it is quite obvious that they are different instruments.

![Figure 10: male dhol and khanjarî players (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.22)](image)

This is convincing evidence that the male ḍhāḍhīs in the seventeenth century did indeed play the small dhol and the khanjarî; and moreover in the very context the British Library Mīrzānāma singled out for censure. Furthermore, the male ḍhāḍhīs were even better known for playing the dhol and khanjarî in contexts more relevant to the Mīrzānāma’s discussion of élite male gatherings. Such portrayals are mostly in the context of the Sufi majlis. However, there is at least one seventeenth-century painting which shows a dhol player accompanying a sārangī player at an outdoor mehfil, the private party of Izzat Khan, governor of Sindh (Wade 1998: fig.152) (fig. 11):
It is therefore likely that the male ḍhāḍhīs were the community stigmatised in both references to the dholak and khanjarī in the British Library Mīrzānāma.

The Mīrzānāma firstly disqualified the ḍhāḍhīs from the mīrzā’s patronage on the grounds that the instruments they played at weddings were “effeminate”. Not only did the dholak and khanjarī represent women’s music and female space, in accompanying female musicians the male ḍhāḍhīs subordinated themselves to women. Because of this, the mīrzā could be perceived as “unmanly” if he permitted the male ḍhāḍhīs to represent him musically in male festivities. In this context, the ḍhāḍhīs were contrasted unfavourably with players of the more “masculine” pakhāwaj, who traditionally accompanied the high prestige kalāwants in their performance of the most revered dhrupad compositions, those of Nayak Bakhshu and Tansen. The pakhāwaj was of such high prestige that the Mughals believed Nayak Bakhshu himself played it (Sahasras 1993: 19). In this way, constructions of gender difference in the male mehfil were
inextricably entwined with notions of social difference amongst musicians. The characteristic instruments played by the ḍhāḍhīs did not just signify the female world, but simultaneously the low-status world of the bazār. Thus, the more general reason for the ḍhāḍhīs’ stigmatisation was their low social origins. The dhol in particular was associated only with lower class and rural musicians during this period, such as the nats and, revealingly, the bhānds72. In order to preserve his masculinity, the distance between the mīrzā and the worlds of women and the lower classes needed to be maintained. The British Library Mīrzānāma excluded the male ḍhāḍhīs from the princely meḥfīl because they were deemed to transgress both boundaries.

**Strategies for transcendence: the male ḍhāḍhīs**

However, the same descriptive evidence that indicates the male ḍhāḍhīs specialised in the dholak and khanjarī is also evidence that they were extensively patronised by the Mughal élite, including the emperor, and that their presence could signify auspiciousness rather than licentiousness. It seems that the codes of etiquette in the British Library Mīrzānāma were frequently and acceptably ignored by many high-ranking noblemen, and that the Mīrzānāma therefore presents a very limited view of what was happening in real meḥfīls. To what extent then were its codes realised, and how do these codes reflect the cultural practice of the Mughal élite?

The descriptive accounts do suggest that the ḍhāḍhīs were viewed with ambivalence as artists. This is demonstrated in Faqirullah’s description of Miyan Dalu Dhadhi, whom he considered to have been one of the greatest singers of the age:

> In Dhrupada none was seen to excel him. . . His compositions are of an exceptionally high order. [However], his contemporaries, who have most of them been noted connoisseurs of the art, failed to take due notice of a man like him. (Rāg Darpan 1996: 195)

Despite this disdain, the ḍhāḍhīs entered the mehfīls of real patrons in large numbers during the Mughal period. Four ḍhāḍhīs are named as singers in the list of Akbar’s

---

72 It may not be a coincidence that some rural ḍhāḍhīs in the twentieth century sang and danced in female dress and personae in Krishnaite bhakti rituals (Vaudeville 1996: 294-5).
musicians (Â’in-i Akbarî 1927: 681-2). According to Faqirullah, Misri Khan Dhadhi, a disciple of Tansen’s son, Bilas Khan, and a renowned dhrupad singer, was patronised by Aurangzeb’s brother Shah Shuja’. Nearly all of the musicians whom Faqirullah employed in his own melîfils were dhâdhis or closely connected with them. More than a quarter of the musicians listed in Faqirullah’s tazkira, all of whom he had heard personally (Râg Darpan 1996: 211), were dhâdhis. Nine of them were renowned vocalists, and not one was known to be a dhol or khanjarî player. Although he ranks them third, Mirza Khan places the dhâdhis alongside the kalâwants and qawwâls as equivalent to the master musicians of old (Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.115b). The iconographical evidence demonstrates that during Shah Jahan’s and Aurangzeb’s reigns, the dhâdhis were not necessarily shunned as “vulgar”. Rather, they were patronised by Shah Jahan himself at life-cycle events, and were a vital part of private male space in the Sufi majlîs. More importantly, the seventeenth-century painting of dhol and sârangi players performing for an intimate circle of high-ranking amîrs demonstrates that even in their incarnation as “rustic” musicians, the dhâdhis were not unknown participants in the melîfil. Clearly the dhâdhis played a significant role in the musical lives of the Mughal male élite.

I would like to suggest two complementary solutions. The first is that many of the dhâdhis employed creative musical strategies to transcend the stigma of low prestige. One was to take up singing the high-prestige genre dhrupad. By the mid-seventeenth century, some dhâdhis had apprenticed themselves to leading kalâwants like Bilas Khan, and would therefore have been fellow disciples of the most prestigious court musicians of the day, such as Lal Khan Kalawant. Moreover, several of them, including Misri Khan Dhadhi, Sawad Khan Dhadhi, and Rahimdad Dhadhi, were remembered for the excellence of their dhrupad compositions (Faqirullah 1996: 197, 201-3). It is likely therefore that some dhâdhis in Aurangzeb’s reign raised their prestige by specialising in dhrupad. Neuman notes that the dhâdhis’ putative descendents, the mirâsîs, adopted a similar strategy in the nineteenth century of “identifying with the high prestige metropolitan... model” in order to raise their socio-musical prestige (2003 forthcoming).

Secondly, although some dhâdhis obviously continued to play their traditional instruments (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.21-2, 25-6), others took up higher prestige
instruments that facilitated their entry into the princely mehfil. When played in the Sufi majlis, the khanjarı acquired religious connotations that enabled it to transcend connotations of femininity and vulgarity (see Doubleday 1999: 123-5). However, in other élite male spaces, many ḍhāḍhīs seem to have renounced the dhol and khanjarı in favour of higher prestige drums like the pakhāwaj and daf. It is particularly noticeable that while no ḍhāḍhīs are listed as dhol or khanjarī players in Faqirullah’s tazkira, he names two who specialised in pakhāwaj and daf, Firuz Dhadhi and Tahir Daf-nawazi respectively. By renouncing their low-status or feminine instruments in the context of the mehfil, the ḍhāḍhīs made themselves acceptable to princely patronage.

Finally, by becoming instrumental accompanists to the qawwāls, the male ḍhāḍhīs made themselves indispensible to the élite mehfil. Bor suggests that in their original role as rural devotional singers, the male ḍhāḍhīs sang and accompanied themselves73. If the objections to rural and bazār musicians throughout the British Library Mīrzānāma reflect normative practice, it would have been difficult for the ḍhāḍhīs to enter the courtly mehfil in this rustic guise. However, their traditional devotional role undoubtedly brought them into contact with the higher prestige qawwāls, who were fully accepted as performers in private male space. By attaching themselves to the qawwāls as accompanists – or possibly becoming qawwāls themselves – the ḍhāḍhīs were enabled to enter the mehfil in their wake.

The male ḍhāḍhīs therefore performed four roles in seventeenth-century Mughal society. Firstly, some maintained their traditional role as players of dhol and khanjarī in rural devotional contexts and to accompany female ḍhāḍhīs at court on the occasion of weddings. Secondly, the ḍhāḍhīs continued to be employed on the battlefield and in public male space as singers of their signature genres, bār and kaṛkhā. Thirdly, some ḍhāḍhīs also began to specialise as singers of the high-prestige “classical” dhrupad, becoming shāgirds of the kalōwants in order to do so. Finally, rather than accompanying their own singing on their distinctive “rustic” instruments, some ḍhāḍhīs took up higher

73 2003: personal communication.
Figure 12: Shah Jahan’s birthday-weighing (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.12)
prestige instruments such as the pakhāwaj, and became accompanists to the higher-prestige qawwāls. By employing creative strategies to enhance their socio-musical prestige and move away from their association with rural and women’s music, some of the ḍhāḍhīs transcended the Mīrzānāma’s stigmatisation and became accepted participants in the princely mehfil.

**Princely transgressions: the mehfil in reality**

This transcendence was complemented by the mīrzās’ deliberate transgressions of socio-musical boundaries. The second solution to the ḍhāḍhīs’ paradoxical appearance in real mehfiḷs during Shah Jahan’s and Aurangzeb’s reign is that some mīrzās were challenging the codes of élite masculinity constructed in the prescriptive literature. In the early seventeenth century, clear transgressions of the British Library Mīrzānāma’s codes are demonstrated in the paintings contained in the Windsor Castle Pādishāhnāma. Of all the Mughal emperors, Shah Jahan exerted the most influence over what his artists portrayed (Beach and Koch 1997: 131). These paintings are therefore likely to provide an excellent glimpse of the cultural imperatives of mīrzā’ī immediately preceding the British Library Mīrzānāma’s completion in 1660. I have already noted that the portrait of Dara Shikoh’s wedding shows that on such occasions male players of the dhol and khanjarī did perform in male space, at the highest social level. This was in opposition to the later dictates of the Mīrzānāma with respect to the separation of masculine and feminine worlds. Even more striking is a painting c.1635 of “The weighing of Shah-Jahan on his forty-second lunar birthday” (Beach and Koch 1997: pl.12-13) (see fig. 12). The right-hand folio portrays a large group of male musicians and singers accompanying a group of female dancers performing in the forecourt of the divān-i khāṣṣ. Wade has identified the dancers as kanchanī 74 (1998: 184-5), although there is no evidence for this apart from the gendered division of labour. Amongst the male musicians are singers, players of rabāb, bīn, tanbūra, dhol – and a male kath-tāla player (fig. 13):

---

74 Probably on the grounds that Bernier mentioned their controversial admittance into the ḥarīm on similar occasions in Shah Jahan’s reign.
Other than in this painting, the kath-tāla is depicted as the exclusive preserve of female musicians and dancers (Wade 1998: 194). It appears again, for example, in the Windsor Castle Pādishāhnāma in the hands of the female ghāḍhīs performing for Dara Shikoh’s wedding (see fig.7). For a man to be painted playing what was undoubtedly a “feminine” instrument, not only in male space, but as a symbol of good fortune, signifies a significant blurring of the boundaries of male and female space during Shah Jahan’s reign.

It is arguably no coincidence that the entry of dhol and khanjarī players into the intimate male space of the mehfīl, and of kanchanī into the female space of the ḥarīm, is recorded in pictorial and written evidence for exactly this period – the reign of Shah Jahan. O’Hanlon has argued that the mīrzānāma literature’s attacks on transgressions of gender and status boundaries represent an attempt on the part of established mīrzās to distance themselves from lower status upstarts at a time of increasing social mobility and lowered service morale under Aurangzeb (1999: 86). However, the musical evidence in paintings from the reign of Shah Jahan suggests that such transgressions were already widespread – and not considered transgressive. In other words, the mīrzānāmas of Aurangzeb’s reign reflect a reactionary position against transgressions prior to 1660 of the strictest standards of élite masculinity by some of the top nobles. I would argue that
this blurring of earlier, more rigid demarcations of masculine and feminine (55, 80) may have been a hallmark of Shah Jahan’s cultural aesthetic. His reign thus saw a period of tolerance for standards of masculinity that had previously been considered, and were still seen by some *manṣabdar*s, as transgressive. The reappearance of a “more conformist religious culture” under Aurangzeb (84) may have led to the reassertion of more conservative ideals of masculinity in the *mīrzānāma* literature. These marked an attempt to rebuild the barrier separating male and female space that had been undermined by Shah Jahan’s policies.

However, the discrepancies between the British Library *Mīrzānāma* and more liberal descriptive accounts unmistakeably show that *mīrzā* like Faqirullah continued to stretch the boundaries of élite masculinity in Aurangzeb’s reign. This is also testified to by the *Mīrzānāma*’s anxious tone. While the *Mīrzānāma* probably does reflect the highest standards of princely etiquette in Aurangzeb’s reign, the evidence of friendship circles indicates that Faqirullah and the circles in which he moved were an accepted group within the upper echelons of élite society. Moreover, it is apparent that the social context Faqirullah describes was the more important and influential one in which music was patronised. Faqirullah writes out of an explicitly Sufi context that is only tangentially present in the *Mīrzānāma*. Moreover, like all good Sufis he celebrates love and the musical expression of emotion without fear. While explicit eroticism is erased from the *Rāg Darpan* for reasons of etiquette, Faqirullah was famed elsewhere for his life-long love for his intimate companion, Nasir ‘Ali. In contrast, the *Mīrzānāma* demonstrates a deep anxiety about the dangers of all love relationships outside the *mīrzā*’s ḥarīm.

It therefore seems that there were two alternative codes of masculinity coexisting in the late seventeenth century, one more conservative and anxious about change, the other more liberal and confident, and reflective of the worldview of many of the top *amīrs*. The conservative position of the *Mīrzānāma*, rather than being evidence of anxiety amongst Aurangzeb’s established nobles over increased social mobility, arguably exposes its author as a low-level *mīrzā*, who needed to adhere to the highest standards of princely etiquette in order to shore up his more precarious social standing. In contrast, high-ranking and established *mīrzās* could get away with stretching the boundaries and
effecting changes to masculine codes without it affecting their high status, in a way that low-ranking mīrzās could not. In this way, the ḍhāḏhīs could become acclaimed participants in the mehfils of Faqirullah’s circle, and Mughal noblemen like Muhammad Baqi and ‘Idul Singh could erase the distinction between patron and performer through their singing, without this constituting a challenge to the high status of Faqirullah’s circle.

Nevertheless, Faqirullah’s disagreement with the Mīrzānāma on the ḍhāḏhīs was one of degree, not of principle. Members of Faqirullah’s circle arguably continued to play by the rules. His ḍhāḏhīs didn’t play the dhol or the khanjarī, and the noble performers he mentions may only have sung in the Sufi majlis. During Aurangzeb’s reign, the principles of separating the mīrzā’s role from that of the professional musician, and of minimising vulgar and feminine intrusions into the mehfil, seem to have held for both factions of élite male society.

VI
Conclusion
During the late seventeenth century, it was this more liberal group of mīrzās, and the challenge they presented to the old codes of masculinity through their introduction of new performers, genres, and instruments into the mehfil, who arguably created the primary environment for long-term change in Hindustani music. Both groups, steeped in the shared Indo-Persian culture of the Mughal manṣabadārs, and bolstered by the constructive friendship of other mīrzās, embraced the common Mughal notions of princely adab that underpinned the principles by which the musical mehfil was conducted. Music existed to move the emotions. However, its affective power could only be released by the musician’s attainment of perfection in performance. The mīrzā played an important role in achieving this release, harnessing his expert knowledge of correct practice to encourage the musician to fulfil his adab. In doing so, the mehfil provided a legitimate space in which the mīrzā could demonstrate his mastery of masculine codes, attain spiritual union with the Divine, or have his mind and body healed from worldly cares.

It was the place of music as a medical cure in the adab of the Mughal nobleman that in this period acted as a spur, not to musical change, but to stability, in spite of a prevailing atmosphere of turbulence. In the following chapter I examine how the
Mughals explained the rāga’s famed aesthetic effects, as stemming from their action on the four humours of the body in accordance with the Unani medical system. Because of this, the rāgas’ aesthetic associations became central to the Mughals’ justification of the place of music in a nobleman’s life. I argue that this encouraged the retention in North India of the rāga-rāginī system of melodic classification, despite the parallel existence at the Mughal court of a practical method of classifying the rāgas according to their scale.

In medicalising music, the Mughals created a legitimate place for it in Indo-Muslim society. Music’s performance, however, was constrained by the requirement that the emotional release it engendered fulfil a higher purpose, lest its emotional and erotic power cause the mīrzā to fall into an unmanly licentiousness. The mehfil had the latent potential to subvert the political and social status quo, because within its boundaries, men and women of low social status were permitted momentarily to exert power over the mīrzā in the performance of music. It was for this reason that the mīrzānāma literature mandated two techniques to avoid unnecessary blurring of gender and social boundaries: differentiating the roles of patron and performer, and excluding from the mehfil communities of musician who might reflect badly on the mīrzā’s masculinity. It was in the implementation of these two techniques of distanciation that the prescriptive literature and the conduct of real mehfilis began to diverge. In this way, the coexistence of two groups of musical patrons, with alternative and equally acceptable conceptions of élite masculinity, is revealed.

The more liberal of these, and the one which is best represented in the musicological and biographical literature, took the Sufi context in which its members were involved as an additional imperative for patronage. It was the combination of this group’s interest in Sufism alongside their embeddedness in courtly culture and contexts that led to the rise of khayāl to popularity during Aurangzeb’s reign. Modern khayāl’s remarkable synthesis of devotional and courtly, Sufi and Vaishnava, is very much a byproduct of the syncretistic Indo-Persian culture of the Mughal male élite. The rise of khayāl is the subject of my final chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

Rāga systems in performance

These are the properties of the six rāgas: When Bhairava is sung, grinding occurs. When Malkauns is performed, the night is turned into day. When Hindol is performed, the bucket is drawn forth from its well. When Megh is sung, it rains. When Sri Rag is performed, beasts and birds are drawn to the sound. When Rag Dipak is performed, lamps are lit and it burns the body of the singer. Some will not play Rag Dipak or listen to it.

~ Risāla dar Rāg

I

Introduction and background

It seems to be axiomatic in the study of Indian classical music to say that a major difference between modern Karnatic music and its North Indian counterpart lies in their conception of the rāgas and how they are organised. The grounding of Indian classical music in a system of modal entities with special melodic and aesthetic characteristics dates back to the earliest known Sanskrit work on music, the Nātyaśāstra attributed to Bharata. However, as a musical technical term, rāga itself first appears in the Brhaddeśī of Matan̄ga (late first millennium CE) (Widdess 1995: 12). From the establishment of the rāga as the primary modal concept until the mid sixteenth century, both Northern and Southern theorists tended to classify individual rāgas according to a system of parent modes (te Nijenhuis 1977: 20-1), whereby current rāgas were derived from their grāmarāga or bhāsā, which in turn were classified under their jāti. In reality, as melodic entities the jātis, grāmarāgas and bhāsās had largely been obsolete since the thirteenth century. They only retained theoretical currency because of the veneration accorded to the Saṅgītaratnākara of Sāṅgadeva (c.1250), which transformed them into organisational concepts that encompassed current rāgas. Between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, two new classificatory concepts emerged which eventually displaced

1 R, f.144a.
2 Some of this chapter is based on my article “The jhāt system of seventeenth-century North Indian rāgas: a preliminary report on the treatises of Kāmīlkhanī” (Asian Music, forthcoming).
the old method of parent modes: the melā system in the South, and the rāga-rāginī system in the North.

In 1550, the South Indian theorist Rāmāmātya broke with the past in his important treatise the Swaramelākalānīdhi, which introduced a system of classifying rāgas according to their basic scalar material (te Nijenhuis 1977: 21). Rāmāmātya’s idea of using a discrete number of root scales, or melās, as the organisational principle of the rāga system was rapidly adopted by several theorists. These were overwhelmingly South Indian, but included two important theorists working in the North, Puṇḍarīkavīṭhala in the sixteenth century, and Ahobala in the seventeenth century. Rāmāmātya’s proposition of nineteen foundational scales led to the development of a logical and practical system of seventy-two melākartā that account for all tonal permutations of the rāgas, both existing and hypothetical. This system was enthusiastically adopted in South India by theorists and practitioners, and forms the basis of the Karnatic melodic system today.

In the North, however, the adoption of a scalar system of classification encountered significant resistance. Until the twentieth century, musicians and writers continued to conceptualise the North Indian rāgas as a conglomeration of individual entities organised according to the male-female-child principle of the rāga-rāginī systems. These customarily present six principal rāgas, each of which is assigned five or six “wives” called rāginīs. The principle of organising modal entities by gender dates back at least to the Gītālaṃkāra (probably twelfth century) (te Nijenhuis 1977: 9); however the Saṅgītamakaraṇḍa attributed to “Narada” (early second millennium CE) was probably the first text to divide the modes into male rāgas and female rāginīs (Widdess 1995: 14). In its fully fledged form, the rāga-rāginī system emerged around the fourteenth century, first appearing in Sudhākalaśa’s Saṅgītopaniśatsāroddhāra (1350) (te Nijenhuis 1977: 15). Several variations of the rāga-rāginī system developed prior to the

---

3 Harold Powers notes that the earliest known treatise to mention melā as a term describing the scalar content of rāga is the fourteenth-century Saṅgītasuddha attributed to Vidyaranya (2003: personal communication).
4 Following Ahobala, the Rāgatattvavibodha of Srīnivāsa, the Hṛdayaprakāśa and Hṛdayaṅkautuka of Hṛdayanārāyana, and the Rāgatantraṅgiṇī of Locana Kavi; all are dependent on Ahobala and on each other. None are likely to be earlier than Kamālkhanī (te Nijenhuis 1977: 29-30).
seventeenth century, often appearing alongside Sāṅgadeva’s classificatory system in the same works (e.g. the Saṅgītadarpaṇa). As the number of rāgas expanded over the centuries, eight or nine “sons” or putras were added to each rāga, and sometimes the putras were also allocated wives (Jairazbhoy 1971: 91).

Many of the features used to distinguish one rāga from another were extramusical. The name rāga itself indicates the centrality of emotion to the concept of rāga; among other things it means “colour”, “passion”, “delight”, and its root raṇī means “to be affected or moved”, “to be excited”, “to be charmed” (Widdess 1995: 39-40). The attribution of aesthetic effects to modal entities already appeared in the Nāṭyaśāstra, which allocated one or more of the eight classical rasas, or affective essences, to each of the eighteen jātis. Gradually the North Indian rāgas collected a host of aesthetic properties by which they were differentiated, including the times and seasons of their performance, associations with deities and moods, purported magical properties, and so on. The most intriguing manifestation of this procedure was the rāgamālā, iconographical depictions of the rāgas and rāginīs as heroes, heroines and deities in verse and painting from the fourteenth century onwards – although there is no known connection between the iconographical and musical aspects of the rāgas. Extramusical associations continue to be important to Hindustani rāgas today.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, dissatisfied with the irrationality of the North Indian classificatory system (Bhatkhande 1990: 1-2), the musicologist V N Bhatkhande codified a new system of classifying the Hindustani rāgas according to ten basic scales, or thāts. Bhatkhande partly derived his thāt system from the few works of seventeenth-century North Indian theory, such as the Saṅgītapārijāta of Ahobala, which define the Hindustani rāgas according to their melās (not always in an organised fashion), and the definitive South Indian works on the melā system. Assuming that in some glorious ancient past the Hindustani rāgas were extracted from parent scales

---

5 In fact, Rāmāmātya organised the rāgas into twenty melās, but as te Nijenhuis points out, the scales sāraṅganaśa and kedāragauṭa are identical (1977: 21).
6 The eight rasas are vīra (heroic), raudra (angry), adbhuta (amazing), karuṇa (pitiful), śṛṅgāra (erotic), hāsya (mirthful), bibhatsa (disgusting), bhayānaka (terrifying) (Widdess 1995: 39).
(rather than the “parent” scales being the result of earlier processes of theoretical abstraction), Bhatkhande set out a procedure by which the North Indian rāgas could once again be classified “scientifically” by their scale:

When the swaras have been standardised... we can also fix on the number of parent modes [ṭhāṭs] under which the existing ragas can be classified and grouped. This is to be done by deciding mathematically the number of possible permutations and combinations as has been done by [the South Indian creator of the 72 melakarta] Vyankata Makhi, in his Chaturdandi Prakasika, and then taking from them such as will best fit the present derivative modes. When the number of the parent modes has been determined by consensus of opinion, we have to proceed to the classification of the existing ragas under the parent modes, and in this we will be following our ancient treatises... The rule followed in the ancient texts that a derivative Raga must be having the same scale as the parent mode, the only difference being in the swaras deleted or added [], still remains. (111-2)

It is difficult to know how closely Bhatkhande really based his system on his seventeenth-century precedents. His derivation of the modern ṭhāṭ system from the saṅgītasāstras was ideologically motivated, and he often makes unjustified assumptions, such as translating the Sanskrit word melā as ṭhāṭ when this is not mandated by the original text. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Bhatkhande derived justification for the development of a North Indian ṭhāṭ system from the seventeenth-century saṅgītasāstras.

It is less often stated that Bhatkhande also based his system on the fret patterns, or ṭhāṭs, contemporary sitar players used in setting up their instruments for performance (Widdess 1995: 31). According to Gangoly, writing in 1935:

Rāgas are usually said to have descended from a certain parent stock which is technically known as a ṭhāṭ (lit. an “array”, or a “setting”). These ṭhāṭs represent modes, or types of some group of notes, from which distinct forms... can be derived. ... ṭhāṭ is technically used in the instrumental music system of Northern India to denote the frets of string instruments (Sitār, Vīnā, Surbahār) for the purpose of playing a given pattern of modes, for, one setting will serve for several modes of the same type... Thus ṭhāṭ is used in a classifying sense, the

---

7 The association of extramusical phenomena with the rāgas also forms part of the Karnatic conception of rāga, however, it is far less prevalent or important than in North India.
8 A typical example from his translation of the Hṛdayaprakāśa: “[’]Translation... There are innumerable melas or Thatas, described in the Ocean of Music... A Thata is a collection of notes capable of producing ragas.’” Observation – Ahobala Pandita has mentioned thousands of Thatas in his Sangeeta Parijata. We wonder whether the word “akara” is cunningly used to hint at those” (Bhatkhande 1990: 25). Neither Hṛdayanarāyāna nor Ahobala use the word ṭhāṭ in the passages translated.
corresponding Southern or the Karnatic word is mela-kartā – the ‘union-maker,’ that is to say, the group-maker which groups together several allied rāgas. (3)

Gangoly pays some attention here to the rootedness of the ṭhāṭ concept in modern-day performance practice. He nevertheless gives primacy to Bhatkhande’s theoretical abstraction of the concept, disguising its newness and placing it in the realm of authoritative tradition.

Unfortunately, Gangoly’s conclusion that Bhatkhande’s ṭhāṭs could be “used in a classifying sense. . . to group together several allied rāgas” is fallacious. Indeed, as a method of redefining the Hindustani rāga system Bhatkhande’s ṭhāṭs have met with considerable resistance in North India. This is not surprising, given that scalar identity is one of the least satisfactory ways of demonstrating a relationship between two North Indian rāgas. As Widdess points out:

It is possible for two rāgas to have identical intervallic structures yet be considered [by musicians] wholly unrelated; conversely, rāgas with different scales may be considered closely related. . .[Powers (1976)] argues that performers conceive the rāgas as falling into groups, connected by common motifs rather than by scale. (1995: 34-5)

Putting the North Indian rāgas into groups on the basis of their scalar structure “goes against the grain of much Indian musical thinking, especially that of practising musicians,” according to Widdess (34). By making scale primary to rāga’s definition, Bhatkhande downplayed the centrality of its aesthetic personality to its identity. As Neuman so succinctly put it, “when rāg Malkauns ceases to be the rāg of jinns and becomes a pentatonic scale, the music becomes something different because it means something different” (1980: 212). Nevertheless, Bhatkhande’s ṭhāṭ system has proved to be a useful shorthand to communicate the basic modal material of individual rāgas. As such, it is now firmly ensconced in the verbal and ideational repertoire of North Indian musicians.

Most of the Indo-Persian treatises reflect, as we would expect, the preeminence of the rāga-rāginī system in seventeenth-century North India. However, in contrast to the view of present-day musicians that Bhatkhande’s ṭhāṭ system is an artificial modern
construction, the Indo-Persian sources show that a highly developed \textit{thāṭ} system operated alongside the \textit{rāga-rāginī} system at the seventeenth-century Mughal court. The crucial texts are the two treatises of Kamilkhani (both c.1668): the \textit{Risāla-i ‘Ivaţ Muḥammad Kāmilkhānī dar ‘amal-i bīn va thātha-i rāghā-i Hindī}, or “Treatise on playing the \textit{bīn} and the \textit{thāṭs} of the Indian \textit{rāgas}”, and the \textit{Risāla-i Kāmil Khān dar bayān-i thāta ya’ni navākhtan-i sāzhā}, or the “Treatise in explanation of \textit{thāṭs}, that is, the playing of instruments” (see Chapter Two). These two treatises are based on the performance practice of the North Indian \textit{bīn}, as witnessed and participated in by the author at the Mughal court in Delhi.

Kamilkhani’s treatises are unprecedented in their elaboration of a \textit{thāṭ} system directly from a twelve-pitch scale derived from the fractional division of the \textit{Sa} string of the \textit{bīn}. Despite their originality, they reflect a wider upsurge in interest, following Rāmāmātya, in classifying Hindustani \textit{rāgas} according to scalar patterns worked out on the \textit{bīn}. In this, Kamilkhani’s works are closest to the Sanskrit theorist Ahobala. Ahobala’s important treatise, the \textit{Saṅgītapārijāta}, does not systematically set out a \textit{melā} system\footnote{He works out hypothetically that the six possible \textit{melā} combinations (all \textit{suddha} swaras, one alteration, two alterations, etc.) produce 11340 possible permutations (te Nijenhuis 1977: 29). However, this is not a \textit{melā} system in Rāmāmātya’s sense, and Ahobala does not apply it to the 122 current \textit{rāgas} he describes.}. He nevertheless uses scale as the primary criterion for classifying the \textit{rāgas}.

More importantly, Ahobala was the first North Indian theorist to derive the twelve \textit{suddha} and \textit{vikṛta} swaras of the Hindustani scale from the fractional division of the string. In this chapter I will be analysing Kamilkhani’s treatises alongside Mirza Raushan Zamir’s contemporaneous translation of the \textit{Saṅgītapārijāta}, the \textit{Tarjoma-i Pārijātak} (1666). In doing so I will show how these works bear witness to the widespread use of \textit{thāṭ} systems in North India as a practical means of setting up the frets of the \textit{bīn} and the \textit{ṭanbūr} for the performance of \textit{rāga}.

If a system of \textit{thāṭs} was indeed established as a means of conceptualising the \textit{rāgas} at the seventeenth-century Mughal court, why then did the \textit{rāga-rāginī} system, with its emphasis on classifying \textit{rāgas} according to their aesthetic properties, maintain its predominance in North India at the same time that the \textit{melā} system was being adopted in
the South? Before turning my attention to seventeenth-century ḥāṭ systems, I will propose a solution, if only for the Mughal court. Firstly, I would argue that the ḥāṭ system elaborated in the Indo-Persian treatises was never designed to replace the ideational rāga-rāginī system of classification with a practical scale-based system, but to complement it. Kamikkhanī’s ḥāṭ system arguably represented the oral system used by musicians to set up the frets of their instruments for performance. Kamillkhani himself underlines the preeminence of aesthetic criteria in classifying the rāgas, and attempts to integrate his ḥāṭs with the time theory of the rāga-rāginī system in a most ingenious way. Thus, the aesthetic properties of the rāgas were able to remain the preeminent ideological criteria for classification, while allowing for the subordinate existence of a scale-based method of conceiving the rāgas in performance. In other words, Kamillkhani’s ḥāṭs were a distant ancestor of the practically-based ḥāṭ system used by nineteenth-century sitār players.

More importantly, the nature of the rāga as the musical embodiment of a unique affective essence (as opposed to a mere combination of notes) was inseparable from the aim of the Mughal mehfil to affect the listener. Indeed, the rāga as “passion” arguably inspired this aim in the first place. As I showed in Chapter Four, its attainment was dependent on perfection of execution, and in particular, perfection in realising the extramusical dimensions of the rāga. The dire extramusical consequences that were believed to result from imperfect execution emphasised the role that extramusical aspects of rāga were perceived to play in the maintenance of the listener’s wellbeing.

The rāgas’ possession of medicinal properties was arguably mooted in the earliest saṅgītaśāstras (Katz 2000: 95). Long-established Persianate traditions of music as an agent of wellbeing and its use in medical therapies also affected Indo-Persian perceptions of the place and function of Hindustani music (see Chapter Four). However, in this chapter I will show that in the seventeenth century, these associations were elaborated into a specific series of correlations between the rāgas and the four elements and humours of the Unani medical system, a version of Galenic medicine still practised by Muslims in South Asia. I will demonstrate that relationships drawn between the rāgas and the Unani humours were not just theoretical, but part of the metaphysical conceptions
of practising musicians. These correlations provided an integrated theory explaining why rāgas needed to be played at specific times to achieve their correct effect. In addition, the texts neatly expose how the seventeenth-century ṭhāṭ system and rāga-rāginī systems were connected in the practice of performers. Perfect execution of the rāga was linked physiologically to the restoration of equilibrium in the bodily humours, a state of being deemed essential for the maintenance of ideal Mughal manliness. I therefore argue that the endorsement of the rāga-rāginī system of classification was necessary to the Mughal élite’s cultivation of mīrzā’ī. Because the extramusical associations of the rāgas were central to the wellbeing of listeners, the rāga-rāginī system maintained its preeminence at the Mughal court.

II
Rāga-rāginī systems at the seventeenth-century Mughal court

As Jairazbhoy points out, there was never a single definitive rāga-rāginī system, but a “bewildering variety” of systems expanding over the centuries (1971: 91). The useful appendices to Gangoly’s book Rāgas and Rāginīs present twenty different rāga-rāginī systems culled from the Sanskrit corpus alone (1935: 175-224) – and the Indo-Persian sources include still more variations. Nevertheless, a survey of the Indo-Persian sources shows that by the second half of the seventeenth century, only a small number of systems remained in popular use. Mirza Khan’s statement in the Tohfat al-Hind (V) that four rāga-rāginī systems were important in the seventeenth century has become famous in a garbled version attributing the statement to “Mahomed Rezza Khan”, the author of the Uṣūl-i Naḡḥmāt al-ʿAṣafī (1793)10. These systems, all of which were ascribed to famous Sanskrit theorists of the past, were the Someśvara, Shiva or Mahādev mat, Bhārata mat, Hanūmān mat, and Kallīṇātha mat. Of these, Hanūmān mat, which has the six principal rāgas Bhairava, Malkauns, Hindol, Dipak, Sri Raga and Megh Mallar, was the preeminent system “current and practised at this time” (Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.104a). Although Mirza Khan catalogues the other three sytems, it is only for Hanūmān mat that he provides iconographical descriptions of the rāgas and rāginīs. In naming these four

systems and assigning Hanūmān mat pride of place, Mirza Khan accurately summed up the bulk of seventeenth-century writings\(^\text{11}\).

Abul Fazl mentions both Kallinātha (Someśvara) and Hanūmān mats in 1593, but gives precedence to the former in his classification of the rāgas and rāginīs. (Ā’in-i Akbarī 1873-94: 264-5). Ras Baras Khan’s listing of Someśvara and Hanūmān mats alone in 1698 suggests both were still in use throughout the seventeenth century (Shams al-᾿swāṭī GOML, f.21b). However, with the exception of Mirza Khan, all other seventeenth-century Indo-Persian writers describe the rāga-rāginī system solely according to Hanūmān mat\(^\text{12}\). Some of the variants the Indo-Persian writers described can be traced to specific Sanskrit sources. The Rāg Darpan, for example, obviously reproduces the system of the Mānakutūhala\(^\text{13}\), but its list of rāgas and rāginīs is also related to the famous Rāgamālā of Mesākaraṇa (c.1509), as well as Qazi Hasan’s Miftāḥ al-Saruḏ (see Chapter Two). The version of Hanūmān mat first described by Mesākaraṇa therefore constituted an influential tradition in the seventeenth-century Indo-Persian texts. On the other hand, some Indo-Persian varieties of Hanūmān mat list only the principal rāgas, or are completely divergent from earlier sources. The Shams al-᾿swāṭī, for example, contrary to all previous systems considers the rāginīs of the three rāgas common to Someśvara and Hanūmān mats to be interchangeable, and unusually allocates six rāginīs instead of five to the rāgas of Hanūmān mat\(^\text{14}\). Given who Ras Baras Khan was, this may have been a performers’ system.

---

\(^{11}\) I will define Hanūmān mat simply as any rāga-rāginī system which has as its six principal rāgas Bhairava, Malkauns, Hindol, Dipak, Sri Raga and Megh Mallar. I am aware that this violates Mirza Khan’s distinction between Hanūmān mat and Bhārata mat, and other mats that have the same principal rāgas. However, there is significant evidence that all systems that used these six rāgas were conflated in seventeenth-century oral theory, and known collectively as Hanūmān mat. Similarly, the system known as Someśvara mat, which has the six principal rāgas Sri Raga, Vasanta (Basant), Bhairava, Pancama, Megh and Natta Narayana, seems to have become conflated with other systems that use the same principal rāgas, primarily Kallinātha mat.

\(^{12}\) Including the Sahasras, the Shahjahani Risāla-i Rāg, the Sarūd al-Bahr and the Miftāḥ al-Saruḏ, the Rāg Darpan, the Mir‘āt al-Khayāl, the treatises of Kamilkhani, the Javāhīr al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadi, and the Nishātārā.


\(^{14}\) Hanūmān mat customarily has five rāginīs. The use of six rāginīs in Hanūmān mat is not completely unprecedented; the Shahjahani Risāla-i Rāg is one example.
Three important treatises, the Sarūd al-Bahr/Miṣṭāḥ al Sarūd, the Javāhir al-Mūṣīqāt-i Muḥammadī, and the Toḥfat al-Hind (V), present full rāgamāḷās of Hanūmān mat. In the Miṣṭāḥ al Sarūd and the Javāhir al-Mūṣīqāt-i Muḥammadī, the verbal descriptions of the rāgas and rāginīs were intended to be enhanced with miniature paintings. Illustrated copies of each, both produced in the Deccan in the mid-late seventeenth century, are held in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Library respectively. These rāgamāḷās highlight the importance of the rāgas’ aesthetic properties to their definition in the Indo-Persian imagination. The Sarūds, for example, reproduce all manner of traditional aesthetic associations, allocating colours, places of emanation in the body, deities, origin myths, times, and seasons to the principal rāgas. Bhairava, for instance, is said to have come from the southern head of Mahadev, to emanate from the head of man, to be Mahadev’s son, to have the colour white, and to be appropriate in winter from false dawn to the rising of the sun (Sarūd al-Bahr, f.6b). More importantly, however, the main body of the Miṣṭāḥ al Sarūd is reserved for iconographical descriptions of the thirty-six rāgas and rāginīs.

Deciding how to portray the rāgas’ aesthetic characters iconographically was no simple task. According to the author of the Maʿrifat al-Arwāḥ, “the treatises disagree greatly on this subject” (f.21a). The scale of disagreement concerning how the rāgas and rāginīs should be depicted can be seen in a comparison of identical rāgas in what are purportedly very similar rāgamāḷā systems, the Miṣṭāḥ al Sarūd and the Toḥfat al-Hind (V). For example, the Miṣṭāḥ al Sarūd describes Malkauns as:

green. In his hand he holds a bānsurī and is dressed in a yellow robe. Over his robe and his forehead saffron is smeared, and he is wearing a garland of rubies and cornelians. He plays the conch and the bānsurī in three directions. Malkauns belongs to the spring season, which is two months long, and he sings together with his wives. (ASB, f.11a)

and Todi as:

---

15 Associations with colour and presiding deities were originally made with the swaras, not the rāgas, in the SaṅgīṭaRamākara (Ramanathan 1999: 435).
a handsome lord... sandalwood is rubbed on his body, and he wears a robe of  clearfix(0.34,0.25,0.38,0.28)chat (or  clearfix(0.37,0.25,0.41,0.28)chit). In his left hand he holds a  clearfix(0.35,0.3,0.38,0.33)bin, and in his right he plays a  clearfix(0.48,0.3,0.51,0.33)manjira. His head is uncovered and he is eating  clearfix(0.24,0.39,0.28,0.42)pan.  (Sarūd al-Bahr, f.13b)

The Tohfat al-Hind (V) describes them differently:

Malkauns is a strong man wearing red, white and blue clothes. He holds a wooden cup in each hand, and he is deceiving young women with wine. He is enjoying the company of women, and his worshippers are throwing a large garland of pearls around his neck.

Todi is a woman in white, wearing a white  clearfix(0.36,0.55,0.4,0.58)sarı, with white flowers and saffron on her body. She is standing in a forest playing the  clearfix(0.34,0.6,0.37,0.63)bin, with deer listening with joy and delight to her instrumental playing.  (Bod, f.117b-8a, 120a)

While many  clearfix(0.34,0.72,0.37,0.75)rāgas are pictured contrastingly in different treatises, the distinctive aesthetic essence of many others is widely agreed. Dipak, for example, the famous subject of the legendary  clearfix(0.28,0.82,0.36,0.85)jugalbandh between Tansen and his daughter Saraswati (originally about Parvati and Mahadev (Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ, f.23a)16), is commonly noted for its association with light, eyes, and fire17. The association of Dhanasri with  clearfix(0.28,0.92,0.32,0.95)fīrāq, the grief of separation from a loved one, is widely depicted; according to the Tohfat al-Hind (V), Dhanasri is “a  clearfix(0.26,0.99,0.32,1.02)bevagni (بیگنی), that is, a bride stricken with  clearfix(0.28,0.99,0.32,1.02)fīrāq. She is wearing a red dress, and weak from the pain of  clearfix(0.28,0.99,0.32,1.02)fīrāq she has become thin. She walks alone, weeping, underneath a  clearfix(0.29,1.04,0.35,1.07)makulaśrī tree” (Bod, f.121a).

16 The first appearance of this story in the Indo-Persian literature, in the Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ (post-1666), is not about Tansen and Saraswati at all, but about Parvati and Mahadev:

When Dipak first came from the mouth of Parvati, she sang it in  clearfix(0.23,1.17,0.27,1.2)nikhād grāma, the sound of which caused the heavens to burn up. Everything was burnt up so that nothing was left, and Parvati herself was killed. Seeing this, Mahadev immediately began to sing Megh, and at that very moment the clouds came and it rained, and the burning of the heavens ceased. Parvati was faint, but after that she rose. She removed one  clearfix(0.23,1.29,0.27,1.32)sargam and made Dipak a six-note  clearfix(0.23,1.3,0.26)rāga sung in  clearfix(0.24,1.33,0.27,1.36)dhaivat grāma, although Bhāratasāṅgīta states it is still  clearfix(0.24,1.36,0.27,1.39)sampāṅga (seven notes). Nikhād grāma is difficult, but those who have achieved perfection in the art of music can sing it. Singer-composers who have achieved perfection can, by the grace of God, light fires with Rag Dipak and bring the rain with Rag Megh. (paraphrase Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ, f.23a)

A similar story involving Tansen and his supposed  clearfix(0.25,1.44,0.28,1.47)guru Swami Haridas appears in an early eighteenth-century Hindavi source, the Padprāṣaṅgmālā, a Vaishnavite hagiography. It is the first written source to link the two men (Delvoye 1997: 206-7).

17 Miftāḥ al Sarūd ASB, f.7a; 14b; Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.118a.
III

Four elements and seven stars: The rāgas and Islamic medicine

The affective essences of the rāgas and rāginīs of Hanūmān mat are described similarly in the mid seventeenth-century Jawāhir al-Musīqāt-i Muḥammadī. It was written by Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim bin Shaikh Farid Ansari al-Qadiri of Jaunpur, for the second-last independent ruler of Bijapur, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (d.1656) (f.2b). Like Mirza Khan’s descriptions in the Toḥfat al-Hind (V), Malkauns, for example, is said to inspire the fire of love, and Dhanasri is said to increase feelings of firāq (f.97a; 99a). Less characteristically, however, this rāgamālā attributes the rāgas’ ability to inspire emotions to the direct influence on every rāga of one of the four fundamental elements of Unani physiology.

Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim’s placement of this notion at the centre of rāga theory is explicit in the title of his treatise. The Perso-Arabic word for the four substances that embody the elements – fire, water, air, and earth – is javāhir18 (Ullmann 1978: 56). The idea that each rāga’s aesthetic character was determined by phenomena central to Islamic medicine – namely the four elements and humours, and the seven astrological bodies – was taken up by two important Mughal theorists whose works are based on performance practice: Ras Baras Khan, and Kamilkhani. Jonathan Katz points out that “the ritual importance and power of music to preserve order and avert disaster, which clearly figured [already] in Vedic ritual. . . [is] one of the underlying ideas in the traditional concept of the occult powers of music” (2000: 95). Nevertheless, I disagree that this is the primary influence on present-day Hindustani ideas and practice. Instead, I would argue a stronger influence on modern attributions of emotive and supernatural properties to the rāgas was their seventeenth-century incorporation into the Unani medical system.

18 singular jawhar. The title is a play on words; javāhir also means “jewels”, and construed as “elements” could also mean “fundamentals”; thus the title could be translated “The fundamentals of the music of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah”.
Islamic medicine, astrology, and music therapy

The roots of the Perso-Arabic or “Islamic” medical system are preserved in the name still given to it by South Asian Muslims, Unani, fibb, or “Greek medicine”. As Manfred Ullmann points out:

‘Islamic medicine’ did not grow on Arab soil. Rather it is the medicine of later Greek antiquity which was formulated in the Arabic language in the South and West of the Mediterranean from the ninth century A.D. The crossing of the language barrier has left the contents almost completely unchanged. (1978: xi)

From the Greeks, scholars of the early Islamic period borrowed, almost complete, theoretical disciplines ranging from medicine, astrology, astronomy, and mathematics to philosophy, geography, and music (xi, 8; Shiloah 1995: 49). The Greek roots of Perso-Arabic medicine can be further distilled to the writings of just one man, Galen (129-216 CE). Most prominently, Islamic writers adopted his teachings on the bodily humours (Ullmann 1978: 10), which he in turn derived from the doctrines of Hippocrates (c.460-377 BCE) (Filliozat 1964: 30). There may have been some cross-pollination between ancient Greek medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, with its parallel system of five elements and three humours, in the period before the first Ayurvedic Āśātra, the Suśrutaṇāhhitā, appeared in textual form (c.100 BCE - 100 CE). However, although later Arab and Persian scholars drew attention to parallel humoral teachings in Ayurveda, it had no influence on the fundamentals of Unani humoral theory (Ullmann 1978: 20). Nevertheless, their significant correspondences are arguably likely to have contributed to Unani medicine’s popularity in India (see Suśrutaṇāhhitā 1993: xx).

According to Ullmann’s elegant summary of Unani humoral theory, fire, water, air, and earth are not the four elements themselves (ustuquṣṣāt), but the four substances (javāhir) that most closely embody them. The elements are the hot (corresponding with fire), the cold (water), the wet (air), and the dry (earth). All matter in the universe

---

19 Filliozat 1964: 229-31; Suśrutaṇāhhitā 1993: xvii. Filliozat never says that the Ayurvedic humoral system influenced the Greek system (the texts of which are older than the Ayurvedic texts), or vice versa. Rather, he argues that they were “parallel”, appearing at a similar time (1964: 30). Nevertheless, he points out that the Timaeus of Plato (written c.325 BCE) includes, alongside two chapters delineating the standard Hippocratic pathology, a third chapter on “diseases due to pneuma [wind], to phlegm (phlegma) and bile (khole).” He argues that Plato’s third system, which is unlike any previous Greek theory of pathology (and was never repeated), could only have come from Ayurveda (229, 231).
consists of different combinations of these four abstract essences. With respect to human bodies:

[The] relationship of mixing in organic bodies is called ‘temperament’ (krāsis, mizāj). A body in which the elements are equally present is called ‘balanced’ or ‘even’ (mu’tadil); if its elements are present in unequal proportions, it is said to be ‘unbalanced’. If the fiery element is dominant, the temperament is called hot; if the watery element is dominant, the temperament is said to be cold. If the element of air is dominant together with the fiery element, the temperament is designated ‘hot-wet’, and so on. (1978: 56-7)

The bodily organs are constituted from the four humours – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile or melancholy. The humours:

are called ‘daughters of the elements’ . . . because relationships exist between the humours and the elements. Fire corresponds to yellow bile, which is hot and dry; air corresponds to blood which is hot and wet; water corresponds to phlegm which is cold and wet; and earth corresponds to black bile which is cold and dry: if these four humours form a balanced mixture, then there is health. If the balance is quantitatively or qualitatively disturbed, then illness ensues. (58)

Similarly, in Ayurveda the three chief elements wind, fire, and water “[act] in the body in the form of [the] three humours [vāyu (wind), pitta (bile), and kaphā or śleṣman (phlegm)] . . . In good health the humours are in equilibrium. Disease is a result of their imbalance” (Suśrutasanhitā 1993: xviii). In Unani medicine, if a person’s temperament is “unbalanced” due to an excess of black bile, which is cold and dry, something which is dominated by the element air, which is hot and wet, should be introduced to their system. In this way, the person will be restored to a healthy equilibrium. These are precisely the correlations Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim draws with respect to the rāgas in the Javāhir al-Mūṣīqāt-i Muḥammadī.

Katz notes that “in some of the earliest Indian sources . . . we find strong links between music and medicine or physiology, especially regarding the genesis of musical sound.” Despite this, he points out that surprisingly, neither Sanskrit nor regional literature contains any known references to the use of music for curative purposes (2000: 84). In contrast, there is a long tradition of music therapy in Islamic thought and practice, from the explosion of ninth-century treatises on the subject to the seventeenth-century
establishment of music therapy in Ottoman hospitals. Perso-Arabic musical and medical philosophies arguably first coalesced in the work of the Arab theorist Ya‘qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (d.870) (Shiloah 2000: 80-1). al-Kindi establishes a holistic understanding of the nature of music, in which he emphasises:

the concept of harmony in its broadest sense. This concept is indeed central for understanding the complex network linking music to all attributes of the universe; and it dominates even the technical aspects and the parameters of a musical system. (Shiloah 2000: 80, emphasis mine).

According to the Pythagorean concept of the “music of the spheres”, which al-Kindi espouses, the ultimate expression of musical harmony is the harmony of the heavenly bodies, whose movements in turn affect the “harmony” of the bodily humours. In this way, music acted as a channel connecting the stars and the human body. al-Kindi was thus able to link together music, astrology, and humoral theory, in a triangular system of correlations that showed how music acted to remedy malign alterations of mind or body caused by humoral imbalance, or disturbances in the celestial sphere (Shiloah 2000: 81).

Although al-Kindi’s work was probably the earliest written synthesis of these ideas, humoral and astrological connections with music were widespread across the medieval Islamic world. The eleventh-century Indian Sufi scholar al-Hujwiri noted in the Kafsh al-mahjub that music could be used as a medical cure, altering the humoral balance of a patient’s temperament. At the same time in Egypt, Abu Nasr ‘Adnan ibn ‘Aynzarbi drew musicians’ attention to the importance of astrology in their diagnosis and treatment of illness. These associations filtered down into “popular wisdom” across the Islamic world (Shiloah 2000: 74-80). This can be seen at work in Abul Fazl’s “common sense” statement that wine and music should be prescribed for those afflicted with melancholy (see Chapter Four). This directly reflects a philosophy Ibn al Jazzar (d.979) expressed over six hundred years previously:

In the case of sickness caused by excessive love [i.e. melancholy], to prevent men from being submerged in excessive brooding, tempered and fragrant wine should be offered, and [the] hearing [of] various kinds of music. . . Certain philosophers say that the sound [of music] is like the spirit, the wine is like the body, of which the one is aided by the other. (in Burnett 2000: 85)

---

In the same way, many tenets first propounded by al-Kindi affected seventeenth-century Mughal understandings of the powers of Hindustani music, and its relationship with the stars, the elements, and the humours.

**Hindustani music and Unani medicine under the Mughals**

Correspondences between the Ayurvedic humours and Indian music were already established in the *Saṅgītaratnākara*. However, a rapid expansion of such associations took place in the seventeenth-century Indo-Persian treatises, replacing this earlier link to Ayurveda with Unani conceptions. The *Saṅgītaratnākara*’s connection between the Ayurvedic humours and vocal quality reappears verbatim in the *Rāg Darpan*. According to Sārṅgadeva, there were four kinds of voice: *khāhula*, which had a predominance of phlegm; *nārāta*, which was dominated by bile; *bombaka*, which had a predominance of wind; and *miśraka*, which consisted of mixtures of these. Interestingly, Faqirullah does not recognise that these humoral associations came from the Sanskrit tradition. Instead, he credits them to a sixteenth-century Sufi writer, Khwajah Muhammad Salah (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 163). It seems that Faqirullah was attempting to make a connection here between Hindustani music and *Unani* medical theories.

This is arguably no coincidence. The *Rāg Darpan* shows an unusually strong interest in the physiological effects of the musical art. This is consistent with the nature of the *Rāg Darpan* as a work of *adab*, particularly its focus on the necessity of musical perfection to the listener’s wellbeing. It is significant that it is in connection with this very subject of the humours that Faqirullah stresses the sacredness of the participants’ responsibility to pursue musical perfection in the *mehfil* (see Chapters Two and Four).

According to O’Hanlon, “understandings of the body, its sophisticated systems of humours, vital energies and emotions, the best means of keeping them in equilibrium and

---


23 Sarmadee recognises Faqirullah’s debt to Sārṅgadeva with respect to the four categories of voice; however he misattributes the “question and answer” section to the “science of ḥībb [sic]” (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 289 n.1). Faqirullah takes this whole section verbatim from a reworking of the *Saṅgītaratnākara* (cf. 1978: 162).

24 The *Rāg Darpan* reproduces in summary all the medical and physiological associations Sārṅgadeva made in the *Saṅgītaratnākara*, itself unusual in the Sanskrit corpus in the amount of biomedical material it contains (*Katz* 2000: 86-7, 94).
of refining and concentrating them to create extraordinary powers” underpinned the codes of élite Mughal masculinity:

These understandings were clearly informed by... Ayurvedic theory and the Indian Unani legacy of Graeco Arabic humoral medicine. At the same time, there were important common themes here: the idea that powers and faculties are acquired through techniques of the body, the doctrine of bodily health as an equilibrium of internal humours dependent on the right balance between heat and cold, dryness and moisture, the minute analysis of the qualities of particular foods, aromas and essences in maintaining this balance, the sense of an intimate connection between temperament, bodily constitution and physical environment. (1999: 52)

Humoral conceptions of the body arguably became more important in late seventeenth-century constructions of mîrza’i, with their increased emphasis on pursuing inner equilibrium through the refinement of the mîrza’s sensuous world. Like agreeable tastes, smells, and sights (69), musical sound was a perfect vehicle for the achievement of this aim. al-Kindi’s philosophy summarises this exactly: “musical harmony. . . helps man in his attempt to achieve spiritual and philosophical equilibrium. . . the proper use of music at the right time has a healing influence on the body” (Shiloah 1995: 50-1). Hindustani music, with its preoccupation with “the proper use of music at the right time,” was a uniquely suitable vehicle for integration into the Unani therapeutic repertoire.

Faqirullah’s focus on humoral theory merely opens the door on a much wider Indo-Persian discourse at this time seeking to integrate Indian music and its affective powers with the four elements and humours of Unani medicine. Both the Ma’rifat al-Arwâḥ (post-1666) and the mid eighteenth-century Tohfat al-Naghma draw attention to correlations between stringed instruments and the bodily humours. Long-standing Sanskritic associations between the human body and stringed instruments are reflected in the common depiction of the human torso as a living harp (ṣarīravīṇā). In this, the śrutiś are represented as 22 horizontal nāḍīs (veins) running between the two main vertical nāḍīs of yogic physiology, the idā and the piṅgalā. However, the authors of the Ma’rifat al-Arwâḥ and the Tohfat al-Naghma go further than this, establishing for the

25 This treatise on Persian and Hindustani music was written in South India for Nawab Walajah Sirajuddaula of Arcot, just west of Madras. Clearly the geographical boundary between the areas of Hindustani and Karnatic musical influence is more porous than we have previously imagined.
Indian system relationships of cause and effect between the four strings of an instrument and the humours of the Unani physiological system.

These treatises associate the highest string with yellow bile, the second string with blood, the third string with phlegm, and the lowest string with black bile. Thus, for example, if a person has an excess of yellow bile, which needs to be balanced with phlegm, the third string should be played, and equilibrium will be restored (Ma’rifat al-Arwāḥ, 33a-b). This is an appropriation of Perso-Arabic musical theory, descended from early Islamic ideas concerning the elemental properties of the four strings of the ‘ūd, which al-Kindi refined and elaborated (see Shiloah 2000: 79). What is of interest here is that these Indo-Persian authors try, however artificially, to apply the theory of correspondence between the strings and the humours to the Indian system. In this way, they draw a link in Hindustani music between a musical phenomenon – the plucking of a string – and a resultant physical and emotional effect – the restoration of bodily equilibrium in accordance with Unani theories of the humours.

A more finely graded system of correlations between instruments and temperament is described in a treatise dedicated to Aurangzeb, the Risāla-i Ḥāji Ḥussain Žahrī Eṣfaḥānī dar fan-i mūsiqī. Haji Hussain Zahri’s treatise is a bizarre amalgam of the Persian and Hindustani musical systems, and its descriptions of musical modes, singing, and instruments are saturated with Unani philosophies. Describing the four elements as the “fundamentals of music (naghma)”, he sets up a classificatory system whereby the Hindustani instruments are defined in terms of their temperament, their affective powers, and the time at which they should be played. The rabāb, for example, has a cold and dry temperament, gives power against accidents, and should be played in the twelfth hour. The sārangī, which he calls the “nightingale of instruments”, has a cold and moist temperament, empowers the senses, and should be played in the thirteenth hour. The bīn, the “delight of instruments”, has a balanced temperament, and gives strength in adversity or ill fortune. Finally, the ṭanbūr has a warm and moist temperament, and gives power over sadness and despair – it is a defence against the cold and dry earthy element, in other words, melancholy (f.10a).

The rāgas and the four elements

More importantly, in allocating specific temperaments to each of the Persian maqāms, the work of Haji Hussain Zahri provides a connection with the Javāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadī. He states, for example, that the first maqām Rast possessed a warm and moist temperament, which produced a temperate, well-balanced feeling in the listener (f.5b). Again, this association reflects widespread agreement in the Perso-Arabic tradition that each maqām had a therapeutic effect in consonance with its temperament. The physician Ibn Hindū (d.1019), whose name is somewhat suggestive27, prescribed specific maqāms for the remedy of certain ailments, because “we know... that there is a mode of melody and rhythm which arouses sadness, one which rouses joy, one relaxing and tranquilizing, another one disquieting and tantalizing, one which keeps awake and one which induces sleep” (in Burnett 2000: 86). Even specific diseases were said to be alleviated by the application of particular maqāms, such as ‘Iraq for “brain diseases, vertigo, pleurisy,” and so on (Shiloah 1995: 52). This was not merely a theoretical allocation; musical modes were historically used in hospital therapy in accordance with their affective properties. Precisely as Haji Hussain Zahri indicates, the Perso-Arabic texts prescribed Rast to produce a sense of wellbeing in the listener (39). One seventeenth-century traveller in the Ottoman empire observed that when Rast was played in hospitals, “this instils life in the patients. All instruments and all modes provide nourishment for the soul” (Çelebi in Burnett 2000: 89). It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the maqāms were used for therapeutic purposes in Mughal India.

Intriguingly, a treatise on the use of Hindustani rāgas in Unani medicine, the ‘Ilājāt-i Dārā Shikoh, was written in 1653 for Aurangzeb’s brother Dara Shikoh (Nizami 1993).

Indeed, the application of Unani humoral theory directly to the rāgas is a central pillar of the Javāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadī. Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim’s interpretation of the effects of the Indian rāgas’ temperaments on the listener is different from Haji Hussain Zahri’s. Nevertheless, it seems that assigning particular musical modes to the Unani elements, and therefore to the arousal of specific emotions, excited the imaginations of the seventeenth-century Indo-Persian theorists. In the Javāhir al-
Mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī, Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim argues that every rāga is dominated by one of the four elements:

Listening to rāgas that possess a windy essence causes the heart to pound with firāq [the grief of separation]. Listening to fiery rāgas causes the heart to burn with love (‘ishq). Listening to watery rāgas unites the heart with the divine, and through approaching divine Truth brings annihilation in divine ecstasy. Listening to earthy rāgas fills the heart with profound knowledge (‘irfān). (f.67b)

In this way, Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim presented an explanation fully in accordance with Persianate cultural logic of the precise mechanism by which the North Indian rāgas and rāginiś evoked the characteristic feelings assigned to them in the rāgamalā. Dhanasri inspired intense feelings of firāq because it was dominated by the windy element (f.99a), and Malkauns caused the fires of love to burn in the listener’s heart because it was a fiery rāga (f.97a). According to Unani physiology, the elements embodied in the rāgas acted on the human system by strengthening their corresponding humours. Theoretically, therefore, the singing of Hindol, a watery rāga, might bring humoral equilibrium to a listener with a hot or choleric temperament, at the same time turning the heart towards love of God, and bringing ecstatic annihilation (f.84b). It is tempting to speculate that the legendary ability of the fiery rāga Dipak to cause fires to break out and burn the singer, and the watery rāga Megh to put them out again, was first based in humoral theories of equilibrium, Ayurvedic or Unani.

Intriguingly, humoral associations may be encoded in the iconography sometimes used to represent Dipak in rāgamalā paintings. If so, this encoding is deliberate, and the seventeenth-century Indian viewer would almost certainly have understood it. In the Miftāḥ al-Sarūd, rāga Dipak’s “whole body is covered with eyes” (ASB, f.14b). According to Ayurvedic medicine, the element fire, found in the body in humoral form as bile, is the agent of vision localised in the eye (Filliozat 1964: 235). Hence, this iconographical representation of Dipak covertly alludes to the rāga’s association with fire, by overtly portraying fire in its humoral embodiment as the eye. This emphasises in the same visual moment both the rāga’s aesthetic character, and its potential effect as

---

27 It is interesting to note that Indian music was known in West Asia as early as the ninth century CE; the
sound on the listener. By using humoral symbols, the visual rāgamālā is able to evoke immediately and experientially a sense of the aural impact of the rāgas and rāgiñīs. This suggests a possible link between the paintings and the music. While it may be coincidental, or unique to Dipak, the extent to which humoral theory informs iconographical depictions of the rāgas in rāgamālā paintings would be an interesting topic for further research.

The swaras and the seven stars

Precisely how this was supposed to work on the level of musical sound is not clear in the Javāhir al-Mūsīqāt-i Muḥammadi. Although Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim lists the performance times and the swaras of each rāga alongside his iconographical descriptions, he makes no attempt to connect them with his humoral theory. Instead, bringing in another common, and related, theory, he argues the influence on the individual swaras is primarily astrological. Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim takes as his basis the Pythagorean idea, deriving originally from al-Kindi and cited by many Indo-Persian theorists, that the seven notes of the scale were created by the rotation of the seven “stars” – the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Shaikh ‘Abdul Kazim allocates a presiding star to each swara, although he does not specify which. Expanding on his astrological theory, he notes that just as the seven heavenly bodies move through the twelve constellations of the zodiac, so the seven notes of the scale move through the twelve musical modes (parda), referring to the Persian modal system (f.24b). Again, this idea was originally developed by al-Kindi’s immediate followers, who assigned each of the twelve musical modes to one of the constellations of the zodiac, which in turn were distributed between the four humours and elements (Burnett 2000: 86-7).

Although this was a theoretical correlation, astrology was an important system of knowledge throughout the Islamic world, and the movements of the stars were thought to have significant effects on all aspects of human affairs (Meisami 1999: 284). The influence of the planets on human life was equally important in Hindu tradition (Katz 2000: 87). The importance of astrology to Mughal society is revealed in extensive references to astrological influences throughout the seventeenth-century historical

Kitāb al-malāḥi of Mufaḍḍal ibn Salāmā (d.905) includes a list of Indian instruments (Shiloah 1995: 62).
chronicles, including associations with music. Khafi Khan, for example, refers three times to the celestial presence of the “lute-playing Venus” at Aurangzeb’s third and fourth regnal year celebrations, which presaged the auspicious performance of music (Muntakhab al-Lubāb 1977: 161, 163, 175). In the third year, “Aurangzeb with his radiant face sat like the moon in the sign of Libra, and in accordance with the effects of this sign, the lute-playing Venus opened the doors of enjoyment on the people” (163). According to Burnett, in Persianate astrology “Venus and the sign of Virgo are particularly relevant for the playing of and listening to musical instruments” (2000: 88)29. This emphasis on auspicious astrological timings for the performance of music was clearly suited to the time-theory of the rāgas and rāginīs.

An isolated anecdote from South India shows that in the early nineteenth century, Hindu musicians believed that music had the power to alleviate illnesses caused by the seven stars’ influences on the body. The story concerns the great musician-composer, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar, who composed a cycle of kṛtis addressed to the navagraha, the seven astrological bodies and the ascending and descending lunar nodes Rahu and Ketu. Legend has it that he composed the cycle to appease the malign influence of a particular constellation in the horoscope of his percussionist, Tambiappan, which was causing a chronic stomach condition (Katz 2000: 87-8). Unani scholars considered the stars to have an important influence on an individual’s humoral balance (Ullmann 1978: 112-4). Abu Nasr ʿAdnan ibn ʿAynzarbi considered astrology “indispensable” to the musician providing therapy, because “the positions of the planets in the zodiac... influence the period favourable for each treatment” (Shiloah 2000: 80). It is possible that Shaikh ʿAbdul Kazim believed the stars also influenced the power of individual notes and musical modes to affect the body.

Elements, stars, swaras, and rāgas

The conclusive link between the stars, the swaras, and the rāgas’ elemental effects on the listener’s equilibrium, is provided in the work of Ras Baras Khan. More importantly, his work uses music’s connection with astrology to provide an explanation for the time-theory of the rāgas and rāginīs that corresponds closely with Kamilkhani’s explanation,

---
without being derived from it. Because of Ras Baras Khan’s position as the foremost practitioner of the late seventeenth century, his statements on this subject are likely to represent current performance practice and the theoretical conceptions of performers. Their parallels with Kamilkhani’s theories support this conclusion. As shown in Chapter Two, Kamilkhani’s treatises are also likely to be practice-based, having been derived from conversations with professional singer-composers, instrumentalists, connoisseurs, and from Kamilkhani’s own experiences of learning to sing and play the bīn (Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn, f.123a).

Both Ras Baras Khan and Kamilkhani reiterate the astrological theory of the origins of the seven swaras. However, in contrast to other Indo-Persian treatises, both overtly tailor this Persianate theory to the Indian scalar system, allocating particular stars to each swara. The main body of Kamilkhani’s principal treatise, the Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn, is dedicated to demonstrating how the bīn should be fretted for the performance of different rāgas, fretting patterns he calls ṭhāts. Before this, he systematically sets out the seven swaras of his basic scale according to fractional divisions of the string. He names each fret as he places it on the bīn according to its presiding planet. Because Sa and Pa are fixed swaras in the Hindustani system, Kamilkhani names them after the two “stars” that have fixed “orbits” in pre-Copernican astronomy, the moon and the sun respectively30. The rest of the swaras he names after the five planets, because just as these five have vacillating orbits, so the other swaras are altered in accordance with the requirements of different rāgas. Kamilkhani does not use astrological calculations to fix the ratios of the string; instead he uses the related divinatory science of geomancy31. Nevertheless, Kamilkhani’s placement of the “stars” on the string according to fractional divisions is significant. Although almost certainly not taken from it, this is fully in accordance with al-Kindi’s astrological theory. Not only did al-Kindi assign the seven notes to the seven celestial bodies, but he also associated the Pythagorean harmonic ratios with “the aspects the [seven] planets form in the heavens” (Burnett 2000: 87).

Ras Baras Khan’s correlation of stars to swaras is identical to Kamilkhani’s, and uses the same criteria of “fixed” and “vacillating” orbits to explain their allocations

---

29 For a detailed look at astrology and astronomy at the Mughal court, see Shireen Moosvi (1997).
30 Sa is the moon rather than the sun because in pre-Copernican systems the moon was the closest astrological body to the earth.
(Shams al-ʾAṣwāṭ GOML, f.16b-7a). In Ras Baras Khan’s system, the stars do exert a dominant influence over the swaras with which they are associated. However, this influence is expressed in terms of each swara’s resultant temperament (mizāj). Each star possesses one of four special qualities – which are, of course, the four elements of the Unani system – water, fire, earth, and wind. These qualities are transferred to their subordinate swaras, whose characters are further described by analogy with the stereotypical temperaments of the four principal communities (qaum) of Hindu society. The basic idea of dividing the swaras between the varṇas derives from Sanskrit tradition (e.g. Saṅgītapārijāta 1971: 31). However, Ras Baras Khan argues that the Brahman swaras, Sa and Pa, are dominated by the watery element; the Rajput, Re and Ma, by the fiery; the grain-merchant, Ga and Dha, by the earthy; and the Kayasth, Ni, by the windy:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sa</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Grain-merchant</td>
<td>Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dha</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Grain-merchant</td>
<td>Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Kayasth (scribe)</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strikingly, Ras Baras Khan then uses these associations to explain why the rāgas and rāgiṇīs have to be sung at specified times of the day and seasons of the year. He argues, for example, that because it is cold in the mornings and the evenings, the fiery element needs to be introduced to balance the cold with heat, and for this reason, rāgas which employ the fiery swaras (Re and Ma) are best sung then. Similarly, in the second prahar of the day, when the sun is shining and it is hot, rāgas which emphasise the watery swaras (Sa and Pa) should be performed to balance the heat with cold (Shams al-ʾAṣwāṭ GOML, f.16b-7a). In other words, it is the particular combination of swaras in a rāga which give it its unique temperament. More importantly, this unique elemental

---

31 Divination from the geometric configuration of dots, in this case dividing the bin into 96 parts to derive all the ratios for the twelve pitches of the Hindustani system (f.126a).

32 Ras Baras Khan includes two lists of correlations between the stars and the swaras. In some MSS, the sun is assigned to Ma in the first list, and Pa in the second. In others, Pa appears in both lists as the sun. If the first copies are correct, it may be that Ras Baras Khan’s first list is theoretical, lining the swaras up in the same order as the “stars” from the earth, whereas the second list is based on the fretting of instruments.
mixture can potentially be used to balance or unbalance the listener’s humoral system, producing wellbeing or illness. Ras Baras Khan is therefore arguing that the time at which each rāga should be performed is determined by each swara’s effect on the humours, because of the need in the Unani medical system to maintain humoral equilibrium.

Ras Baras Khan’s exact correspondences between the swaras’ temperaments and the times of the rāgas seem somewhat artificial. However, despite approaching the problem differently, Kamilkhani comes to a similar conclusion. In the introduction to his treatise, Kamilkhani states that his aim is to explicate the time-theory of rāga. At first glance, this statement appears to be misleading, given that this would ordinarily lead to an elaboration of the rāga-rāgini system, and nowhere in his treatises does Kamilkhani systematically do this. However, it becomes clear that when he says his treatise “defines and clarifies the times of the rāgas,” he means something altogether different (Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn, f.123a). His placement of the story of the seven swaras’ creation from the seven stars33 at the heart of his opening discourse is highly significant (f.124a-b). At the end of the section in which he determines the frets of his principal thāṭ, Kamilkhani states that the frets are named after the astrological bodies because each swara possesses the character of their presiding star. This, he argues, is the reason why the rāgas are allocated to specific times of day. Kamilkhani does not, like Ras Baras Khan, set out a series of explicit associations between individual swaras and humoral theory. Nevertheless, he does argue that because specific swaras – and patterns of swaras, the thāṭs – possessed characters appropriate to different times of day, night, heat, cold, and so on, the rāgas that were created from these swaras and thāṭs had to be performed at the same times in order to be beneficial to the listener (f.127a-b). It is to Kamilkhani’s innovative thāṭ system that we now turn.

33 Strikingly, he treats this narrative as one common to Sufis and Hindu bhaktas.
IV

Ahobala, Kamilkhani and Pythagoras: the establishment of the Hindustani scale

Although Kamilkhani’s treatises are independently derived, they are sufficiently similar in subject matter to contemporary Sanskrit treatises to suggest some common concerns. These are 1) the use of the vıṅgā as a practical embodiment of theoretical concepts; 2) the establishment of a twelve-pitch Pythagorean scale using the frets of the vıṅgā either a) crosswise, according to consonant octaves and fifths across the strings of the vıṅgā, or b) lengthwise, according to fractional divisions of the Sa string; and 3) the classification of rāgas according to a discrete number of basic scales. Amongst others, these concerns are common to Rāmāmātya, Puṇḍarikaviṭṭhala, Śrīkanṭha, Somanātha, Ahobala, Ṣṛdayanārāyana, and Locana Kavi. Prior to Ahobala, the twelve-pitch scale of the North and South Indian systems was established crosswise, using a Pythagorean cycle of perfect intervals across the vıṅgā’s four strings. Methods for doing this first emerged in Rāmāmātya’s work (te Nijenhuis 1977: 21), and were still familiar when Mirza Raushan Zamir translated Ahobala’s Saṅgītapārijāta in 1666 (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak BL, f.48a).

However, in the Saṅgītapārijāta, Ahobala broke new ground by using a quasi-Pythagorean system of ratios on a single string to establish his scale lengthwise. The appearance in Kamilkhani’s treatises of a parallel but not identical method of working out the scale using string ratios testifies to the basis of this system in the performance practice of seventeenth-century bīn players.

The rudra vıṅgā and the construction of the Hindustani scale

In 1550 Rāmāmātya described two kinds of vıṅgā: the sarvarāga-melā (“all-rāga-scale”) vıṅgā, which had fixed frets for all twelve pitches of the scale, and could therefore be played in any rāga; and the ekarāga-melā (“single-rāga-scale”) vıṅgā, which te Nijenhuis states had moveable frets that needed to be readjusted for each rāga (1977: 21).

Rāmāmātya also described three tuning systems: the śuḍḍha-melā vıṅgā, tuned to mandra Sa, mandra Pa, madhya Sa, and madhya Ma; the madhya-melā vıṅgā, tuned to mandra Pa, madhya Sa, madhya Pa, and tār Sa; and the acyutāra-jā-melā vıṅgā, tuned to mandra Sa, mandra Pa, madhya Sa, and madhya Pa (21):
The viṇā Rāmāmātya used to establish his scale was the sarvarāga-melā āuddha-mela viṇā – the fixed-fret viṇā tuned Sa-Pa-Sa-Ma according to perfect fifths and fourths. This tuning corresponds with that of the modern Hindustani rudra viṇā, or bīn, which likewise has fixed frets.

Rāmāmātya used this tuning to establish his twelve-pitch scale crosswise, using the principle of samyvādi, or consonance. This was done by using the open Pa string to establish the position of Pa an octave above on the top Ma string, thereby locating the position of the second fret. By placing the fret at right angles to the string, this produced (from lowest to highest) the swaras Re-Dha-Re-Pa. This procedure was repeated until frets containing all twelve pitches of the scale were established across the four strings of the viṇā (Powers and Widdess 2001: 174):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>suddha-melā</th>
<th>madhya-melā</th>
<th>acyutarāja-melā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The viṇā Rāmāmātya used to establish his scale was the sarvarāga-melā āuddha-mela viṇā – the fixed-fret viṇā tuned Sa-Pa-Sa-Ma according to perfect fifths and fourths. This tuning corresponds with that of the modern Hindustani rudra viṇā, or bīn, which likewise has fixed frets.

Rāmāmātya used this tuning to establish his twelve-pitch scale crosswise, using the principle of samyvādi, or consonance. This was done by using the open Pa string to establish the position of Pa an octave above on the top Ma string, thereby locating the position of the second fret. By placing the fret at right angles to the string, this produced (from lowest to highest) the swaras Re-Dha-Re-Pa. This procedure was repeated until frets containing all twelve pitches of the scale were established across the four strings of the viṇā (Powers and Widdess 2001: 174):

![Diagram](image-url)

It is important to note that a century later in North India, both Ahobala and Kamilkhani seem to have used a viṇā tuned differently from Rāmāmātya’s. Neither theorist even mentions the tuning system of his viṇā in the section where his scale is established, because it was not essential to the lengthwise string-ratio method of establishing the frets. Ahobala describes only one type of viṇā, which he names as the rudra viṇā. Ahobala’s viṇā had four main strings, tuned to anumandra Pa, mandra Sa,
mandra Pa, and madhya Sa; and three “śruti strings” on the right-hand side of the vīnā, which were plucked in rhythm with the tāla, tuned to madhya Sa, madhya Pa, and tār Sa (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 808, f.89b)34. This tuning system is an octave lower than Rāmāmātya’s madhya-melā vīnā. Although Kamilkhani describes the bīn (rudra vīnā) differently from Ahobala/Mirza Raushan Zamir, it is likely that his vīnā was tuned the same way. Kamilkhani notes only the pitch of his principal tuning string, mandra Sa. However, he also specifies that “one or two other strings should also be attached on the left-hand side of the bīn parallel with the first string, whose pitch should be deeper than the first string.” In addition, he states that a finer string or strings called jhārī strings should be attached to the right-hand side of the vīnā and plucked with the little finger of the right hand. (Risāla dar ʿamal-i bīn Bod, f.125a). This is likely to refer to the same lower octave madhya-melā vīnā tuning used by Ahobala. Although Kamilkhani misapplies this term, it is suggestive that he defines a bīn that has had all its strings correctly tuned and its frets properly established as “madhya-melā”35 (f.126a).

The crosswise-lengthwise compromise: Ahobala’s śuddha scale

A crosswise method of establishing the frets according to saṃvādī (consonance) was certainly possible on a vīnā tuned Pa-Sa-Pa-Sa, using what is essentially the Pythagorean circle of fifths. As I will demonstrate, one such method does seem to have been used within the living memory of contemporary musicians. Mirza Raushan Zamir’s elaboration of a crosswise method of fretting Ahobala’s vīnā adds substantially to Ahobala’s terse five-śloka explanation of how the older principle of saṃvādī related to his fractionally derived śuddha scale36. In this section I will demonstrate a relationship between Ahobala’s string ratios and an earlier saṃvādī method of setting the frets on the madhya-melā vīnā. I will argue that this compromise may explain a curious anomaly in the upper half of Ahobala’s twelve-pitch scale – namely that none of the fractions he uses

34 Somanātha’s rudra vīnā is constructed in the same manner as Ahobala’s, but is tuned Sa-Pa-Sa-Ma, and thus closely resembles the modern Hindustani bīn (Ayyangar 1980: 81-2)
35 Because he was taught to play the vīnā by contemporary masters of the instrument, it is likely that this represents their definition of the term, which may have changed in over a century of oral transmission from the time of Rāmāmātya.
corresponds well to natural intervals, and two of them, śuddha Dha and komal Dha, are unexpectedly high.

In the section where Ahobala delineates his string-ratio method, the swaras are worked out on the top string, which is tuned to madhya Sa. According to Ahobala, tār Sa is positioned exactly half way along the string; Ma is positioned half way between tār Sa and the meru (nut), and so on:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{śuddha scale:} & \\
\text{Re} &= 1/3 \text{ meru} \rightarrow \text{Pa} \\
b\text{Ga} &= 1/2 \text{ meru} \rightarrow \text{Pa} \\
\text{Ma} &= 1/2 \text{ meru} \rightarrow \text{tār Sa} \\
\text{Pa} &= 1/3 \\
\text{Dha} &= 1/2 \text{ Pa} \rightarrow \text{tār Sa} \\
b\text{Ni} &= 1/3 \text{ Dha} \rightarrow \text{tār Sa} \\
\text{tār Sa} &= 1/2
\end{align*}
\]

This produces the śuddha scale Re, komal Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, komal Ni.

Powers and Widdess argue that Ahobala’s “basic principle is extremely simple. Every division must be made either in halves or in thirds, and of course the length to be divided must already be established” (2001: 174). However, when compared with Kamolkhani’s method (see below), Ahobala’s calculations, especially for the upper frets of the śuddha scale and the vikṛta swaras, appear overly complicated. Kamolkhani calculates all swaras in terms of their distance from the meru compared with the karha (bridge); in other words as a fraction of the whole string (Risāla-i Kāmil Khān, f.133b). It is interesting that Mirza Raushan Zamir simplifies Ahobala’s method in his commentary, bringing it more in line with Kamolkhani’s. Mirza Raushan Zamir notes that Ahobala’s calculations for the śuddha scale correspond to the whole-string fractions:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{vikṛta swaras:} & \\
\text{bRe} &= 2/3 \text{ Sa} \rightarrow \text{Re} \\
\text{Ga} &= 1/2 \text{ meru} \rightarrow \text{Dha} \\
\text{#Ma} &= 1/3 \text{ Ga} \rightarrow \text{tār Sa} \\
\text{bDha} &= 1/3 \text{ Pa} \rightarrow \text{tār Sa} \\
\text{Ni} &= 1/2 \text{ Dha} \rightarrow \text{tār Sa}
\end{align*}
\]

---

37 For the sake of clarity I will name the twelve pitches of Ahobala’s and Kamolkhani’s scales according to modern usage. For example, to Ahobala modern komal Ga was part of his śuddha scale and was therefore śuddha Ga; I have instead labelled it komal Ga.
The eventual positions of the twelve frets on the string can be represented graphically thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahobala</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re = 1/9</td>
<td>9:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bGa = 1/6</td>
<td>6:5 (Pythagorean ratio 32:27 = 5/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma = 1/4</td>
<td>4:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa = 1/3</td>
<td>3:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa = 1/2</td>
<td>2:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fractions and ratios for Ahobala’s vikṛta swaras work out as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahobala</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>komal Re = 2/27</td>
<td>27:25 (Pyth 256:243)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tivra Ga = 5/24</td>
<td>24:19 (Pyth 81:64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tivratar Ma = 11/36</td>
<td>36:25 (Pyth 729:512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>komal Dha = 7/18</td>
<td>18:11 (Pyth 128:81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tivra Ni = 25/54</td>
<td>54:29 (Pyth 243:128)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eventual positions of the twelve frets on the string can be represented graphically thus:

```
0    |   1/9 | 1/6 | 1/4 | 1/3 | 5/12 | 4/9 | 1/2 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>11/36</td>
<td>7/18</td>
<td>25/54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
S  |  bR   |  bG  |  M   |  P   |  D   |  bN  |  S  |
```

Analysing Ahobala’s original text, Bhatkhande infers that his śuddha scale is “the modern Kafi Thata of the Hindusthani musicians” (1990: 28)\(^{38}\). Immediately after setting out the fractions for Ahobala’s śuddha scale, Mirza Raushan Zamir comments that:

[In this configuration] the īstāns (positions) of the swaras are considered perfect (kāfī). (The reason) this [scale] is first and foremost is because in this ārām all the swaras are [in] saṃvādi [relationship with each other]. “In kharaj grām [saḍja-grāma] Sa and Pa are saṃvādi, in madham Ma and Sa, and in gandhār Ga and Ni”\(^{39}\) (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 808, f.44b)

---

\(^{38}\) Bhatkhande incorrectly attributes the first use of string ratios to establish this scale to Hṛdayanārāyana.

\(^{39}\) The last sentence is Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation of the following śloka (Ahobala 1971: 95, śl.327): *śadja-pancama-bhāvena śadje jīneyāḥ svarā budhahiḥ ga–nī–bhāvena gāndhār ma–sa bhāvena madhyame*
The identical scale, named as kāfi ṭhāṭ, appears as one of Kamikhani’s seventeen ṭhāṭs. The longevity of the name kāfi ṭhāṭ to describe this scale outside the Sanskrit tradition arguably confirms the performance roots of Ahobala’s scale system. However, as Powers and Widdess note, his “śuddha dha . . . seems improbable (it is a quarter-tone higher than the harmonic major 6th, 5/3, and an eighth-tone higher even than the Pythagorean major 6th). The komala dha also appears roughly a quarter-tone too high” (2001: 175). These discrepancies become more obvious when compared with Kamikhani’s ratios, which are much closer approximations of the harmonic proportions (see below). On the other hand, “the approximation to natural intervals produced by this method is good in the lower half of the octave. Ahobala-paṇḍita holds that even if the division method were used at first, the resulting positions should then be adjusted by ear” (175).

A possible solution to the unnaturally high Dha frets lies in an analysis of the sanvādī relationships in Ahobala’s śuddha scale alongside Mirza Raushan Zamir’s crosswise method of producing it. In the above passage, Mirza Raushan Zamir suggests that Ahobala chose Sa, Re, komal Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, and komal Ni to be his śuddha scale because they are the swaras most closely related in the sanvādī tuning system. Powers and Widdess point out that Ahobala’s śuddha scale is simply the śadja-grāma of the Nāṭyaśāstra, which Sāṅgadeva established as his śuddha scale in the Saṅgītaratnākara (2001: 172, 174). In quoting Ahobala’s explanation of sanvādī relationships in his śuddha scale above, Mirza Raushan Zamir notes that “in kharaj grām Sa and Pa are sanvādī, in madham Ma and Sa, and in gandhār Ga and Ni”. These are precisely the pitches that Sāṅgadeva considers to be sanvādī within the śadja-grāma. However, Mirza Raushan Zamir states that Ahobala’s śuddha scale is considered the pure, primary scale (kāfi ṭhāṭ) because all its swaras are in sanvādī relationship with each other. It is notable that the swaras of Ahobala’s śuddha scale are the closest to Sa in the Pythagorean circle of fifths, and therefore the swaras most consonant with Sa:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
bG & bN & M & S & P & R & D \\
\end{array}
\]

Moreover, while Re and Dha are not sanvādī in the śadja-grāma, they are sanvādī in Mirza Raushan Zamir’s crosswise method of establishing the scale using the cycle of
perfect fifths. It is at this very point, in explanation of Ahobala’s śuddha scale ratios, that Mirza Raushan Zamir sets out his saṃvādī method for establishing the frets, deriving Pa and Ma from their saṃvādī relationship with Sa; Re and Dha from Pa; and komal Ga and komal Ni from Ma\(^{40}\).

Mirza Raushan Zamir quotes a dohra in Hindavi which practising musicians may have used to remember how to fret the bīn, and which was probably the source of his method. His method uses only two open strings, mandra Sa and mandra Pa. Because there is no string tuned to Ma on the madhya-mela viṇā, the frets cannot be established automatically as they can on the śuddha-mela viṇā. Firstly, the pitch of the open Pa string (III) is determined by saṃvādī with the open Sa string (II), the establishment of which\(^{41}\) Mirza Raushan Zamir says is “very easy”. After this, the position of Pa on the Sa string can be established, and a fret placed there which produces Re on the Pa string. This Re can then be used to establish Re on the Sa string. Ma on the Sa string then needs to be established independently, either by saṃvādī with Sa, or by establishing the Sa fret on the Pa string, which produces Ma on the Sa string. In this way, the rest of the swaras in Ahobala’s śuddha scale can be established, followed by the vikṛta swaras (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 793, f.48a). The frets are established in the following order: 7, 2, 5, 10, 3, 8, 1, 6, 11, 4, 9 (see Table 1).

**Dohra:**

\[
\text{س ب ب ر د س م س كي لى هوت هي كهرب نكهاد}
\]

\[
\text{تهن نكهاد گندهار مين ب س كوهي (گروهي) سنیاد}
\]

---

\(^{40}\) This may have some bearing on the fact that when Ahobala and much earlier theorists divide the swaras between the four varṇas, they designate Sa, Ma and Pa as brāhmaṇa, Re and Dha, the saṃvādis of Pa, as kṣatriya, Ga and Ni, the saṃvādis of Ma, as vaiśya, and the vikṛta swaras as śudra (Saṅgītapārijāta 1971: 31).

\(^{41}\) Mirza Raushan Zamir’s meaning is slightly obscure here, but his statement that Pa can be established very easily “by kiya” (bar kiyaḥ besyār āśān), kiyaḥ meaning “being, existing, existence, mode of being”, etc., may indicate this is his interpretation of Rāmāmātya’s term swayambhū, “self-existent”. This would be consonant with Powers’ and Widdess’ interpretation of swayambhū as meaning that the positions of the frets in Rāmāmātya’s system are “predetermined. . . not open to choice” (Powers and Widdess 2001: 174).
Table 1: Mirza Raushan Zamir’s crosswise fretting method

from Sa:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

from Ma:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vikṣṭa swaras (from Ma):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Mirza Raushan Zamir’s attempt to explain it demonstrates, a crosswise method of establishing the frets was more laborious on the madhya-melā viṇā than on the śuddha-
melā viṇā, requiring the establishment of nearly twice as many frets in an unsystematic order. It was therefore somewhat impractical. It may have been for this reason that a simpler method of fretting the madhya-melā viṇā was devised, which nevertheless continued to maintain the roots of the scale in sanvādī, or Pythagorean, relationships. Until at least the reign of Jahangir, Persianate music was as widely patronised as Hindustani music at the Mughal court. By the time Ahobala was writing, the lengthwise method of establishing the scale according to Pythagorean string ratios was already extensively used in North India to set up instruments such as the fretted ẗanbūr for the performance of Persian music. This is demonstrated by a sixteenth-century treatise on the fretting of Persian instruments, the Kashf al-Autār by Qasim bin Dost ʿAli Bukhari, which was adapted from a text written for Humayun, presented to Akbar, and recopied for the seventeenth-century connoisseur Diyanat Khan. The notes of the lower tetrachord of Qasim’s basic scale are fixed at identical ratios to Ahobala’s42.

Furthermore, as Ahobala’s description of it shows, the fretted ẗanbūr was extensively used in the performance of Indian music at the time he was writing, employing the same fretting patterns – ṯḥāṭs in Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation – as indigenous Indian instruments (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 808, f.93a). Mirza Raushan Zamir states explicitly in his commentary on Ahobala’s string ratios that the bīn and ẗanbūr were fretted using the same method, and that both were instruments of equal prestige played by the master kalāwants (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 793, f.49b). Faqirullah confirms the last observation in 1666, noting at least one kalāwant who specialised in ẗanbūr, Taracand, whose late ustād Shauqi had been an expert in both Indian and Persian music (Rāg Darpan 1996: 209). I would therefore argue that the Persian system of establishing the frets by Pythagorean string ratios was appropriated in the seventeenth century for use

42 Kashf al-Autār, f.244a; cf. Tarjoma-i Pārijātak 808, f.43b-4a. In her study of Somanātha’s Rāgavibodha, te Nijenhuis notes the popularity in India of Ṣafiuḍdund’s thirteenth-century Arab treatise, the Kītāb al-
Advār, and its possible influence on Indian methods of fretting. Two copies of this treatise in Persian (both Shahjahanabad 1664) and one in Arabic (Shahjahanabad 1663) are in Diyanat Khan’s collection in the British Library. te Nijenhuis argues that both Puṇḍarikaviṭṭha’s and Somanātha’s scale temperaments – and possibly Rāmāmātya’s – were influenced by the Pythagorean systems of Arab and Persian music (1976: 4, 7).
on the paradigmatic Hindustani instrument, the *rudra viṇā*, because it was a simpler
method of fretting a *viṇā* tuned Pa-Sa-Pa-Sa than the crosswise method, but *related* to it.
In other words, Ahobala’s system of fret positions on the *madhya-melā viṇā*, established
by string ratios, arguably represents an attempt to reconcile his new lengthwise method
with an earlier crosswise method of tuning.

If we assume that crosswise *samvādi* relationships were originally influential in
fixing the fret positions of Ahobala’s twelve-pitch scale, it is possible to explain his
anomalously high position of śuddha Dha (for example), particularly using Mirza
Raushan Zamir’s method. Although śuddha Dha is initially located only three perfect
fifths away from Sa, it is established on fret 2 of the Pa string. The fret that produces
śuddha Dha on the Sa string, and which therefore pertains to Ahobala’s string-ratio
method, is fret 9. In Mirza Raushan Zamir’s system, because he derives all but frets 7, 2
and 5 from Ma, fret 9 is established *last*. Hence the śuddha Dha fret is *ten* perfect fifths
away from Sa. Moreover, it is in true *samvādi* relationship with Ma, not Sa! This would
indeed produce a pitch, and therefore a fret position, considerably higher than the śuddha
Dha on fret 2, which is in correct Pythagorean relationship with Sa. The eighth-tone
discrepancy Powers and Widdess note between Ahobala’s śuddha Dha and the
Pythagorean major 6th is therefore easily explained.

In any case, if this is a system based on crosswise *samvādi* relationships, it would
only be necessary for Ahobala’s first six frets to be in close accordance with Pythagorean
ratios. As we have seen, this is largely the case. According to Mirza Raushan Zamir’s
translation, Ahobala’s *rudra viṇā* had twelve frets, corresponding to a single octave on
the top *madhya* Sa string (*Tarjoma-i Pārījātak* 808, f.89b). The fact that Ahobala
establishes all twelve pitches of the scale at once indicates that these frets were fixed. It
was therefore necessary to change strings to change register. If performance practice on
Ahobala’s *rudra viṇā* reflected that of Rāmāmātya’s fixed-fret *viṇā*, it is likely that the
performer changed to the next higher string after only a single tetrachord. On
Rāmāmātya’s śuddha-melā *viṇā* this occurred on reaching Ma; on the *madhya-melā viṇā*
this would have taken place on Pa:
Thus frets 7–11 on Ahobala’s viṇā were only ever needed on the top string. This is indeed the string Ahobala uses to delineate his string ratios:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV:</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III:</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II:</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the scale was played over two strings in samyādi relationship, the accuracy of Ahobala’s string ratios in the lower tetrachord of his scale would have brought the whole scale in tune with Pythagorean ratios. It was still necessary to place all twelve frets on the viṇā, because the upper frets were used on the top string. However, the exact intonation of frets 7–11 was arguably less important than maintaining the samyādi consonances of frets 1–6. As Powers and Widdess suggest, it would have been possible for the performer to adjust the upper frets by ear before they were fixed in place, in order to bring them into line with their octave counterparts on frets 1–6 (2001: 175).

Kamilkhani’s scale and his two ṭhāṭ systems

Like Ahobala, Kamilkhani uses a rudra viṇā tuned Pa-Sa-Pa-Sa to establish his scale using a system of string ratios. Unlike Ahobala, not only are Kamilkhani’s ratios much more closely aligned with the harmonic proportions, but he uses his scale to produce a practice-based ṭhāṭ system for the bīn that covers the majority of contemporary rāgas.

These important developments are arguably due to a critical difference between Ahobala’s and Kamilkhani’s viṇās. Unlike Ahobala’s rudra viṇā, Kamilkhani’s bīn had moveable frets. Kamilkhani notes that his bīn has fourteen “or one or two more” frets (sārs, Sanskrit sārika), which are “hoisted” on the wood of the bīn (Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn, f.125a). These frets cover two octaves of a single string tuned to mandra Sa. Five of them are fixed in position, for which he uses the Sanskrit term ačal “fixed” – mandra Sa, madhya Sa, tār Sa, mandra Pa, and madhya Pa. The other frets are moveable, in
accordance with the “vacillating” swaras Re, Ga, Ma, Dha, and Ni (f.126a). Kamilkhani notes that the second octave beginning on madhya Sa corresponds with the principal vocal register of singers. Frets are not usually established for the third octave, because while compositions customarily move into the lower (mandra) register, even the best vocalists rarely possess the ability to sing in the high (tār) register. Mistakenly labelling the meru fret 1 (mandra Sa), he numbers the frets, noting that madhya Sa is the eighth fret, and that frets are set using string ratios either up to Ni (fret 14) or tīp (tār Sa, fret 15):

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccc}
0/1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 & 11 & 12 & 13 & 14 & 15 \\
S & R & G & M & P & D & N & s & r & g & m & p & d & n & s \\
\end{array}
\]

After this, if a singer possesses the ability to sing in the high register, one to three extra frets can be placed by ear (f.127a).

From this description, and from Kamilkhani’s subsequent elaboration of his ṭhāṭ system, it is clear that Kamilkhani’s bīn has moveable frets. Moreover, from his distribution of the frets over two octaves it appears that this is a purely lengthwise system of establishing the swaras, enabling the entire range of the rāga to be played on one string. Because the frets were therefore positioned only in accordance with their relationship with Sa, they were liberated from the need to be in saṃvādi relationship with swaras in crosswise alignment with them. Strikingly, unlike Ahobala, Kamilkhani’s string fractions correspond less to Pythagorean ratios than to the harmonic proportions, reflecting a further move away from crosswise saṃvādi relationships to lengthwise relationships between swaras. The difference between Ahobala’s crosswise-lengthwise compromise and Kamilkhani’s purely lengthwise system begs the question as to whether Kamilkhani was describing a traditional rudra viṇā. The inclusion in his ṭhāṭ system of a Persianate scale with a three-quarter-tone Re called ghazal ṭhāṭ is suggestive. Like Kamilkhani’s bīn, the fretted ḏanbūr in use in Hindustan had moveable frets (Rāg Darpan 1996: 126\(^4\)), and was mainly played on one string tuned to Sa (Tarjoma-i Pārijātak

\(^4\) Sarmadee confuses Faqirullah’s description of the kingrah with that of the fretted ḏanbūr (Rāg Darpan 1996: 127). It is the ḏanbūr, not the kingrah, that has “five strings of iron,” etc. Faqirullah’s description of two types of ḏanbūrs, one with banda (frets) and the other without, is very similar to Mirza Raushan
It is possible that Kamilkhani’s moveable frets, harmonic proportions, and ḥaṣā system represent a more radical transferral of ṭanbūr techniques and performance practice onto the rudra viṇā. This may have been an experiment, one which did not have any lasting impact on the modern fixed-fret rudra viṇā, but which arguably influenced subsequent developments on ṭanbūr and ultimately the sitār.

In the Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn, after describing how the bīn should be constructed, Kamilkhani establishes the seven frets of his śuddha scale in correspondence with fractional divisions of the whole string. He bases all his calculations in the Islamic divinatory science of geomancy, in which “divination is accomplished by forming and then interpreting a design consisting of sixteen positions, each of which is occupied by some geomantic figure” (Savage-Smith and Smith 1980: 11). Kamilkhani applies geomancy to his division of the string, theoretically dividing the wood of the bīn into 96 equal parts. Not only is 96 a multiple of 16, and a number equal to the names of Daniyal the prophet (Risāla dar ‘amal-i bīn f.126a), but being a multiple of 2 and 3 is ideally suited to the calculation of the harmonic ratios. Also geomantically significant is the fact that Kamilkhani’s smallest interval, the harmonic minor 2nd, is 1/16 of the total string length. The denominators of Kamilkhani’s fractions all divide into the number 96; however, in reality his largest denominator is 48. Moreover, when establishing each fret, he uses the simplest fraction, and divides the wood of the bīn with a pair of compasses according to the simplest number of divisions. Thus, for example, to find manda Pa the bīn is divided into three equal parts, Pa being the first of the three divisions, rather than 32/96. In this way the fret positions of Kamilkhani’s principal scale are established at the following divisions of the string:

---

Zamir’s more detailed description of the banda (fretted) and ḏyanda (fretless) ṭanbūrs (Tarjomā-i Pārijātak 808, f.92b-3a).

44 A second string, also tuned to Sa, was sometimes employed as well (Tarjomā-i Pārijātak 808, f.93a).
Kamilkhani uses the word ṭhāṭ to refer both to the fretting pattern and its corresponding scale; hence his principal ṭhāṭ is called ṭhāṭ Bhairava. Although Kamilkhani’s śuddha scale and the swaras of Ahobala’s rāg Bhairava do not correspond, Kamilkhani’s Bhairava ṭhāṭ has the same scale as Puṇḍarikaviṇṭhala’s Śuddha Bhairava (Powers 1970: 12). Kamilkhani does not go on systematically to delineate the positions of vikṛta swaras. Rather, using ṭhāṭ Bhairava as a basis Kamilkhani moves one or two frets at a time, creating a series of seven-swara patterns in each of which a handful of different rāgas can be played. He establishes firstly a system of seventeen ṭhāṭs, and in his second draft a system of eight ṭhāṭs, that can be used as a shorthand indicating how to set up the bīn for the performance of a particular rāga. The principal difference between the two systems is that the seventeen-ṭhāṭ system allows for a greater number of fret positions – sixteen (!) as opposed to eleven – and therefore subtler shades of intonation in rāgas that require this. This flexibility would only be possible using a moveable-fret bīn like Kamilkhani’s.

Kamilkhani lays out his ṭhāṭ system in two ways, as a verbal description of where and when to move the frets, and as a table of string ratios. He does not specify whether the swaras are komal, śuddha, or tivra; he merely notes their initial positions and how far they move in terms of string divisions. Table 2 is a graphical representation of his verbal description, and Table 3 is Kamilkhani’s original table of seventeen ṭhāṭs (overleaf). The first eight ṭhāṭs of the seventeen-ṭhāṭ system are his eight-ṭhāṭ system; I have highlighted these by placing the remainder in italics. In the table, the first number is the distance of

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{ śuddha scale: } & \\
\text{ madhya } Sa & = & 1/2 \\
\text{ bRe } & = & 1/16 \\
\text{ bGa } & = & 1/6 \\
\text{ Ma } & = & 1/4 \\
\text{ Pa } & = & 1/3 \\
?\text{ Dha } & = & 19/48 \\
\text{ bNi } & = & 7/16 \\
\end{array}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1/16</th>
<th>1/6</th>
<th>1/4</th>
<th>1/3</th>
<th>19/48</th>
<th>7/16</th>
<th>1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the fret from the *karha* (bridge), the second is its distance from the *meru* (nut), and the third is the total number of divisions. The last two together give the fraction.

*Table 2: Kam ilkani’s thāts according to string fractions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1/16</th>
<th>1/8</th>
<th>1/6</th>
<th>5/24</th>
<th>1/4</th>
<th>7/24</th>
<th>1/3</th>
<th>19/48</th>
<th>7/16</th>
<th>15/32</th>
<th>1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhairava</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Rag</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>-------&gt; G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindol</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>------&gt; N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedara*</td>
<td>-------&gt; R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyan</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>-------&gt; M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarang</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>-------&gt; G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>-------&gt; D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallar</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>-------&gt; D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanhra</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D&lt;----- N&lt;---</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibhas</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafi</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deskar</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marv</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sankara*</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazal</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desi Todi</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramkali</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malkauns</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>bg</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>?D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-R</td>
<td>-G</td>
<td>#G</td>
<td>+M#M</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>#D</td>
<td>-NN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sankara and Kedara are the same; the *Tarjoma-i Pārijātak* confirms this (793, f.62b; 69a).
Theory and practice: the enigma of the Dha fret

As I will demonstrate, Kamilkhani’s eight-\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\) system was applicable to and grounded in contemporary performance practice. However, compared with his seventeen-\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\) system it is arguably a more theoretical system, a rationalisation of the earlier system that attempts to squeeze r\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash g\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\) with unusual swara positions into more regular \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\). This abstraction operates on a number of levels. Firstly, and most bizarrely, Kamilkhani’s eight-\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\) system is not a twelve-pitch system, but an eleven-pitch system. This is quite explicit; he states that on a fixed-fret \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash v\texttt{\textbackslash i\texttt{\textbackslash n}}}}\) called the bajar \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash v\texttt{\textbackslash i\texttt{\textbackslash n}}}}\) (as opposed to his \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b\texttt{\textbackslash i\texttt{\textbackslash n}}}}\)), there are eleven frets to the octave (f.128b). Ignoring the atitivratar Dha in Sarang and Mallar, which as komal Ni still features in these r\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash g\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\), there is only one fret position for Dha in Kamilkhani’s eight-\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\) system. This is also the case in the seventeen-\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\) system, with the exception of the very high Dha in Malkauns \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\), which corresponds with Ahobala’s \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash s\texttt{\textbackslash u\texttt{\textbackslash d\texttt{\textbackslash d\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a}}}}}}\) Dha.

Kamilkhani states that in Bhairava \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash t\texttt{\textbackslash h\texttt{\textbackslash a\texttt{\textbackslash t}\texttt{\textbackslash s}}}}\), all frets are at their lowest positions. It is tempting to speculate that Kamilkhani’s fret is therefore meant to be komal Dha, in line perhaps with Ahobala’s high setting of both Dha frets. However, Kamilkhani’s fret would be very high for komal Dha, even higher than Ahobala’s, and it is on an unusual fraction of the string, 19/48. There is no evidence that Kamilkhani’s scale is related to Ahobala’s, even without conscious borrowing; rather the reverse. Firstly, their basic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>\textit{that}</th>
<th>\textit{R}</th>
<th>\textit{G}</th>
<th>\textit{M}</th>
<th>\textit{P}</th>
<th>\textit{D}</th>
<th>\textit{N}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhairava</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>5, 1, 6</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Rag</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindol</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedara*</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyan</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>33,15,48</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarang</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>33,15,48</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megh</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanhra</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibhas</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>33,15,48</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafi</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>5, 1, 6</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deskar</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>17,7,24</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marv</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>13,11,24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sankara*</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazal</td>
<td>11, 1, 12</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desi todi</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>39, 9, 48</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>13,11,24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramkali</td>
<td>15, 1, 16</td>
<td>39, 9, 48</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>29, 19, 48</td>
<td>17,15,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malkauns</td>
<td>7, 1, 8</td>
<td>19, 5, 24</td>
<td>3, 1, 4</td>
<td>2, 1, 3</td>
<td>7, 5, 12</td>
<td>9, 7, 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
scales are different – Ahobala uses śuddha Re and Dha – and their string divisions are worked out differently. A comparison of their string ratios confirms that while they are similar enough to suggest that string-ratio methods of fretting the bin were commonly in use in North India, Ahobala and Kamilkhanı’s ratios are rarely the same:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahobala</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>2/27</th>
<th>1/9</th>
<th>1/6</th>
<th>5/24</th>
<th>1/4</th>
<th>11/36</th>
<th>1/3</th>
<th>7/18</th>
<th>5/12</th>
<th>4/9</th>
<th>25/54</th>
<th>1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>15/48</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>19/48</td>
<td>7/16</td>
<td>15/32</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kamilkhanı</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>2/27</th>
<th>1/9</th>
<th>1/6</th>
<th>5/24</th>
<th>1/4</th>
<th>11/36</th>
<th>1/3</th>
<th>7/18</th>
<th>5/12</th>
<th>4/9</th>
<th>25/54</th>
<th>1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>15/48</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>19/48</td>
<td>7/16</td>
<td>15/32</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>śuddha scale:</th>
<th>Ahobala</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>bG</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>bN</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamilkhanı</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>?D</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vikṛta swaras:</th>
<th>Ahobala</th>
<th>bR</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>#M</th>
<th>bD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamilkhanı</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>#M</td>
<td>?D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answer to the mystery of the ?Dha fret lies in the fact that of the two, Kamilkhanı’s ratios more closely approximate the harmonic ratios, a simplified system of Pythagorean ratios in which, for example, the minor third is deemed to be 6:5 (1/6) rather than 32:27 (5/32). The correspondences between the harmonic and Kamilkhanı’s ratios are striking when illustrated side by side (I have been unable to find the harmonic ratios for the tritone or major 7th, so have been unable to include these in my comparison):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>harmonic</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1/16</th>
<th>1/8</th>
<th>1/6</th>
<th>1/5</th>
<th>1/4</th>
<th>1/3</th>
<th>3/8</th>
<th>2/5</th>
<th>7/16</th>
<th>1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamilkhanı</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>bG</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(#M)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>bD</td>
<td>bN</td>
<td>(N)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Kamilkhanı    | S | bR   | R   | bG  | G   | M   | (#M)| P   | bD  | bN   | (N) | S  |

Kamilkhani is almost certainly using the harmonic ratios to allocate his frets. The only time the two systems do not line up perfectly is when the harmonic proportions are based on a division of five – 5:4, the harmonic major 3rd, and 5:3, the harmonic major 6th. Five does not divide into 96. I would argue that because geomancy dictates Kamilkhanı’s string fractions, he is therefore forced to approximate the fractions for the harmonic major 3rd and 6th. 5/24 approximates almost exactly to 1/5 (5:4), and 19/48 is as close as
possible to 2/5 (5:3) under the geomantic circumstances. In other words, Kamilkhani’s Dha fret is the harmonic major 6th – śuddha Dha.

This still does not explain why Kamilkhani does not allocate a fret at 18/48 (3/8) for the harmonic minor 6th, komal Dha, even in his seventeen-ṭhāṭ system. One possible reason relates to his conviction that on a fixed-fret viṇā there are eleven rather than twelve fret positions to the octave. He derives this from a misunderstanding of the śrūtis.

All Sanskrit treatises that cover similar material to Kamilkhani attempt to reconcile the twenty-two divisions of the octave mandated by the Saṅgītaratnākara with the contemporary reality of a twelve-pitch system. Kamilkhani is aware that the number twenty-two is significant, but instead of realising it describes twenty-two microtonal divisions of a single octave, he ingeniously multiplies his “eleven” fret positions over two octaves to arrive at twenty two. In other words, he believes the twenty-two śrūtis to be the semitonal divisions of the contemporary Hindustani scale, but in order to reconcile the two he has to leave out one fret position. This may explain why he does not allocate a fret position for komal Dha.

Seventeenth-century ṭhāṭ systems in practice

What then happened to Kamilkhani’s komal Dha? By analysing Ahobala’s and Kamilkhani’s ṭhāṭ systems in tandem, it is possible to work this out. Ahobala does not set out an organised melā or ṭhāṭ system in the manner of Puṇḍarikaviṭṭha or Kamilkhani. However, he does use the word melā to denote the scales of the 122 rāgas he includes as notated examples. Mirza Raushan Zamir consistently translates melā as ṭhāṭ. He frequently introduces rāga examples with statements like “This rāga is in the same ṭhāṭ as Sankarabharan,” implying, like Kamilkhani, that the ṭhāṭs were conceptualised practically as fret patterns common to a number of rāgas, rather than being theoretical abstractions. Given that both Mirza Raushan Zamir and Kamilkhani name the identical scale kāfī ṭhāṭ, I would suggest it is possible to construct a ṭhāṭ system on the basis of Ahobala’s rāga examples that was arguably rooted in musical practice. He lists a few rāgas that have unique scales, but most of them are identified with the following ṭhāṭs:
Together the two systems arguably demonstrate that seventeenth century musicians did conceptualise rāgas in performance in terms of ṭhāṭs. Nine of Ahobala’s ṭhāṭs are identical to Kamilkhani’s in scalar material⁴⁵, and six have the same scale and name (in other words they are known to include one or more of the same rāgas). Ten of Kamilkhani’s ṭhāṭs are also identical to ten of the twelve melaṅs of the seventeenth-century Sanskrit theorist Locana Kavi (cf. Bhatkhande 1990: 16–20). Eight of Bhatkhande’s ten ṭhāṭs are also represented amongst Kamilkhani’s (see Table 5 below). It is noteworthy that Ahobala’s ṭhāṭs include seven of Kamilkhani’s eight ṭhāṭs (the exception being Megh Mallar), but only two of Kamilkhani’s additional ṭhāṭs, Kafi and Bibhas. The scale patterns that overlap are those that encompass the largest number of rāgas in both Kamilkhani’s and Ahobala’s systems, or those like Kalyan or Sarang that form a unique group. It is therefore probable that Kamilkhani’s eight-ṭhāṭ system, although not perfect, encompasses the main body of seventeenth-century rāgas.

\[\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{Table 4: Ahobala/Mirza Raushan Zamir’s ṭhāṭs} \\
\hline
\text{R} & 2/7 & 5/24 & 11/36 & 7/18 & 25/54 \\
\text{Kafi} & R & bG & M & P & D & bn & S \\
\text{Todi} & bR & bG & M & P & bD & bn & S \\
\text{Gauri} & bR & G & M & P & bD & N & S \\
\text{Kalyan} & R & G & #M & P & D & N & S \\
\text{Sankara} & R & G & M & P & D & N & S \\
\text{Sri Rag} & R & G & M & P & D & bn & S \\
\text{Sarang} & R & G & #M & P & D & N & S \\
\text{Abhiri} & R & bG & M & P & bD & N & S \\
\text{Naat} & #R & G & M & P & #D & N & S \\
\text{Barari} & bR & G & M & P & bD & N & S \\
\text{Bhairavi} & R & bG & M & P & bD & bn & S \\
\text{Mukhari} & bR & bbG & M & P & bD & bn & S \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

important rāgas not named as a ṭhāṭ:

\[\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{Megh Nad} & bR & bG & P & D & bn & S \\
\text{Bengali} & bG & #M & P & N & S \\
\text{Suddh Barari} & bbG & #M & P & bD & N & S \\
\text{Todi Barari} & bR & bG & #M & P & bD & bn & S \\
\text{Salang} & bR & bG & G & M & P & D & bn & S \\
\end{array}\]
By comparing Ahobala’s and Kamilkhani’s ठाँठ systems using राग Todi as an example, it is possible to show that Kamilkhani’s single ठाँठ of Todi is very close to Ahobala’s Todi: *komal* Re, *komal* Ga, Ma, Pa, *komal* Dha, and *komal* Ni. Although Kamilkhani does not describe the ठाँठ of Todi, his Desi Todi ठाँठ is very close to Ahobala’s Todi: *komal* Re, slightly *komal* Ga, Ma, Pa, ?Dha, and slightly *komal* Ni. Kamilkhani states that both Desi Todi and Gauri are in Hindol ठाँठ. Ahobala’s Gauri ठाँठ is identical with Kamilkhani’s Hindol ठाँठ – if Kamilkhani’s Dha fret in practice (if not in theory!) can be moved to *komal* Dha.

Moreover, it is easy to see how Desi Todi could also be played in Hindol ठाँठ if slight adjustments were permitted to the Ga and Ni frets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahobala</th>
<th>Gauri</th>
<th>Hindol</th>
<th>Desi Todi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauri plug</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindol plug</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desi Todi plug</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>-G</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kamilkhani furthermore states that राग Todi is in Bhairava ठाँठ. Once again, if his ?Dha encompasses the fret positions of *komal* as well as शुद्ध Dha, it would certainly be possible to play Todi as defined by Ahobala in Kamilkhani’s Bhairava ठाँठ:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kamilkhani</th>
<th>Bhairava</th>
<th>Todi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bhG plug</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>bG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todi plug</td>
<td>bR</td>
<td>bG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that in the eight-ठाँठ system Desi Todi, which has a unique scale of its own, is no longer a ठाँठ in its own right but is instead squeezed into Hindol ठाँठ, indicates that in his final draft Kamilkhani enlarged his main ठाँठs theoretically to encompass a number of रागas that deviated slightly from the principal fret positions. It is likely that in practice, Kamilkhani’s ?Dha fret was moved to the *komal* position when required. The absence of the *komal* Dha fret, and the disappearance of several ठाँठs from the first to the

---

45 Ten including Kamilkhani’s Desi Todi/Ahobala’s Todi
final draft, therefore suggests that theoretical considerations, however misguided, overrode a full representation of the ṭhāṭs in actual use. Nevertheless, the remarkable correspondences between Kamilkhani’s ṭhāṭs and the ṭhāṭs of Ahobala’s rāgas demonstrate that Kamilkhani’s ṭhāṭ systems were rooted in current practice. More importantly, Kamilkhani’s treatises also confirm that Ahobala’s Saṅgītapārijāta is firmly founded in the historical practice of musicians.

V Conclusion
The treatises of Kamilkhani and Ahobala together indicate that Bhatkhande was right in suggesting that ṭhāṭ systems were used to conceptualise North Indian rāgas in the seventeenth century. The Risala dar ‘amal-i bīn and the Saṅgītapārijāta demonstrate that a twelve-pitch scale derived from the fractional division of the octave was widely used in North India, and that the rāgas were conceptualised as belonging to a discrete number of fret patterns based on this scale known as ṭhāṭs. Moreover, the fact that Kamilkhani and Ahobala took entirely different routes to establish very similar conclusions about the tuning of the Hindustani scale indicates that ṭhāṭ systems were indeed used in contemporary instrumental practice.

Kamilkhani’s decision to converse with practising musicians and to learn the bīn himself, the eccentricity of his musicological theories, and his manifest ignorance of Sanskrit all testify to the performance basis of his treatise. The differences between his work and Ahobala’s demonstrate their independence. Both treatises were attempting to solve the problem of how to fret a vīṇā tuned Pa-Sa-Pa-Sa, but the different construction of their instruments – one with fixed frets, the other with moveable frets – led to two solutions, which produced different sets of string ratios. Without a vīṇā using moveable frets, Kamilkhani could not have tuned it according to the harmonic ratios lengthwise, and the fixed frets of Ahobala’s vīṇā limited him to a compromise solution between crosswise and lengthwise systems. The fact that such different paths converged in string ratios that are as similar as they are, and the serendipitous appearance of the same kāfī ṭhāṭ in both texts and in present-day performance practice, is convincing evidence of the practical employment of ṭhāṭ systems in the seventeenth-century Mughal empire.
However, Bhatkhande was arguably incorrect to suggest that these \textit{thāṭ} systems were ever meant to be used in an abstract, classificatory sense, as a replacement for the \textit{rāga-rāginī} system. Rather, the absence of a systematic \textit{thāṭ} system in Ahobala’s treatise and Kamilkhani’s explicit statements together indicate that scale \textit{coexisted with but remained subsidiary to} the aesthetic character of \textit{rāga} as a classificatory principle.

In the Mughal empire, it seems that the \textit{thāṭ}s were simply a practical shorthand signifying to \textit{bin} and \textit{tanbūr} players the fret pattern of individual \textit{rāgas} for performance purposes. This understanding of the term is confirmed by its preservation in the oral theory of nineteenth-century musicians. In the modern period, \textit{thāṭ} appears with this connotation as early as 1834 (Willard 1882: 64). Resurfacing in the written tradition in several \textit{sitār} handbooks of the 1870s, “\textit{thāṭ}. . . became a term for indicating the correct fret setting for each \textit{rāga}” on the \textit{sitār} (Miner 1997:45). The continuity of the term’s use in performance practice from the seventeenth until the nineteenth centuries is demonstrated by the use of \textit{kāfī thāṭ} to describe the same scale from Mirza Raushan Zamir and Kamilkhani through to the \textit{sitār} players of Bhatkhande’s time. However, it is also exemplified by several eighteenth-century references to the use of \textit{thāṭ}s in Hindustani music, especially on the \textit{tanbūr}. These include a \textit{Risāla dar Rāg} written for Muhammad Shah (r.1719-48), and a late eighteenth-century handbook on playing the \textit{tanbūr}, the \textit{Risāla dar navākhtan-i rāg dar tanbūr}. It is highly likely that \textit{sitār} players appropriated the \textit{thāṭ} concept from the performance practice of the earlier \textit{tanbūr}.

In this way, the practical nature of the seventeenth-century \textit{thāṭ} system allowed the all-important aesthetic properties of \textit{rāgas} to continue as the main basis for \textit{rāga} classification. To the Mughal male élite, the role of music in ameliorating the ill effects of humoral imbalance or the adverse influence of the stars was fundamental to its purpose and worth. They explained the purported emotional effects of the Hindustani \textit{rāgas} by drawing relationships between the \textit{rāgas} and the Unani humours, and the \textit{swaras} and the astrological bodies. In this way, the extramusical associations of the \textit{rāgas}, and in particular their auspicious timings, became indispensible to the wellbeing of listeners in the \textit{mehfīl}. It was for this reason that the \textit{rāga-rāginī} classificatory system retained its
preeminent position at the Mughal court, the main arbiter of North Indian cultural norms until the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, Bhatkhande noted that the important *swaras* of a *rāga*, particularly its *vādī*, seemed to dictate the time at which it should be sung. Unlike Ras Baras Khan and Kamilkhani, however, he did not provide an explanation (Gangoly 1935: 90-2). On the basis of their own extensive experience, these two theorists argue that the stars influence the humoral temperaments of each *swara*, and that it is the unique combination of these that create a *rāga*’s particular aesthetic character. Moreover, by using geomancy to establish his frets, Kamilkhani proposes a connection between the supernatural effects of geometry and the stars, and the *ṭhāts themselves*. In their incorporation of *rāga* into the worlds of Indo-Muslim medicine, astrology, and geomancy, Ras Baras Khan and Kamilkhani construct a physiological relationship between the natural and supernatural, musical and extramusical dimensions of *rāga*, and a cogent reason why conformity to the latter was essential in Mughal musical culture.

**Table 5: Matching ṭhāts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kamilkhani: Bhairava</th>
<th>Ahobala: Todi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bhairava</strong></td>
<td><strong>Todi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhairava  <em>bR</em></td>
<td><em>bR</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bG</em></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>G</em></td>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>?D</em></td>
<td><em>bN</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>S</em></td>
<td><strong>(Locana Kavi – Todi; Bhatkhande – Bhairavi)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Desi Todi <em>bR</em></td>
<td><em>bR</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-G</td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M</em></td>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>?D</em></td>
<td><em>bN</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-N</td>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todi  <em>bR</em></td>
<td><em>bR</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bG</em></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>G</em></td>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bD</em></td>
<td><em>bN</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>S</em></td>
<td><strong>(no correspondences)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kamilkhani: Sri Rag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Sri Rag  *bR*       |
| **G**               |
| *M*                 |
| **P**               |
| *?D*                |
| *bN*                |
| *S*                 |

| Salang  *bR*       |
| **G**               |
| *M*                 |
| **P**               |
| *D*                 |
| *bN*                |
| *S*                 |

| Ahobala: Salang    |
| **(no correspondences)** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kamilkhani: Hindol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Hindol  *bR*       |
| **G**               |
| *M*                 |
| **P**               |
| *?D*                |
| *N*                 |
| *S*                 |

| Gauri  *bR*        |
| **G**               |
| *M*                 |
| **P**               |
| *bD*                |
| *N*                 |
| *S*                 |

| Ahobala: Gauri     |
| **(Locana Kavi – Gauri; Bhatkhande – Bhairav)** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kamilkhani: Kedara/Sankara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Kedara/Sankara  *R*        |
| **G**               |
| *M*                 |
| **P**               |
| *?D*                |
| *N*                 |
| *S*                 |

| Sankara  *R*          |
| **G**               |
| *M*                 |
| **P**               |
| *D*                 |
| *N*                 |
| *S*                 |

| Ahobala: Sankara |
| **(Locana Kavi – Kedara; Bhatkhande – Bilaval)** |
Kamilkhani: Kalyan
Kalyan R G #MP ?D N S
Kalyan R G #MP D N S
Ahobala: Kalyan
(Locana Kavi – Imana; Bhatkhande – Kalyan)

Kamilkhani: Sarang
Sarang R #G #MP #D N S
Sarang R #G #MP #D N S
Ahobala: Sarang
(Locana Kavi – Sarang)

Kamilkhani: Kanhra
Kanhra R G M P ?D bN S
Sri Rag R G M P D bN S
Ahobala: Sri Rag
(Locana Kavi – Karnata; Bhatkhande – Khamaj)

Kamilkhani: Bibhas
Bibhas bR G #MP ?D N S
Barari bR G #MP bD N S
Ahobala: Barari
(Locana Kavi – Dhanasri; Bhatkhande – Purvi)

Kamilkhani: Kafi
Kafi R bG M P ?D bN S
Kafi R bG M P bD bN S
[Bhairavi R bG M P bD bN S]
Ahobala: Kafi (Bhairavi)
(Locana Kavi – Bhairavi (with D); Mukhari (with bD); Bhatkhande – Kafi)

Kamilkhani: Desi Todi
Desi Todi bR -G M P ?D -N S
Todi bR bG M P bD bN S
Ahobala: Todi
(Locana Kavi – Todi; Bhatkhande – Bhairavi)

Kamilkhani: Megh Mallar
Mallar R G M P #D N S
(Locana Kavi – Megh)
CHAPTER SIX

The origins and development of khayāl

Hajrat Khwāja sang kheliye dhamāl
Bā’is Khwāja mil ban ban āye
Tā meñ Hajrat Rasūl ṣāḥib-i jamāl
Hajrat Khwāja sang kheliye dhamāl. . .

Let us play dhamal with Hazrat Khwaja,
All dressed up, the twenty two saints have come;
Among them, the exalted Prophet is the beautiful master.
So let us play dhamal. . .

~ A qawwāli attributed to Amir Khusrau

I

Introduction

Since its rise to preeminence in the early eighteenth century, a number of theories concerning the origins of khayāl have coexisted in oral histories and written records. These theories have clustered around three important figures in Indian music history, Amir Khusrau Dehlavi (1253-1325), Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur (r.1458-83, d.1505)2, and Ni’mat Khan “Sadārang” (early eighteenth century). Although these theories may be contradictory in some respects, they do not give rise to controversy in and of themselves. Rather, “the major source of confusion pertaining to the nature of khayāl,” according to Wim van der Meer, “has its roots in the Hindu-Muslim controversy” (Meer 1980: 50). Since the rise of modern Indian musicology, a number of new theories concerning the origins of khayāl have been mooted which derive from attempts to claim a pre-Muslim origin for all of India’s cherished cultural traditions (Miner 1993: 18). While these may be of merit in pointing out the fundamentally indigenous nature of khayāl, there is no evidence that khayāl came directly from any “pre-Muslim” or “Sanskritic” genre or style that has been suggested as its predecessor3. Nor is the

---

1 Edited by Aditya Behl from a translation by Yousuf Saeed (2001).
Arabic word *khayāl*, meaning “imagination” or “fantasy”, a corruption either of Sanskrit *kelī* (“amorous play”, “sexual intercourse”) or Hindi *khel* (“sport”, “play [a game]”). Even the influence of *dhrupad* on the evolution of *khayāl* was minimal until long after the latter was firmly established. The nationalist group of theories can thus be largely dismissed, thereby removing the controversy.

Nevertheless, reconciling the more traditional theories remains problematic. The earliest written reference to *khayāl* as a distinctive vocal genre that I have been able to trace occurs in a Mughal context around 1637. At least one Hindavi source of the seventeenth century, the *Caurāsī vaishnavān kī vārtā*, mentions *khayāl*, but the text’s date is uncertain, and it may have been written as late as 1711. To my knowledge, *khayāl* does not appear in any Sanskrit text prior to 1637, and it seems to have been unknown in the Mughal court when Abul Fazl completed the *Ā’īn-i Akbarī* in 1593. It therefore seems probable that it emerged as a distinctive genre between 1593 and 1637, or slightly earlier. This makes attempts to attribute the creation of *khayāl* to either Amir Khusrau or Husain Shah Sharqi implausible.

Nevertheless, the conventional association of these two figures with the emergence of *khayāl* does have a historical basis, albeit in an unexpected way. In this chapter I will argue that *khayāl* first arose in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the Delhi area, amidst the Sufi nexus that linked two of the most important Chishti centres of the period, Delhi and Jaunpur. I will then demonstrate that it first rose to prominence not at the eighteenth-century court of Muhammad Shah (r.1719-48) as is commonly supposed, but in the second half of the seventeenth century under Aurangzeb. Finally I will show that in the seventeenth century *khayāl* both referred to a popular style found in several regional variants across Mughal India, and more narrowly came to signify the most prestigious of these variants, which was associated with the *qawwāls* of Delhi. The latter was the direct forebear of modern *khayāl*.

---

4 Gautam 1980: 32; Ranade 1990: 25. See *The Oxford Hindi-English dictionary* for the unrelated etymologies of these words (1993: 213, 229, 244).
II

Amir Khusrau, Ni‘mat Khan, and qawwālī

The standard historiography of khayāl traces its development in terms of three chronological phases: 1) its innovation in the fourteenth century by Amir Khusrau from the devotional genre qawwālī; 2) its further development in the fifteenth century by Husain Shah Sharqi via his insertion of elements from the secular genre cutkula (or cutkula); and 3) its final transformation in the eighteenth century by Ni‘mat Khan “Sadarang”, who elevated khayāl to a “more rigorous and classical style” by fusing it with dhrupad elements (Miner 1993: 84).

The first phase of this chronology has often been questioned, and most scholars argue that although Ni‘mat Khan did not invent khayāl, his was the decisive hand in lifting it out of obscurity and in creating khayāl as we know it today. Nevertheless, the basic framework of this chronology has proven persistent, and already appears in the earliest written references to khayāl as a musical genre.

The oldest reference I have found to khayāl mentions it only in passing in a biography of the nobleman Baqir Khan Najm-i Sani, who died in 1637. His contemporary Shaikh Farid Bhakkari remembered him as a patron of “dhrupad and khayāl, [compositions] in the Hindavi language composed in rāga” (Zakhīrāt al-Khavānīn 1970: vol.ii 345). The earliest reference to name an inventor, an entry in the Pādishāhnāma also dated 1637, links khayāl’s genesis to Amir Khusrau (1867-8: vol. ii 5-6). Abul Hasan Amir Khusrau Dehlavi, an Indian-born nobleman of Turkic descent, who graced the court of the Delhi Sultanate until his death in 1325, is one of the most important cultural figures of Indo-Muslim history. Possessing the rare distinction of being at the same time a “boon companion” of the Sultans and the “most beloved disciple” of one of India’s most revered Sufi saints, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (Rizvi 1978: 168, 172), Amir Khusrau was able to act as a bridge...
between the worlds of the court and the Sufi shrine. He was renowned for his musicianship and his literary accomplishments, and has been credited with the invention of several musical genres, most notably qawwālī, tarāna and khayāl (Miner 1993: 19-20). The idea that Amir Khusrau created khayāl has proven impossible to sustain. As several scholars have pointed out, Amir Khusrau makes no mention of khayāl in his writings (e.g. N P Ahmad 1984: 111). There is stronger evidence for a connection between Amir Khusrau and qawwālī. Song texts attributed to him are still sung today by the qawwāls most closely associated with his tradition, the hereditary qawwāl-bachche (“children of the qawwāls”) at the dargāh of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi, who claim direct descent from Amir Khusrau (Qureshi 1986: 13). As with khayāl, however, Amir Khusrau makes no reference to qawwālī in his writings, despite describing at length the activities of the fourteenth-century qawwāls and the genres they performed, including qaul and ghazal (Trivedi 1999: 81-4).

It is not until the Shams al-As was in 1698 that the term qawwālī first appears in written records, considerably later even than khayāl. Before this date, the repertoire specific to the qawwāls was referred to by its constituent parts, most prominently qaul and tarāna. The author of the Shams al-As, Ras Baras Khan Kalawant, employs the word qawwālī simply as an umbrella term for devotional genres sung by the qawwāls (f.34a). Dargah Quli Khan uses it in a similar way in his famous ethnography of Delhi, the Muraqqa’-i Dehlī (1739-40). Despite frequent mention of the qawwāls, he uses the word qawwālī only twice in his entire text, both times in the phrase funūn-i qawwālī – the “arts” or “modes” of qawwālī (Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1993: 94, 100). Thus qawwālī in the early

---

9 Although bachcha is the Persian singular for “child” (plural bachchagān), I will be using the Hindustani singular and plural endings because the qawwāl-bachche are a North Indian social phenomenon.
10 Amir Khusrau is sometimes said to have been a qawwāl himself. This is highly unlikely, as fourteenth-century qawwāls seem already to have been low-status hereditary specialists, as they are today, whereas Amir Khusrau was a high-ranking nobleman and patron; see Trivedi 1999: 83-4.
11 The term qawwālī is also found in the undated Nishātāra (f.21a). As this work borrows freely from the Rāg Darpan, as well as the Risāla-i Musamma ba-Naghmāt of 1690, it is unlikely to be earlier than the Shams al-Aswārī, and I have dated it c.1700.
12 e.g. Ā’in-i Akbarī 1876-7: 139. Trivedi was the first to argue that qawwālī evolved quite late from its separate constituents, although she erroneously locates its first appearance in the mid eighteenth century (1999: 95).
eighteenth century seems to have been merely an umbrella term for qaul, tarāna, and other “modes” of Sufi devotional music, also signifying a shared musical style (101)13. The single appearance of the word qawwālī in Inayat Khan Rasikh’s Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyan-i Hindūstān (1753) apparently signifying a distinctive entity, may indicate the beginnings of its transition from an umbrella term to a specific genre (1961: 24). Nevertheless, the Indo-Persian evidence suggests that the use of qawwālī to denote a single genre of Muslim devotional song is an even more recent development14. This terminological clarification is important. Sufi hereditary musicians did not become known as qawwāls because they sang qawwālī, as several modern scholars have assumed15. On the contrary, as its etymology suggests16, the qawwāls derived their name from their most important pre-modern speciality, qaul, half a millennium before qawwālī first emerged. Amir Khusrau’s link was therefore not with qawwālī, but with qaul and its hereditary specialists, the qawwāls. Importantly, the qaul and tarāna belonging to the qawwāls of Delhi in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were consistently ascribed to the “school” or “style” (ravish) of Amir Khusrau. Qaul is still an important constituent of modern qawwālī, as are both tarāna and ghazal (Qureshi 1986: 21, 24, 240). Thus there is a direct genealogical link between the Khusravi “school” of qaul and tarāna in Delhi prior to 1700, and the later singers of “qawwālī” who are so often cited as having been instrumental in the development of khayāl.

If Dargah Quli Khan’s contemporary snapshot can be considered representative, it would seem that the qawwāls of Delhi indeed played a prominent musical role in Mughal society during Muhammad Shah’s reign. Miner argues that their music may have been “the

---

13 Shekhar and Chenoy translate the word funūn here as “style” (Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1989: 101). However, they also incorrectly assume that qawwālī existed as a single song genre by 1739-40, and insert it as such in places not warranted by the original text.
14 In her seminal study of qawwālī, which focusses on the Delhi qawwāl-bachche tradition, Qureshi says that qawwālī is “a recognized musical genre in the Indian subcontinent. . . Qawwali considered as music is a group song performed by qawwals. . . a mystical poem set to a strophic tune” (1986: xiii). E.g. Goswami 1957: 128-9; Ranade 1990: 28. Qureshi may believe this as well. She seems to define a qawwāl as one who sings qawwālī, and states that the word qawwālī is derived directly from qaul (1986: 83). From a historical perspective, this etymology is unlikely.
16 According to Lambton, “[Arabic] nouns denoting professions and trades are formed [from the root نَفَل فُنَل] on the measure “ناَفَل” (1974, 198). Qaul فُنَل فُنَل in Arabic is a verbal noun meaning “speaking” or “saying”, which came to denote a specific musical genre, qaul, in medieval Islam. Thus a qawwāl فُنَل فُنَل is literally a “singer” of qaul فُنَل فُنَل.
single most widespread form of the time, and one held in high musical regard” (1993: 84). Significantly, it appears that the qawwāls may have been the primary exponents of khayāl during this period, Ni‘mat Khan’s contributions notwithstanding. Dargah Quli Khan notes a number of khayāl singers, including Shah Daniyal, Rahim Khan, Daulat Khan, Gyan Khan, Haddu, and Allah Bande, who had close familial and social ties with the qawwāls (Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1993: 98, 101-2). Of particular importance are the khayāl singers Jani and Ghulam Rasul, the sons and musical successors of the most eminent qawwāl of the day, Taj Khan Qawwal (Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1993: 91-2). They later became the founders of the Lucknow khayāl style (Miner 1993: 97).

It is important to note that Ni‘mat Khan had significant connections with the qawwāls of Delhi. His first patron was Muhammad A‘zam Shah, Aurangzeb’s third son. According to Rasikh, while in Muhammad A‘zam Shah’s employ Ni‘mat Khan had close associations with Tatari Qawwal, who appears to have been one of his teachers. Alongside dhrupad and khayāl, Ni‘mat Khan was remembered as a peerless composer of tarāna, previously considered a qawwāl speciality (Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughānviyān-i Hindūstān 1961: 30-1). More importantly, Dargah Quli Khan recorded that he:

> takes part in the ceremony of the ‘urs of the saints and himself performs the celebrations of the eleventh day. There is a musical gathering at his residence on the eleventh day of every month’

(Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1989: 75; 1993, 90)

This shows that Ni‘mat Khan was himself involved in Sufi practice. Qureshi states that “the commemoration of a saint’s final union (wişāl) with God on his death day (‘urs) constitutes the prime raison d’être for holding Qawwali assemblies. . . At [major] shrines, Qawwali occasions are also held on the saint’s monthly or weekly death days” (Qureshi 1986: 103). The eleventh day is the day on which sama‘ gatherings are held in memory of Hazrat ‘Abdul

---

17 Miner assumes this to have been qawwālı as a single song genre, and tends to translate Dargah Quli Khan’s “qawwālı” as “qawwālı singer”, a connotation absent from the Persian text. This leads to a few misreadings of Dargah Quli Khan’s account; for example that “qawwālı” is mentioned as performed. . . at the home of Taj Khan” (Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1993: 83). Qawwālı does not appear in this passage, or anywhere in association with Taj Khan Qawwal (68, 91-2).

18 The British Library manuscript copy also has “the eleventh day” (Risāla-i Sālār Jang, f.112b), but Miner has “the twelfth day” (1993: 85).
Qadir Jilani, the founder of the Qadiri order of Sufis, whose ‘urs is also celebrated by the Chishtis. Either way, this passage indicates that Ni‘mat Khan personally played a musical role in these assemblies. It is not clear from Dargah Quli Khan’s account what genres he performed at the quasi-religious gatherings held at his house, merely that he sang in rāga and played the bīn (Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1993: 90). The latter might indicate dhrupad, which would be in keeping with his modern reputation as having remained exclusively a dhrupad performer (Miner 1993: 86-7). However, there is also a Sufi tradition of bīn playing, and Kamilkhani’s treatises (1668) show that even Persian music could be played on the bīn in the seventeenth century (Risāla-i Kāmil Khān, f.135b). More importantly, Dargah Quli Khan seems to have known Ni‘mat Khan only as a composer of khayāl (Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1993: 90-1). It is indeed possible that he may have performed khayāl at his devotional gatherings: Dargah Quli Khan mentions one khayāl specialist, Shah Daniyal, whose “renderings in classical style enamour and mesmerise the sufis” – precisely the kind of language usually applied to devotional genres.

Miner regards Dargah Quli Khan’s references to khayāl as evidence that the genre existed prior to Ni‘mat Khan’s innovations. However she speculates that the older khayāl which “might have had long-standing connections” to the qawwāls was a non-classical song form “not strictly based on rāgas”. Ni‘mat Khan’s synthesis of this inferior genre with the high-prestige dhrupad supposedly created a “new, more classically acceptable” khayāl, which rapidly eclipsed the older form (1993: 84, 87-8). While Miner’s conclusions have merit, they are largely undermined by the seventeenth-century sources. Nevertheless, it does seem from Dargah Quli Khan’s account that Ni‘mat Khan’s khayāl style did become predominant amongst the musicians of Delhi within his own lifetime. It is likely that the qawwāl-bachche therefore passed his style on along with their own to the emerging gharānās

---

19 Exemplified by the great nineteenth-century musician Bande Ali Khan, who was fond of khayāl and performed it on the bīn (Richard Widdess and Joep Bor 2003: personal communications).
21 Miner argues that Jani and Ghulam Rasul gave up “qawwāl” only on reaching Lucknow, taking up this “new” form of khayāl “as it gained in acceptability and prestige” (1993: 97). Dargah Quli Khan, however, already names them as khayāl singers in Delhi, “true successors of their father” Taj Khan Qawwal (Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī 1993: 92).
of the nineteenth century. At least three gharanās claim their founders received instruction from members of the Delhi qawwāl-bachche lineage, which Neuman refers to as the “father” of gharanās (Neuman 1990: 149). The supposed link between khayāl style and “qawwālī” is made explicit in the person of the nineteenth-century qawwāl-bachchā Bade Muhammad Khan. He is reputed to have introduced the characteristic tāns of khayāl from qawwālī, (Goswami 1957: 129) and to have taught the founders of the oldest present-day khayāl gharanā, the Gwalior gharanā (Neuman 1990: 149). The famous Tan Ras Khan, principal court musician to the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was a qawwāl-bachchā (Qureshi 1986: 99), and members of the Patiala khayāl gharanā claim him as the ustād of their founders. He is simultaneously regarded as a pivotal ancestral figure both of the Delhi khayāl gharanās (Neuman 1990: 152), and of the current qawwāl-bachche at the dargāh of Hazrat Nizamuddin (Qureshi 1986: 99). A few hints of a connection between khayāl and Sufi musical traditions remain to the present day, not least in several khayāl texts that reflect a Sufi devotional context (Wade 1984: 13-23). Acharya Brihaspati draws attention to “a special variety of musical poems which are recited by the Sufī saints in southern India. . . also known as Khayal. The nature of these songs is mystic” (N P Ahmad 1984: 108). Also suggestive is the occasional Hindustani practice of substituting a tarāna for the chota khayāl at the end of a khayāl performance.

Thus it is clear that a link between Sufi musical traditions and khayāl has been in evidence from at least the early eighteenth century. This connection is reflected in oral histories of musicians and in the secondary literature as stories of khayāl’s invention by Amir Khusrau, or of its emergence from the musical genre qawwālī. Neither of these theories is literally true. Khayāl as a distinct genre is simultaneously both centuries younger than Amir Khusrau, and considerably older than qawwālī as it is conceived today. Neither khayāl nor qawwālī can therefore be associated with the historical figure of Amir Khusrau. Rather, it is

---

22 “These days in Dehli, the khayyāls of Ne’mat Khan are in vogue” (Muraqqa’-i Dehlī 1989: 113 and 1993: 102).
23 According to the nineteenth century Ma’dan al-Mūsīqī Bade Muhammad Khan, known here as Miyan Muhammad Khan, was “noted for his tan, palta, tahrir and zamzama. He was acclaimed as a unique singer in the South. He had a habit of tying his hair in a knot, like the South Indians. Very sociable by nature, he was employed by the Raja of Rewa on a salary of a thousand rupees” (Ma’dan al-Mūsīqī 1959: 19).
Amir Khusrau’s musical legacy that is implicated in the evolution of khayal. There is a direct link between Amir Khusrau and the qawwals of Delhi, and their musical traditions. The qawwals of Delhi have been renowned as the heirs of Amir Khusrau’s musical traditions from his own time until the present day. At the same time they have been implicated in the development, preservation and transmission of both qawwali and khayal. As I will demonstrate, this connection between khayal and Sufi musical traditions, and particularly the qawwals and Sufis of Delhi, extends back well before the eighteenth century.

Husain Shah Sharqi and cutkulā

While the attribution of khayal to Amir Khusrau is the earliest tradition in the Indo-Persian sources, the confusion in recent secondary literature concerning khayal’s origins is also grounded in the seventeenth century. Pace Miner, the Indo-Persian treatises show that by 1660 khayal was already one of the more prominent and prestigious genres performed at the Mughal court (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101; f.91a). At the same time, however, the circumstances of its creation were increasingly contested by writers who attributed its invention to a different historical figure, Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur. Husain Shah Sharqi (r.1458-83)24 was the last of the Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur, and overlord of the father of Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (r.1486-1517), that other famous patron of Hindustani music25. From 1394 until 1483 the Sharqi dynasty of Jaunpur ruled over an independent kingdom that stretched from Aligarh to Bihar. In 1483, after a decades-long struggle between Jaunpur and the Lodi Sultans of Delhi, Bahlul Lodi deposed Husain Shah Sharqi, placed his own son Barbak on the Jaunpur throne, and exiled the former ruler to Kahalgānī in Bihar until his death in 150526. Both Husain Shah Sharqi and his grandfather Ibrahim Shah Sharqi (r.1401-40) were renowned music connoisseurs. Little is now known about Husain Shah Sharqi’s actual contribution to Hindustani music; this may change with Aditya Behl’s forthcoming

24 The dates of Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi’s reign differ from source to source; these are the dates given in Bosworth’s New Islamic dynasties 1996: 314. Saeed’s seminal work on the Sharqi Sultans gives 1458-84.
25 Husain Shah Sharqi made Gwalior a tributary of Jaunpur in 1466 after a successful invasion. According to Saeed, Raja Man Singh’s father, Raja Kirat, became Husain Shah Sharqi’s loyal vassal and friend, and aided him in his fruitless campaign against Bahlul Lodi; see Saeed 1972: 86, 95-6; Bosworth 1996: 314. Husain Shah Sharqi was alive during most of Raja Man Singh’s reign, and the two famous patrons must have known each other.
translation of Qutban’s Hindavi Sufi romance, the Mrğâvâtî, written for Husain Shah Sharqi in 1503. But from the late seventeenth century until the present day, scholars and musicians have overwhelmingly associated Husain Shah Sharqi with the invention of khayâl.

This perceived connection certainly reflects a prominent tradition in the primary literature. However, in the earliest references to Husain Shah Sharqi in the Indo-Persian treatises, he is not associated with khayâl, but with a now obsolete genre called cutkulâ. Cutkulâ appears originally to have been an important genre possibly related to dhrupad. It is mentioned in a seventeenth-century Sanskrit treatise, the Saṅgītanārāyana, as “a form of dhruvapadā with only two verses rhyming AABB, one of two types of dhruvapadā (Saṅgītanārāyana 1987: vol. i, 150). The earliest Mughal descriptions of cutkulâ and khayâl, in the Â’in-i Akbari of 1593 and the Pâdishâhnâma of 1637 respectively, suggest that cutkulâ was originally distinct from khayâl. While Abul Fazl does not mention Husain Shah Sharqi by name, he does note that a genre called cutkulâ was indigenous to Jaunpur (Â’in-i Akbarî 1873-94: 266). Khayâl however is absent from his text. Lahawri on the other hand mentions only khayâl, situating it firmly within the traditions of Amir Khusrau (Pâdishâhnâma 1867-8: vol. ii, 5). This would seem to indicate that before 1637 khayâl and cutkulâ were considered to be separate genres, cutkulâ being the older of the two. Cutkulâ was first ascribed explicitly to Husain Shah Sharqi in c.1660 by the anonymous author of the British Library Mîrzânâma, who called it “a perfect work of art” (Mîrzânâma 1975: 101). In 1666, Faqirullah expanded on Abul Fazl’s description, explaining that cutkulâ was a genre:

sung in Jaunpur, with two [verses (miṣra’)]28; [these] do not rhyme, and the Paran climaxes itself on reaching back to the [first verse]. The sentiments of love and the ideas of love-making (‘ishq and ‘āshiqi), [the grief of separation (firāq)], . . . and some aspects of eulogy and praise, form its regular theme. . . The author and the originator of this song-style has been Sultan Husain Sharqi. (Râg Darpan 1996: 101; my translation in square brackets)

---

27 2003: personal communication.
28 That Faqirullah means verse here is indicated by his previous description of dhrupad as consisting of four miṣra’ – udgrāha, melāpaka, dhrava and âbhoga; see Râg Darpan 1996: 96-7.
This description of cutkulā bears a significant resemblance to Faqirullah’s later description of khayāl as a two-verse song on the subject of love (‘ishq and ‘āshiqī) (Rāg Darpan 1996: 111-3). Faqirullah nevertheless seems to suggest here that the two genres were still considered distinct from one another, cutkulā belonging to Husain Shah Sharqi and Jaunpur, and khayāl to Amir Khusrau and Delhi (101). However, they are often paired together in the Rāg Darpan, and I would argue that Faqirullah’s overriding need to be faithful to the Ā’īn-i Akbarī’s structural precedent in this section misleadingly gives primacy to the supposed regional distinctiveness of the two genres. He thus masks what had become a more complicated situation.

The earliest manuscript to mention both genres, the British Library Mīrzānāma (c.1660), shows that the line between khayāl and cutkulā was already more blurred than Faqirullah suggests. Not only does the author state that the cutkulā of Husain Shah Sharqi and the styles associated with Amir Khusrau were both forms of khayāl, but he describes another, apparently unified style called “Khairābādī chutkula and khayāl” (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101; f.91a). Faqirullah himself lists an important musician of Shah Jahan’s reign, Shaikh Sher Muhammad, who was noted for reviving the “style (tarz) of Husain Shah Sharqi of singing cutkulā and khayāl (together)” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 192; my translation).

About ten years after the Rāg Darpan was written, Mirza Khan went even further in his seminal treatise the Tohfat al-Hind (V) (c.1675). Mirza Khan was the first Mughal writer to credit Husain Shah Sharqi rather than Amir Khusrau with khayāl’s invention:

Khayāl is an Arabic word, and in the vernacular language [Hindavi] the letter K is often used instead, giving Khayāl. It is in two tūks; its inventor was Sultan Husain Sharqi, the emperor of Jaunpur, and it is mostly (now) in the language of Khairābād. .. If it has one tuk it is called cutkulā. (Bod f.113b-4a)

This shows that by the late seventeenth century, not only were khayāl and cutkulā considered to belong to a single genre, but cutkulā had become subsumed under khayāl. Moreover, in the process khayāl had lost its connection to Amir Khusrau. This is supported by Sher Khan Lodi’s chronologically confused assessment of 1690:
Today, dhrupad is [the most] celebrated [form]. After [the period of Raja Man Singh Gwalior], Husain Shah Sharqi, the ruler of Jaunpur, took dhrupad, which contains four verses (mišrā’), and created [a form of] it in two verses. He also changed its musical style (āhang), making it more colourful, and named it khayāl and cutkulā. (Mir’āt al-Khayāl, f.140a)

The author of the undated Nishatārā, which was probably written c.1700, states unequivocally that “cutkulā, which is sung by the musicians of Jaunpur, is the same as khayāl” (Nishatārā, f.21a.). After this, cutkulā rapidly disappears from the Indo-Persian treatises, being mentioned rarely and only in passing in conjunction with khayāl.

It seems reasonable to suggest that Husain Shah Sharqi may have been involved in the development of cutkulā, given the consistency of his association with it in the Indo-Persian literature. However, contrary to popular tradition, it appears that Husain Shah Sharqi played no role in the invention of khayāl. Instead, his name only became associated with its creation after cutkulā had become so entangled with khayāl that they were considered to be the same genre. Neither Amir Khusrau nor Husain Shah Sharqi therefore were personally involved in the creation of khayāl. Rather, their musical legacies became implicated in a later period in facilitating khayāl’s emergence. The strong connection drawn between Husain Shah Sharqi and the invention of khayāl in the Indo-Persian texts thus raises more questions than it answers. How did a genre originally regarded as belonging to the traditions of Amir Khusrau become so closely identified with Husain Shah Sharqi within such a short period of time? Given that cutkulā appears to have been the older genre, how did it become subsumed by khayāl? How is it even possible that the two genres could have become so closely intertwined considering the enormous geographical distance that lies between Delhi and Jaunpur? The key to the mystery of the origins of khayāl lies in the cultural world of the performers who specialised in both genres during the Mughal period – the qawwāls and Sufis of Delhi.

29 The Muraqqa‘-i Dehlī (1993: 89) lists a solitary musician, Jani Hajjam, who sang khayāl and cutkulā (mistranscribed here as “jangla”). The Usūl-i Naqhmāt al-Âṣafī of 1793 is the last to list cutkulā amongst its musical genres, again only in passing. Willard’s reference to cutkulā in 1834 is copied directly from the
III
The qawwāls of Delhi and the ravish of Amir Khusrau

The eighteenth-century connection between the traditions of the qawwāls and khayāl becomes much clearer when we look at the context in which khayāl developed during the seventeenth century. By the end of the sixteenth century, according to Abul Fazl, the word qawwāl had taken on specific connotations, signifying not simply a kind of musician, but the genres he sang, his geographical origin, and his social milieu. Abul Fazl argues that the qawwāls belonged to a larger community of Hindustani musicians, the ḍhāḍhīs (Â‘īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 271-2). Given that the qawwāls of Delhi appeared in the literature centuries before the ḍhāḍhīs, this was arguably incorrect. Nevertheless, as I established in Chapter Four, there were connections between the two groups at this time. Faqirullah argued (perhaps spuriously) that the pivotal early khayāl singer, Shaikh Sher Muhammad, was a ḍhāḍhī; his most talented disciple was a qawwāl, Kabir (Rāg Darpan 1996: 193, 203).

Unlike the ḍhāḍhīs, however, the qawwāls specialised in the ravish – the style or genres – of Amir Khusrau, which was associated with the Delhi region (Â‘īn-i Akbarī 1873-94: 266, 271). At this time, the only genres Abul Fazl specified as belonging to the ravish of Amir Khusrau were qaul and tarāna. However, he also included Persian poetry in the repertoire of the qawwāls. Musically, Abul Fazl describes the ravish of Amir Khusrau as a synthesis of Indian and Persian styles. However, it appears that the song-texts sung by the Delhi qawwāls in 1593 were still primarily in Persian30 (Â‘īn-i Akbarī 1876-7: 139, 142).

Lahawri’s early seventeenth-century description of the genres belonging to the ravish of Amir Khusrau confirms Abul Fazl’s report. However, Lahawri increased their number to four. Abul Fazl’s “Persian poetry” probably describes the same genre Lahawri names here as fārsī; Faqirullah later defines fārsī as “several couplets (bait) of a ghazal or qaṣīda composed

seventeenth-century Toḥfat al-Hind (V), and is therefore unlikely to relate to contemporary performance practice (Willard 1882: 102; cf. Toḥfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.113b-4a).
30 Abul Fazl states that Amir Khusrau created qaul and tarāna in conjunction with his hamzabānī Samit and Tatar, hamzabānī meaning “of the same language”. Neither name is of Indian origin; Šāmit is a Persian word meaning “silent” or “dumb”, and Tatar denotes the Central Asian Turkic-speaking Tartar tribe. Amir Khusrau himself belonged to the Hazara, a Turkic-speaking Shi’ite Afghan tribe (Pādishāhānāma 1867-8: vol. ii, 5). Their common language was most probably Persian.
in a rhythmic cycle” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 114, my translation). Strikingly, however, for the first time Lahawri also lists a genre in the Hindustani language:

Amir Khusrau Hazāra-nizhād\(^{31}\), who was the disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin [Auliya of Delhi], created four genres of song:

1) **Qaul**, which consists of ḡūṭ (played) with the qānūn. It is in Arabic or Persian, is either rhymed or unrhymed, and is composed in one tāla, or two, three or (even) four.

2) **Fārsī**, which are Persian poems (ashʿār) combined with tarāna and brought together in a single tāla.

3) **Tarāna**, which has no poetical text [i.e. no words] and is performed in one tāla.

4) The fourth is a musical composition (taṣnīf) which is performed in the Hindustani language. It is called khayāl and the like. Khayāl was also (created and) sung a little time before the Amir. (Pādīshāhnāma 1867-8: 5-6)

Lahawri’s insertion of khayāl into the ravish of Amir Khusrau is highly significant. From its first description in the Indo-Persian literature, it is evident that khayāl was rooted firmly in the repertoire and stylistic universe of the qawwāls. Faqirullah’s description of the ravish of Amir Khusrau in 1666 is even more revealing, because it is a conscious expansion of Abul Fazl’s original text. Alongside qaul and tarāna, Faqirullah includes khayāl, naqsh, nigār, basī, tillallāna [sic], fārsī, fard, and sohila, which Abul Fazl had earlier described as a speciality of the ḍhāḍhi women (Rāg Darpan 1996: 101, 115). His transformation of Abul Fazl’s text is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates again that khayāl was firmly part of the repertoire of Amir Khusrau’s musical heirs. More importantly, however, it confirms the implication of Lahawri’s account that khayāl first appeared at the Mughal court between 1593 and 1637.

The link between khayāl and the qawwāls was maintained over the course of the seventeenth century, even after the genre’s connection to Amir Khusrau had been forgotten. This is most clearly demonstrated in Mirza Khan’s hierarchical (and overdetermined) arrangement of the main classes of male musicians. Mirza Khan placed all living performers into the second-highest category, below the nāyaka, as:

\(^{31}\) Of Hazara descent
those who have (mastered) practice without (understanding) theory. They are of two types: 1) Those who perform both mārga and desi rāgas (that is, ancient and modern), who are called gandharps; and 2) those who know only desi rāgas, who are called gunkařs. Gandharps and gunkařs who excel in the singing of dhrupad, etc, are called kalāwants. If they excel in the singing of qaul, tarāna, and khayāl, etc, they are called qawwāls. Those who excel in the singing of kaṭkā [kaṛkhā], etc, are called ḍhāḍhīs. (Tohfat al-Hind (V), Bod f.115b)

It seems that at the time Mirza Khan was writing, the qawwāls were regarded as master musicians of high prestige, almost on a par with the traditional exponents of dhrupad, the kalāwants. This conclusion is supported by writers of historical chronicles in this period, who used the phrase “kalāwants and qawwāls” as a conventional shorthand for performers of high art music in general (e.g. Muntakḥab al-Lubāb 1977: 245). However, what is more important about this passage is that for the first time the qawwāls were defined by the fact that they specialised in khayāl.

As Lahawri’s description indicates, khayāl was correspondingly defined by a stylistic affinity with the rest of the qawwāls’ repertoire. Lahawri’s fārsi, for example, must have been stylistically compatible with tarāna. Another early reference to khayāl suggests that fārsi and khayāl were also similar, to the extent that the only difference between them may have been in the language of their texts. In the Kitāb-i Chishtiyya (1655/6) Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi defines a genre, possibly called rekhta, as “every fārsi, fārsi being similar to/consonant with Indian khayāl, in which one sets the words of both languages [Hindavi and Persian] to a rāga and tāla” (Kitāb-i Chishtiyya, in Faqirullah 1996: xxxii). It is possible, as Sarmadee suggests, that Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi is using the word khayāl here in its generic sense, thus meaning “fārsi is in accordance with Indian thought/aesthetics.” However, Sarmadee was unaware that Lahawri defined both fārsi and khayāl as musical genres decades prior to the completion of the Kitāb-i Chishtiyya. Moreover, as we shall see, Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi was fully conversant with khayāl as a musical genre. Thus he is most probably using khayāl here in its more specific sense. Indeed, by the end of the century Ras Baras Khan Kalawant listed fārsi as a type of khayāl (Shams al-Aswāt, f.34a). It is therefore likely that the four genres Lahawri lists as having been “created” by Amir Khusrau,
fārsī, khayāl, tarāna and qaʿl, shared a distinctive style. Furthermore, in what may be the earliest use of the word qawwālī to describe a particular musical style, the Nishaṭārā draws a direct connection between the style of the genres belonging to Amir Khusrau and khayāl singing. Despite assigning the invention of khayāl to Husain Shah Sharqi, and drawing attention to its equivalence with cutkulā, the author states that “nevertheless, the raviṣh of khayāl singing comes from qawwālī. . . The ādāb of qawwālī were established by Amir Khusrau Dehlavi. . . [and] qawwālī [style] is derived from tarāna” (Nishaṭārā, f.21a-b). Thus it is clear that from its first appearances in the Mughal literature around 1637, khayāl was considered an integral part of the repertoire of the qawwāls of Delhi. By the late seventeenth century, the qawwāls were classified as khayāl specialists. Khayāl shared with the other genres of the qawwāls’ repertoire a distinctive musical style, the “raviṣh of Amir Khusrau”, which came to be known in the early eighteenth century as qawwālī. Furthermore, if we define “classical” as a high-prestige court genre that utilises both rāga and tālā, khayāl patently qualifies. Far from being “non-classical”, khayāl used “mārga” and “deśī” rāgas, and tālā32, and its performers were awarded high prestige and patronised by the most important connoisseurs of the day (e.g. Risāla-i Ṣikr-i Mughanniyān-i Hindūstān 1961: 31). Although by the late seventeenth century khayāl was considered to be distinct from qawwālī proper (Shams al-Aswāt, f.34a), in one sense seventeenth-century khayāl was qawwālī, in that it was definitively “something belonging to the qawwāls”. Khayāl was not entirely exclusive to the qawwāls at this time. However the small number of other male musicians known to have performed khayāl in this period also belonged to a Sufi context33. The Indo-Persian sources conclusively demonstrate that the qawwāls were the primary exponents of khayāl throughout the seventeenth century. Thus the eighteenth-century connection between khayāl and the qawwāls of Delhi becomes self-evident.

32 Mirza Khan’s reference to gandharps who know both mārga and deśī rāgas, etc., derives originally from the Saṅghitaratnākara, and should not be read literally as a statement of fact. It does however suggest that khayāl was considered suitable for the performance of more serious rāgas at this time. What is more interesting about this passage is that it represents an Indo-Persian attempt to reconcile the traditional but obsolete categories of the Saṅghitaratnākara with the current categories of musician at the Mughal court.
The Sufi musicians of Delhi and the music of Jaunpur

The evidence is overwhelming that sometime during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, khayāl emerged in the region of Delhi as part of the ravish of Amir Khusrau. It is probable that khayāl derived some of its distinctive stylistic features from older genres belonging to the same tradition, namely qaul, tarāna, and fārsī. However, this still does not explain how cutkulā came to be implicated in the development of khayāl. An important clue is found in the Ā’in-i Akbarī. It appears that the qawwāls of sixteenth-century Delhi specialised in another style apart from the ravish of Amir Khusrau – that of Jaunpur. In other words, they performed cutkulā as well as qaul and tarāna (Ā’in-i Akbarī 1876-7: 142). I would therefore propose that khayāl developed in this period from the adaptation of the regional-language genre cutkulā to the stylistic traditions of Amir Khusrau. This would explain the significant similarities of form and subject matter between seventeenth-century cutkulā and khayāl. It would also explain why cutkulā briefly coexisted in the mid seventeenth-century literature as a species of khayāl and as an independent genre. Because khayāl grew out of cutkulā, the seventeenth-century rise of khayāl arguably led directly to the eclipse and eventual assimilation of the older genre apparent in the Indo-Persian literature. It can be assumed that the qawwāls continued to perform cutkulā in the late seventeenth century, given that cutkulā was by this time a variant of khayāl. Intriguingly, however, the only individual musicians noted as having specialised in cutkulā during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb were ‘Idul Singh and Shaikh Sher Muhammad. Neither of them were qawwāls, both were noted khayāl performers, and both were Sufi initiates with distant links to Jaunpur (Rāḡ Darpan 1996: 191-5, 203). It is in Faqirullah’s biography of Shaikh Sher Muhammad that the first clue linking together the regions of Jaunpur and Delhi first emerges.

33 The only singer whose background is uncertain is Sayyid Khan Nohar, son of Akbar’s musician Sujan Khan Nohar (Sarmadee incorrectly transliterates his name “Sultan Khan”) (Rāḡ Darpan 1996: 205).
34 ‘Idul Singh’s father, Raja Roz-Afzun, was both hereditary ruler and Mughal governor of Kharagpur, which adjoined the eastern border of Jaunpur. Raja Roz-Afzun apparently embraced Islam under Jahangir (Maʿāṣir al-Umārī’ 1999: vol. ii, 609). ‘Idul Singh clearly practised his art in a Sufi context, specialising in the ‘ilm of Husain Shah Sharqi and Amir Khusrau, particularly khayāl and tarāna (Rāḡ Darpan 1996, 204).
Shaikh Sher Muhammad was the most prominent *khayāl* singer and composer of the seventeenth century, innovating his own style of *khayāl* which was highly regarded, but somewhat controversial because of its departure from Delhi tradition (*Mīrzanāma* 1975: 101). From an early age, Shaikh Sher Muhammad was a disciple of the Chishti Shaikhs of Barnawa, a village east of Delhi, and later spent much of his life as a *derwīsh*. His dates are uncertain, but Faqirullah states that he died in his fifties before the *Rāg Darpan* was completed in 1666. According to the less reliable *Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughānīyān-i Hindūstān*, he was still alive when Aurangzeb came to power in 1658 (1961: 27). As Faqirullah met him, it is reasonable to assume that Shaikh Sher Muhammad was born after 1600, and that the height of his career coincided with the reign of Shah Jahan (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 191-3). According to the *Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughānīyān-i Hindūstān*, his patron was Aurangzeb’s brother and Shah Jahan’s heir designate Dara Shikoh (1961: 27).

As a musical innovator Shaikh Sher Muhammad was clearly influential. Faqirullah described his musical style as:

unique. In fact, it was superb; and he was himself conscious of it. . . . he sang [cutkulā and *khayāl*] with a fineness and perfection, beyond which it cannot even be imagined. In *Chautuklah* and *Khayāl*, his compositions are many – all of very high order. (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 193)

He also composed *dhūrupad* and *tarāna* (193). A number of his disciples and family members are listed in the Indo-Persian sources as having been singers of note during the seventeenth century, including his brother Puja (or Yuha), his grandson Shaikh Moinuddin, and Kabir Qawwal. His *khayāl* style was so distinctive that the author of the British Library *Mīrzanāma* differentiated “the *khayāl* of Shaykh Shēr Muhammad Hindi” from two other types of *khayāl* apparently prevalent at the beginning of Aurangzeb’s reign, the *khayāl* of Amir Khusrau, which he regarded as the most prestigious form, and Khairabadi *khayāl*. The latter he castigated as vulgar, and it may have been performed by lower-prestige female

---

35 Just west of the main road between modern-day Kirana and Meerut, closer to Meerut than Kirana.
singers. The unique style of Shaikh Sher Muhammad held an ambiguous position for the connoisseur. The true mîrzâ was abjured to abstain from listening to it, on the grounds that although it was a “perfect work of art”, his khayâl could “be sung well by very few singers; also, because of unjustified interpolations [it is] not what [it] used to be” (Mîrzânâma 1975: 101). It seems the controversy over Shaikh Sher Muhammad’s style mainly derived from the fact that “in the technique and procedure of singing . . . the Sheikh had perfected some innovations – not at all on the orthodox lines”. In their departure from Delhi tradition, it seems it was his personal idiosyncrasies that caused his style to be regarded with ambivalence, although Faqirullah stresses that “all of these [innovations] have been so gracefully done” (Râg Darpan 1996: 193).

However, Shaikh Sher Muhammad’s khayâl style appears to have been considered distinctive for another, less unorthodox reason. As we have already seen, it was he who supposedly revived the “style (tarz) of Husain Shah Sharqi of singing cutkulâ and khayâl (together)” (192; my translation). It is unclear what Faqirullah means by this. Sarmadee speculates in his translation that he was referring to some kind of combined genre, although this idea is not overt in the original. It is more likely to mean simply that Shaikh Sher Muhammad performed khayâl in the “style of Husain Shah Sharqi”, which must have referred to cutkulâ style. This seems to be borne out by Faqirullah, who compares the musical styles of the two figures, drawing attention to their relationship by distinguishing the one area in which they allegedly diverged:

In the singing of melody (naghma), Sultan Sharqi was superior to the Shaikh in a number of particulars. However, the quality of pathos (dard) which the Shaikh expressed in his singing was (unique to him; it was) unknown in the singing of Sultan Sharqi. (Râg Darpan 192; my translation)

---

37 The British Library Mîrzânâma castigates mîrzâs who patronise “Khayrâbâdi khayâl and chutkula and dholak and khanjarî” (1975: 101). As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, dholak and khanjarî were played primarily by male dhâdhis to accompany their female counterparts. The Caurâsi vaishnavan kî vârti indicates that female singers did perform khayâl in this period (Singh 1970: 95). It may therefore be that Khairabadi khayâl was sung by female dhâdhis or by courtesans, although this is not clear.
Thus it seems that Shaikh Sher Muhammad’s khayāl style was distinguished from other early khayāl styles not just by its author’s personal idiosyncrasies, but in its adherence to the supposed style of Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur.

Given that the predominant style of khayāl in Shah Jahan’s reign was associated with Amir Khusrau, Shaikh Sher Muhammad’s reintroduction of what seems to have been regarded as an older khayāl style more closely related to cutkulā is significant. By 1637 a khayāl style considered intrinsic to the ravish of Amir Khusrau must already have been in existence for some time (Pādīshāhnāma 1876-7: 5-6). Thus, the “revival” of a cutkulā-style khayāl by the “outsider” Shaikh Sher Muhammad makes it likely that his khayāl originated outside the traditions most closely associated with Amir Khusrau in Delhi, most probably within a Sufi tradition with significant links to Jaunpur. Furthermore, Shaikh Sher Muhammad is the earliest singer of khayāl to be mentioned in the Indo-Persian sources, and he was musically active during the period in which khayāl first appeared at the Mughal court, between 1593 and 1637. This raises the possibility that the cutkulā-style khayāl in which he specialised is the earliest form of khayāl mentioned in the Indo-Persian corpus. If the khayāl that appears in 1637 as part of the ravish of Amir Khusrau really did grow out of cutkulā, it is likely that the cutkulā-style khayāl represented by Shaikh Sher Muhammad was the prototype for Khusravi khayāl. Indeed, a garbled memory of an external origin for Khusravi khayāl may be preserved in Lahawri’s anachronistic belief that it was “(created and) sung a little time before the Amir” (Pādīshāhnāma 1867-8: 6). Was Shaikh Sher Muhammad therefore responsible for introducing khayāl to the qawwāls of Delhi? Although he is known to have had a number of disciples amongst the qawwāls, this is unlikely. Extrapolating from Lahawri, khayāl probably entered the qawwāls’ repertoire before Shaikh Sher Muhammad reached adulthood. Instead, this cutkulā-style of khayāl arguably became known to the qawwāls of Delhi at an earlier stage. Shaikh Sher Muhammad’s unfashionable preservation of this style suggests that khayāl was first developed by an earlier member of his tradition.

38 So much so that by the eighteenth century, he was believed to have been a qawwāl (Risāla-i Zikr-i Mughanniyyān-i Hindūstān 1961: 27).
Indeed, it is in his musical and spiritual genealogy that the connection between Delhi and Jaunpur is finally exposed.

**Khayāl, the Shaikhs of Barnawa, and the Delhi-Jaunpur nexus**

As a Sufi mendicant, Shaikh Sher Muhammad travelled extensively to numerous centres of Sufi pilgrimage during his lifetime, eventually dying in Patna (Rāg Darpan 1996: 191-3). It is therefore almost certain that he visited Jaunpur. By the early seventeenth century Jaunpur was one of the most significant Sufi centres in the whole of North India (Rizvi 1978: 260; 1983: 232). Throughout the Mughal and Sultanate periods it was a crucial site on the Sufi pilgrimage routes running from South East Asia through North India and the Deccan, Central Asia, and Persia, to the Middle East and North Africa (vol. ii, 152). Pilgrimage was central to the lives of members of all the Sufi orders in India. This was also true of the qawwāls who provided the music for the Sufi majlis, who travelled along the pilgrimage routes either with the Sufis who employed them, or independently. It is arguably through these links that various musical styles associated with Sufism moved from one geographical area to another. It is one obvious route by which cutkulā could have moved from Jaunpur to Delhi, and qaul and tarāna in the opposite direction. Jaunpur was most importantly a Chishti centre (Rizvi 1978: 261), the order to which both Shaikh Sher Muhammad and the qawwāls of Hazrat Nizamuddin belonged, and within which the practise of samā’ was most highly developed. The Chishti silsilas of Jaunpur seem to have had particularly significant connections with Delhi, in which lies one of the two most important Chishti centres in India, the dargāh of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. It is possible that Shaikh Sher Muhammad learnt the cutkulā-style khayāl for which he was renowned directly from a Jaunpuri tradition. However, it is almost certain that he derived it instead from his pīr, the great musician and Sufi, Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi (Rāg Darpan 1996: 191).

The biography of Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi takes pride of place in Faqirullah’s tazkira of musicians, and it is apparent that Faqirullah considered him the greatest musician of his generation. Considering he was a contemporary of the considerably more famous

---

39 Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, for example, legendarily heard of the great Sufi ascetic who was to become his pīr, Baba Farid, from an itinerant qawwāl (Rizvi 1978: 155; Ernst and Lawrence 2002: 66).

40 For examples, see Rizvi 1978: 261; 1983: 265.
Tansen, this is quite striking. In Faqirullah’s version, Shaikh Bahauddin materialises from nowhere as one who was supposedly “noble-born, but renounced the world when only twenty-five” to become a *dervish*. Writing almost forty years after his death in 1628-9, Faqirullah states that:

> In Mārga music, there has been no one like him even in the part of the country called Deccan. So many... compositions (*tasānīf*) in the form of *Gīta, Dhrupada, Khayāl, Tarānah* today are from him. These are really good. [The singing of] Chautuklā he did consider to be the most difficult of the song-forms [to perform]. Rabāb (or Rubāb), Bīn and Amirtī, he handled specially well; [he] also invented an instrument (*sāz*) by the name of *Khayāl*, in shape quite uncommon, although of the stringed variety. (*Rāg Darpan* 1996: 187-91)

Thus it seems Shaikh Bahauddin was remembered as a notable *khayāl* composer in the mid seventeenth century, one whose compositions were apparently still in circulation.

Faqirullah’s account of his life is, however, rather garbled. This is certainly so in relation to *khayāl*, which is here described confusingly as both a musical genre, and a strange new instrument. Fortunately, a more reliable account of his life exists, which confirms Faqirullah’s claim that Shaikh Bahauddin was connected with *khayāl*. It forms part of a seventeenth-century hagiography of Chishti Sufis who lived between Shikohabad and Jaunpur, and it was written by Shaikh Bahauddin’s son, Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi (Rizvi 1983: 279).

Shaikh Alauddin Muhammad Chishti of Barnawa wrote his *Chishtīyya-i Bihishtīyya* in 1655-641. It is the same work Sarmadee calls the *Kitāb-i Chishtīyya* (see above).

Although I have been unable to consult this important manuscript, S A A Rizvi extensively paraphrases it in his *History of Sufism in India* (1978)42. According to Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi, Shaikh Bahauddin was the head of an important Chishti *sīlsila* in the village of Barnawa east of Delhi, which traced its spiritual lineage back to Hazrat Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli (d.1356). Appointed successor to his grandfather Fariduddin in 1579, Shaikh Bahauddin became a mendicant, dedicating “the rest of his life to travel and the study of

\---

41 This is the date given in Storey’s exhaustive catalogue of Indo-Persian manuscripts, which states that it was completed in 1066 AH (1655-6). Rizvi’s dating of 1076 AH (1665-6) is incorrect.

42 Unless otherwise stated, all references to the biographies of the Shaikhs of Barnawa in this section are taken from Rizvi 1983: 275-9.
music”. Travelling between Barnawa and such important Chishti centres as Delhi, Lahore, the Deccan, Jaunpur and Bengal, he was constantly accompanied by “a group of expert musicians, both singers and players. . . [who] were always on hand to accept whatever futuh (gifts) he received”. His khāngāh in Barnawa seems to have been a magnet for visiting Hindu and Muslim musicians, especially from the nearby Mughal court and the Deccan. These included Nayak Harkaran, Nayak Harnath, Nayak Chirju, Nayak Sahun, Allah Dad (Ilahdad) Rababi, Sudhar Rababi, Bazu Rababi, Bhagwan Rababi, Parbin Khan Binkar, Karbin Khan, and Nilkanth. Shaikh Bahauddin’s connection with the Mughal court was strengthened by friendships with several noblemen of Akbar and Jahangir’s reigns, including the powerful Khan-i Khanan ‘Abdur Rahim and Akbar’s intimate companion Shaikh Farid Bukhari (not to be confused with Shaikh Farid Bhakkari). Shaikh Bahauddin also had warm relationships with Vaishnavite devotional sects, and was especially close to the vairāgī Das Ghanun, the guru of several Rajput nobles at the Mughal court, with whom he had a mutually inspirational friendship.

According to his biographer, as a musician the Shaikh was renowned for his jikrīs (zikrs), his “enthusiasm” for “the innovations of Amir Khusraw”, and his invention of new, classical-style melodies for the vishnūpads of Kabir and Sur Das. Importantly, he was also noted for “combin[ing] the style of Amir Khusraw with the old classical Indian tunes” in his jikrī compositions. Moreover, his son states that one of “the Shaikh’s talents was writing verses in Hindi and composing accompaniments [to them which] were used by Hindus and Muslims alike to invoke the favour of deceased sufis”. Rizvi does not explicitly state that Shaikh Bahauddin composed or performed khayāl or cutkulā. In addition, Shaikh Alauddin refutes Faqirullah’s claim that he composed dhrupad, arguing that “the Shaikh considered the dhurpad [sic] of Raja Man Singh of Gwalior. . . to be a retrograde step in the history of Indian music”. Nevertheless, in his description of the strange instrument Faqirullah referred to as “an instrument named khayāl” (khayāl nām-i sāzī) (Rāg Darpan 1996: 190)43, Shaikh Alauddin arguably does confirm that Shaikh Bahauddin was connected with the vocal genre khayāl. According to Shaikh Alauddin, his father did not name his invention khayāl, but sāz-

43 According to Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi, the instrument in question was designed “in the shape of an inkwell (qalamdan) which opened to reveal a series of strings and pegs”.
Khayal. In other words, according to Rizvi, it was an “instrument [used] to play khayal . . . a form of vocal music”.

Shaikh Alauddin Barnawi was intimately acquainted with Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi as his son and disciple, and must have known his famous fellow disciple Shaikh Sher Muhammad. In his discussion of rekhta (see above), he describes what is therefore almost certainly the vocal genre khayal. Compositions attributed to Shaikh Bahauddin were still current at the time Faqirullah was writing. In addition, Shaikh Sher Muhammad was himself Shaikh Bahauddin’s most prominent musical disciple. Given this, it is most likely that Shaikh Sher Muhammad inherited his distinctive style of khayal from Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi.

Moreover, Shaikh Bahauddin’s genealogy confirms that he probably also had contact with cutkula, which he allegedly considered “the most difficult of [all] the song forms” (Rāg Darpan 1996: 191). The Shaikhs of Barnawa were long-standing patrons of classical music, and they also had a significant connection with Jaunpur. The first Shaikh of Barnawa to be remembered for his patronage of music was Shaikh Bahauddin’s great-great-grandfather, Shaikh Pir Buddhan (d.1498). According to Rizvi, he was a particular enthusiast of the qaul and tarāna of Amir Khusrau. In addition:

Hindu musicians from as far as the Deccan would call on him, finding in him a great connoisseur and admirer of classical Indian music. The Shaikh’s fame soon turned Rapri into an important centre for both Persian and Indian music. The Shaikh was successful in persuading a group of musicians (known as Chokh) from the Deccan to settle in Rapri, some of whom later even embraced Islam.

Shaikh Pir Buddhan’s primary significance in the history of Indian classical music, however, was that he was the pir of Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur. An Indo-Persian text written for Jahangir, the Gulzār-i Abrār, recalls famous musical contests between the Sultan and the Shaikh (Saeed 1972: 205). Whatever the veracity of such stories, it seems likely that Husain Shah Sharqi would have introduced cutkula to his spiritual master and fellow connoisseur. Shaikh Pir Buddhan’s son, Shaikh Badruddin Sani (d.1543), inherited his father’s passion for music. His samā‘ gatherings were famous for bringing together Indian
classical music and the qaul and tarāna of Amir Khusrau to induce devotional ecstasy, which proved highly popular. His successor Fariduddin was also a noted connoisseur of classical music, and it was from his grandfather Fariduddin that Shaikh Bahauddin succeeded to the leadership of his silsila in 1579.

Thus all the evidence suggests khayāl first developed within the musical environment fostered by the Shaikhs of Barnawa. Analysing the earliest Indo-Persian references to khayāl and its immediate social context, I have argued that khayāl must have originated in the Delhi area from the adaptation of the regional-language genre cutkulā to the stylistic traditions (the ravish) of Amir Khusrau. Given its long-standing association with the qawwāls I have also argued that khayāl developed within a Sufi, and more specifically Chishti, context. The Shaikhs of Barnawa were an important Chishti Sufi lineage based in the Delhi region, with genealogical links to the two greatest Chishti saints of Delhi, Hazrat Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli (d.1356), and his pīr Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (d.1325). They are known to have incorporated Amir Khusrau’s musical traditions, particularly qaul and tarāna, into their sama’ gatherings, and thus incidentally must have employed qawwāls in their khānqāh. Moreover, the Shaikhs fostered a significant musical and spiritual environment in which the genres of Amir Khusrau mingled with Indian classical genres in the context of Sufi devotionalism. This devotionalism was an inclusive one that seems to have attracted as many Hindus as Muslims; the first Shaikh of Barnawa was known as Shaikh Atit Turk Jogi, the “Wandering Turk Yogi” (Rizvi 1983: 276), and his descendent Shaikh Bahauddin was renowned for his relationships with Vaishnavite sects. Prominent amongst the classical genres incorporated into their sama’ gatherings was the Vaishnavite genre vishnūpad. However, it is likely that their assemblies also included cutkulā: the great-great-grandfather of the first known composer of khayāl was the pīr of cutkulā’s probable founder, Husain Shah Sharqi. The two earliest composers of khayāl named in the Indo-Persian texts were representatives of the Barnawi tradition, and their khayāl style was regarded as more closely related to cutkulā than was the style of the qawwāls of Delhi. The earliest known composer of khayāl was a Shaikh of Barnawa himself.

44 Shaikh Pir Buddhan’s father Shaikh Nasiruddin migrated to Shaikhupura Rapri, also east of Delhi, in the late fourteenth century, and Shaikh Pir Buddhan returned to Barnawa at the end of the fifteenth century.
It is possible that it was the qawwāls attached to the Shaikhs of Barnawa who first developed khayāl. However, if a single figure was responsible for its creation, the most likely candidate would be Shaikh Bahauddin. I have argued that khayāl probably emerged around 1593, appearing as a staple of the repertoire of the qawwāls of Delhi by 1637. Shaikh Bahauddin’s active career from his succession in 1579 until his death in 1628-9 coincides exactly with this period. He is the only one of the Shaikhs of Barnawa to be remembered as an outstanding Hindustani musician in his own right, rather than simply a connoisseur. Unusually he was also regarded as a musical innovator. Cutkulā, qaul, and tarāna had long been established in his tradition via earlier movements of genres between Delhi and Jaunpur along the Sufi pilgrimage routes. Shaikh Bahauddin is known to have combined the ravish of Amir Khusrau with Indian classical genres in his musical compositions. He is also known to have composed in the Hindustani language for a Sufi context that appealed to both Hindus and Muslims. Moreover, his residence near Delhi, his contact with visiting Muslim musicians, and his pilgrimages to Sufi sites in Delhi, undoubtedly including the most famous of them all, the dārgāh of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, all suggest he would have had ample contact with the qawwāls of Delhi. It is also possible that khayāl entered the repertoire of the Delhi qawwāls via the qawwāls who served Shaikh Bahauddin, as both groups continued to exchange their musical traditions along the well-worn pilgrimage routes. Given that Shaikh Bahauddin’s khayāl was already a hybrid involving elements previously borrowed from the Dehlavi qawwāls, it is unsurprising that they so rapidly incorporated khayāl into their specialised repertoire.

IV

The two definitions of seventeenth-century khayāl

What then were the characteristics of khayāl as it became established in the repertoire of the qawwāls of Delhi in the seventeenth century? To answer this we have first to confront a major problem of terminology, which first surfaces c.1660 in the British Library Mīrzānāma. I have already noted that its author lists several varieties of khayāl, including the “cutkulā of Shāh Husayn Jaunpūrī” as one of those varieties. This cannot be explained as a reference to the older style of khayāl, because he also lists the khayāl style of Shaikh Sher Muhammad
alongside it. Furthermore, in the first known reference to this Punjabi genre in the Indo-Persian literature, the author includes “the tappa of Shaykh Husayn Faqir” as a variety of khayāl. Still more confusingly, he opens his lecture on the kinds of khayāl a mīrzā should prefer with the statement “If he likes the khayāl, he should appreciate [first and foremost] the qaul of Amir Khusrau and the heart-consuming tarāna in his style” (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101; f. 91a.). It is possible that the author of the Mīrzānāma didn’t quite understand what constituted khayāl. On the basis of Lahawri’s definition he does seem to have misunderstood the nature of qaul and tarāna. However, the Tohfat al-Hind (V) confirms that tappa was considered a variety of khayāl during this period, and Mirza Khan includes yet another genre in the Purbi language under this rubric called pūrbi ot pūrī (Bod f.113b). By 1698, Ras Baras Khan Kalawant lists seventeen different varieties of khayāl, including fārsī, a folk genre called janglī, and Arabic qaul.

I have thus far chosen, for the sake of focussing on the problem of origins more narrowly, to define seventeenth-century khayāl as a genre of the Delhi region arising from a synthesis of cutkulā and the stylistic traditions of Amir Khusrau. However, this definition is clearly inadequate. In what ways then did these other genres qualify as khayāl? Three treatises, the Rāg Darpan and two later treatises based on it, the Nishatārā and the Maʿrifat al-Arwāḥ, provide descriptions of some of the genres listed as varieties of khayāl. A comparison of these genres shows that they share a number of similarities. Faqirullah describes Khusravi khayāl as a two-verse (and sometimes four-verse) genre in the desi language of Delhi on the subject of love (‘ishq and ‘ašiqī). His definition of cutkulā is very similar: a two-verse Jaunpuri genre on the subject of love (‘ishq and ‘ašiqī), the grief of separation (fīrāq), and praise (sitā) (Rāg Darpan 1996: 100, 110-2). Tappa is defined as:

an exceptionally popular song-form of the Punjab; also composed in the language of the same region; comprising two to four [verses . . . rhymed AABB] . . . Its singular theme is the transitoriness of man’s physical existence and the life-generating power of love. (Rāg Darpan 1996: 119; my translation in square brackets)

45 Faqirullah also includes here what he calls “martial themes” (razmīya), but it is clear that the cutkulā exploring this subject is a slightly different genre, sādhara-cutkulā, presumably related to the sādhara performed by the qhāḍīhīs (Å’in-i Akbari 1873-94: 267, 271).
The *Ma’rifat al-Arwaḥ* provides an intriguing clue with respect to two further varieties of *khayāl*, which Ras Baras Khan calls Marwari *khayāl* and Lahori *khayāl*. Contrary to the *Rāg Darpan* upon which its descriptions are based, the *Ma’rifat al-Arwaḥ* defines *khayāl* as a two-, three- or four-verse genre on the subject of love sung in the Marwari language, and *cutkulā* as a four-verse genre on the subjects of love and the grief of separation sung in the language of Lahore and adjacent areas (*Ma’rifat al-Arwaḥ*, f.17a-b).

Thus it seems that the term *khayāl* could be used at this time in a wider sense, to refer to several different regional genres with shared characteristics: the use of local languages, a two- or four-verse format, and the theme of love and separation. Ras Baras Khan confirms this. In enumerating the desi genres performed with the eleven classical tālas, he lists his seventeen varieties of *khayāl* as “*khayāl* of every region (*khayāl*-i har mulk), that is to say Hindi *khayāl*, Gwaliori *khayāl*, Marwari *khayāl*, Purbi *khayāl* [etc.] . . .” (*Shams al-Aswāt*, f.35b). Indeed, when referring to *khayāl* he consistently uses this phrase, *khayāl*-i har mulk.

I would therefore argue that the earliest conceptions of *khayāl* encompass more than one regional genre. It is also possible to translate Lahawri’s description of *khayāl* as “*any musical composition which is performed in the Hindustani language. . . this is called *khayāl* and the like*” (*Paḍishāhnāma* 1876-7: 5-6).

The possible inclusion of several regional genres in the Khusravi style under the rubric *khayāl* highlights another similarity between the different types. Five varieties of *khayāl* are credited to the invention of named individuals – *cutkulā*, ṭappa, Arabic *qaul*, fārsī, and *khayāl*. These individuals were all known Sufis, more particularly those who had a deep interest in Hindavi devotional verse. Ṭappa for example was supposedly the creation of Shaikh Husain Faqir (*Mīrzānāma* 1975: 101), also known as Shaikh Husain Lahori (1539-99). Shaikh Husain was an important Qadiri Sufi who “enrolled a legion of disciples who became Qadiri ambassadors in all parts of the Panjab as well as elsewhere in India” (Rizvi

46 The regions Ras Baras Khan lists are Hindi, Gwaliori, Marwari, Purbi, Vilayati (i.e. Persia), Khairabadi, Bengali, Dakhni, Kanhri, Dipaki, Marathi, Lahori, Desi and Kashmiri. He also includes fārsī, which probably refers to the genre not the region, given that it appears between the genres Arabic *qaul* and *jangli*, and that he has already mentioned Vilayati *khayāl*. In addition, he indicates that his list is not exhaustive (*Shams al-Aswāt*, f.35a-6b).
Rizvi calls him “the most colourful of the Panjabi Sufis” (437), and although he does not name Shaikh Husain as the inventor of *tappa*, he is known to have been a singer and to have participated enthusiastically in Hindu festivals, particularly Holi and Basant (65). Shaikh Husain was renowned for his *kafi* compositions, verses in Punjabi and Sindhi that adopted tropes from Vaishnavite traditions and indigenous folk tales, and whose “dominant theme” was again “love together with the passions aroused” (48). It is also possible that the Bengali *khayal* Ras Baras Khan lists is the same genre as the *bangala* attributed to the Qalandari Sufi, Saiyid Murtaza of Murshidabad (1590-1662). Its subject matter, yet again, was love (‘ishq) (49). Like Shaikh Husain, Saiyid Murtaza had a significant interest in *bhakti* devotionalism, and is most famous for his work *Yoga Qalandar*, which applies yogic philosophy and practice to Sufi mystical techniques (Rizvi 1978: 352-3). Thus it is possible further to define seventeenth-century *khayal* in its wider sense as any regional-language genre, not necessarily on Islamic themes, that was primarily cultivated in the Sufi environment for devotional purposes. Shah Daniyal’s performance of *khayal* in the eighteenth century to inspire Sufi devotional ecstasy (*Muraqqa’-i Dehlī* 1993: 98) was therefore entirely in keeping with the genre’s original socio-religious context.

The use of regional-language genres whose themes were not explicitly Islamic as vehicles for ecstasy in the Sufi majlis was not at all unprecedented. Devotional practices and philosophical themes derived particularly from yoga and Vaishnavite *bhakti* had an enormous influence on Indian Sufism during the Sultanate and Mughal periods. In addition, the allegorical potentials of local literary traditions of courtly love were a significant inspiration to Indian Sufi writers. Both of these influences are beautifully manifested in an important Hindavi literary genre of the Sultanate period, the Sufi romance (50). From the thirteenth century onwards, as a result of significant interactions with local literary traditions and Vaishnavite practices, Hindavi devotional songs were welcomed into Sufi *samā‘*.

---

47 This is something of an understatement. Not only did he reputedly wander the streets of Lahore drunk, singing and dancing, but he had a celebrated homosexual relationship with his Brahman disciple Madhu Lal. Their story was immortalised by a close associate of Madhu Lal, Shaikh Mahmud, in the *Haqīqāt al-Fuqara* (1662) (Kugle and Behl 2001, 145-58).
50 See, for example, Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman’s recent English edition (2000) of Manjhan’s *Madhumalati* (1545).
gatherings as effective vehicles for Indian Muslim devotional expression. The Deccani Sufi Saiyid Gisudaraz (1321-1422) argued that:

> each language was endowed with a characteristic of its own and to him none was as effective as Hindawi for through it esoteric ideas could be so clearly expressed. Hindawi music, the Saiyid believed, was also subtle and elegant, penetrating deeply into the heart and arousing humility and gentleness. . . it was natural, to the Saiyid that Hindawi music was becoming increasingly popular [in the Sufi majlis]. (Rizvi 1978: 326-7)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the performance of Hindu devotional songs in Sufi samā’ gatherings was popular throughout North India. As the example of Shaikh Bahauddin shows, many Sufis were enamoured of the vishnūpad of Kabir and Sur Das; to them the Radha-Krishna lyrics of the latter were “a symbolic reference to divine love and Reality” (Rizvi 1978: 433). Moreover, if the qawwālī text I quoted at the head of this chapter possesses any historical veracity, it is possible that dhamar was incorporated into Sufi devotional practice. The dārgāh of Hazrat Nizamuddin continues to be renowned for its Basant celebrations, and the ‘urs celebrations at the shrine of Shaikh Husain in Lahore were “until the end of the nineteenth century an orgy of colour on the days of Holi” (vol. ii, 65). There is also evidence that dhrupad, another genre originally developed in Hindu devotional contexts, was performed as part of Sufi samā’ (vol. i, 359).

However, despite the similarity of performance context, purpose and content, vishnūpad, dhamar and dhrupad sung in the Sufi majlis were never considered to be khayāl. The presence of these genres in the majlis’ repertoire therefore begs the question: in what way was khayāl considered distinctive from other regional-language genres in the Sufi devotional repertoire? Lahawri’s positioning of khayāl “and the like” in the ravish of Amir Khusrau, his definition of fārsī as Persian poems plus tarāna, and the qaul-tarāna pairing – in Lahawri effectively gīt plus tarāna – suggest an answer. If, as Shaikh Alauddin suggests, fārsī and khayāl were closely related, it is likely that they were formed similarly. This is supported by the fact that by 1698 Ras Baras Khan considered fārsī to be a variety of khayāl. Lahawri defined fārsī as Persian poetry – Faqirullah’s ghazal and qaṣīda – combined with tarāna in a single tāla. I would therefore argue that khayāl was any song form in a regional
language, including “secular” love lyrics and Hindavi devotional verses, that was combined with tarāna in the Sufi majlis for the purpose of inspiring divine ecstasy, and was thus brought within the stylistic universe of the ravish of Amir Khusrau. Hence the main difference between the varieties of khayāl and other regional genres sung in the majlis was stylistic. This difference primarily inhered in the use of an essential technique associated with the ravish of Amir Khusrau, the incorporation of the nonsense syllables and fast dramatic flourishes of tarāna. Indeed, tarāna was precisely what the author of the Nishaṭārā thought constituted the stylistic essence of the ravish of Amir Khusrau, and it was this very style that he argued defined khayāl. Tarāna remained definitional to the khayāl performed by qawwāls well into the nineteenth century, as this statement from the Ma’dan al-Mūsīqī (1856-7) shows:

The singing of Khayāl has been prevalent among Qavvāls but they do not have Ālāp. Instead they begin with words of Tarānā that are in Persian and after exercising these words for some time they straight come to Khayāl, etc., and quickly create a highly colourful effect. So much so, that the people who practice Ālāp appear inferior before them. (in Powers and Katz 2001: 164)

Thus I would like to suggest two definitions for seventeenth-century khayāl. Firstly, khayāl was used in a generic sense to describe a number of similar regional genres, originally developed within a Sufi context to be sung in the samā’ gathering. These were all in regional languages, and the more prominent varieties were two- or four-verse forms on the themes of love and the grief of separation, probably including both Sufi and bhakti devotional texts as well as depictions of human love. The varieties of khayāl were considered to be related largely because of their adaptation to the stylistic tradition par excellence of Sufi devotional music, the ravish of Amir Khusrau. Some of these varieties such as jangī were undoubtedly folk genres, but others developed from “classical” genres like cutkulā. The more “classical” varieties of khayāl were considered of higher prestige at the Mughal court (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101), and the most prestigious of them all was the khayāl that had no other name, and was associated most closely with the heritage of Amir Khusrau. In this way the word khayāl secondarily came to refer in a specific sense to the most prestigious variety of “classical”
khayāl, which belonged to the repertoire of the qawwāls of Delhi. This genre originally developed in the Delhi region from a synthesis of the ravish of Amir Khusrau with the Jaunpuri genre cutkulā, a two-verse “classical” form possibly related to dhrupad, primarily on the themes of love, the grief of separation, and praise. It is this form that became the preeminent form of khayāl in North India by the end of the seventeenth century.

**Khayāl during the reign of Aurangzeb**

I will finally consider this variety of khayāl in more depth, because it was the khayāl that emerged in the ravish of Amir Khusrau in Delhi before 1637 that arguably metamorphosed into the khayāl we know today. Although Aurangzeb left Delhi in 1679, never to return, the imperial capital remained the most prestigious cultural centre in Mughal India throughout his reign (Chandra 1986: 206-7). One reason for the rise to preeminence of the khayāl belonging to the qawwāls of Delhi was undoubtedly their proximity to the Mughal court, and to the large number of nobles and members of the imperial household resident in Shahjahanabad throughout this period, many of whom were devotees of the major Chishti shrines (210). Nevertheless, according to Sher Khan Lodi, in 1690 dhrupad was still the preeminent form of vocal music (Mīr’āt al-Khayāl, f.140a). Faqirullah’s taṣkīra suggests that dhrupad’s hereditary specialists the kalawants similarly maintained their prestige as the leading class of living musicians during this time. This was probably still the case towards the end of Aurangzeb’s reign, when Ras Baras Khan Kalawant highlighted dhrupad’s prestige by listing it as a mārga genre, rather than the leading desī genre as it had previously been classified51.

However it is equally apparent from the Indo-Persian texts that by Baqir Khan’s death in 1637, khayāl was already the subject of significant patronage at the Mughal court. Khayāl may even have rivalled dhrupad in popularity, if not yet in prestige, by the beginning of Aurangzeb’s reign. The author of the British Library Mīrzānāma wastes considerably more ink comparing the merits of no fewer than five varieties of khayāl than he does pronouncing that a mīrzā should listen to the dhrupads of Tansen and Nayak Bakhshu (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101). The fact that he felt it necessary to dictate which kind of khayāl was most worthy of being listened to shows the extent of the genre’s popularity amongst the élite in c.1660.
Similarly, Faqirullah begins his tazkira with disproportionately lengthy biographies of Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi and Shaikh Sher Muhammad, and despite the preponderance of kalāwants in his tazkira lists equal numbers of individuals who were known respectively for their performance of dhrupad and khayāl. Finally Mirza Khan demonstrates the height of prestige to which khayāl had risen in Delhi by the late seventeenth century, by placing it immediately after dhrupad in his list of genres, and by classifying the qawwāls as gandharps and gunkārs just below the kalāwants (Tohfat al-Hind (V) Bod, f.113b, 115b). It may be that Ras Baras Khan’s elevation of dhrupad to mārga status in 1698 was actually indicative of its declining popularity in the face of khayāl’s increasing success (Widdess 1994: 95).

It is also clear that Khusravi khayāl was considered a “classical” genre of Hindustani music in the seventeenth century. The earliest reference to khayāl, in Shaikh Farid Bhakkari’s biography of Baqir Khan, equates khayāl with the high-prestige dhrupad, and states that both were in rāga (Zakahīrat al-Khavānīn 1970: vol.ii 345). With respect to tāla, Faqirullah’s definition of cutkulā is interesting, in that he describes something called the paran, which just before the completion of the second verse “climaxes itself” on returning to the first verse (Rāg Darpan 1996: 100). Sarmadee is mystified by this term, and speculates that it refers to the sam (Rāg Darpan 1996: 282 n.39). However, it is more likely to be referring to the theka or the rhythmic pattern of the tāla as a whole. According to Miner, commenting on the use of this term in the Ma’dān al-mūsiqi (1856-7), “paran. . . was a section of solo dhrupad-style playing [particularly on the rabāb] usually accompanied by pakhāvaj. It was the translation of complete pakhāvaj compositions onto the strings of the instrument. . . the instrumentalist began by stroking the rhythm of an appropriate tāla” (1993, 171). Both rabāb and pakhāvaj accompanied khayāl and cutkulā in the late seventeenth century. It is also worth noting that Husain Shah Sharqi legendarily created seventeen new rāgas, all of which are delineated in the Rāg Darpan (Rāg Darpan 1996: 63-5). Whether he did or not, this supports the idea that cutkulā, and therefore the khayāl that grew out of it,

---

[51] Shams al-Aswāt, f.35a-b; Rāg Darpan 1996: 97.
[52] See definition of “classical” above.
were serious rāga-based genres; Mirza Khan indicates in the *Toḥfat al-Hind* (V) that both mārga and desī rāgas were performed in khayāl style. Both Faqirullah and the author of the *Mīrzānāma* state that cutkulā and the khayāl of Shaikh Sher Muhammad were exceptionally difficult genres to master54. Finally, according to Ras Baras Khan khayāl was performed in all eleven tālas common to mārga and desī genres in current practice (*Shams al-Āswāʾ*, f.35b-6a). Khusravi khayāl in the seventeenth century was thus undoubtedly a “classical” genre of considerable and growing prestige throughout Aurangzeb’s reign.

Other than that it was a two- or four-verse “classical” genre on the subjects of love, the grief of separation, and praise, which was performed in devotional and courtly settings, it is difficult to know much for certain about the cutkulā-based khayāl indigenous to Delhi. It is not even clear in what language it was sung; Faqirullah suggests the desī language of Delhi, and Mirza Khan the “Khairabadi” language. Although desī may refer to a dialect of Delhi, it is possible that it refers to braj bhāṣā (Rāg Darpan 1996: xxviii-xxix). Khairabadi on the other hand does appear to have been a dialect of Delhi (Trivedi 2000: 288). However, given that Khairabadi khayāl was still considered separate to Khusravi khayāl in c.1660 (Mīrzānāma 1975: 101), Mirza Khan’s statement in c.1675 probably reflects an increasing appropriation of other varieties of khayāl into the Dehlavi qawwāls’ repertoire55. Both Ni‘mat Khan “Sadarang” and his nephew Firuz Khan “Adarang” composed khayāls in several languages including braj bhāṣā, Khairabadi, and interestingly Purbi (Trivedi 2000: 287). The latter arguably confirms that the main varieties of khayāl were indeed absorbed into the dominant genre by the early eighteenth century, with the exception of ḥappa, which developed into a distinctive genre in its own right. More importantly, it illustrates an unmistakable continuity between the late seventeenth-century khayāl of Aurangzeb’s reign and the mid eighteenth-century khayāl supposedly “reinvented” by Ni‘mat Khan at the court of Muhammad Shah.

One characteristic of khayāl noted as integral to its style in the Indo-Persian literature is its quintessential aesthetic quality, dard. Sarmadee translates this word “pathos” (Rāg

Darpan 1996: 193), but it is generally used to refer to the pain or affliction of love or grief, and in a Sufi context is related to the feeling of desire for ecstatic union with the Divine. A related word Faqirullah uses to describe khayāl’s aesthetic is hazīn (125), which means sad or melancholy and is related to the word huzn, grief or sorrow. This aesthetic quality seems particularly appropriate for the expression in musical sound of the main themes of khayāl and cutkulā, love and the grief of separation. Dard was primarily inherent in the vocal quality of the singer, but it was also possible to reproduce it on a stringed instrument, in particular the rabāb. According to Faqirullah, the rabāb ordinarily possessed six gut strings, but these could be reinforced with additional courses of metal strings, which may have been sympathetic56:

The advantage is twofold: one, that the gut-strings become slack during rainy season; but the metallic ones do not. Secondly, that for those who sing Chautukla and Khayāl, it is incumbent upon them to do so with a voice laden with pathos [hazīn]. And a Rabāb (Rubāb), having extra strings, sounds really soft and pathetic [hazīn]. All the same, if an Ustād-i-Kāmil [great master] handles a Rabāb, with six strings, even he plays it in a way that extra strings become redundant. It is with reference to such Ustāds that a poet of note says “And, insofar as the technique of mulāyam nawāzī [soft and tender playing] became integral to the art, the listeners had their ears turned into containers of moulten-wax”. (Rāg Darpan 1996: 125)

It is possible to speculate further on the thematic content of seventeenth-century khayāl, given the likely role of Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi in its creation, and his known incorporation of Hindavi devotional themes into Sufi sama’. The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century impact of Vaishnavite bhakti on Sufi musico-religious practices was profound. According to Rizvi, this influence came mainly through Vaishnavite devotional poetry and therefore also through its song texts57 (Rizvi 1978: 354). As already noted with respect to vishnūpad, Vaishnavite song lyrics were popular in Sufi assemblies all over North India. Moreover, their expressions of devotion to the Hindu deities, and in particular to Krishna, were not perceived as foreign or antithetical to Sufi religious conceptions. Rather, in what Rizvi considers to be “a most remarkable development [,] the sufis regarded them as

57 This was not a one-way street – Aditya Behl argues that the Sultanate-period Sufi romances laid the ground for the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas (personal communication 2003).
welcome additions to their devotional poetry to induce ecstasy”. Vaishnavite imagery in song texts was explained allegorically, in the same way as the Sufis interpreted the Persian mystical and technical terms in their own devotional texts, and as contemporary Hindu bhaktas such as Nabhaji interpreted theirs. In 1566 Mir ‘Abdul Wahid Bilgrami wrote a treatise on Sufi mystical interpretations of Vaishnavite song texts “well-known” in the Sufi community. Two thirds of this work, the Haqā’iq-i Hindī, are dedicated to explaining allegorically the terms and concepts used in dhrupad and vishnūpad texts in Hindi and braj bhāṣā. To the Sufis, the word Krishna in a devotional song, for example, symbolised:

the Prophet Muhammad and sometimes the (Perfect) Man. Often it indicates the Reality of the creation of man which is related to the Unity of Being. Sometimes it represents Iblis [Satan]. Often it stands for idols, Christians or the sons of fire-worshippers. . . Idol and Christian-boy represent manifestations of divine light which illuminate beautiful faces.

As another example, the transverse flute (bānsurī) indicated:

The appearance of existence out of the void.

Verse

The entire world is the humming of His song.
None has heard such a prolonged voice.

It also points to the contents of the Qur’anic verse: “. . . and breathed into him (Adam) of My Spirit” and the divine command in the Qur’an namely “Be.”58 (Rizvi 1978: 359-61)

In this way the sixteenth-century Sufis appropriated the themes and concepts of Vaishnavite devotional poetry to express Islamic devotional feeling in the Sufi assembly.

Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi was undoubtedly one of Rizvi’s “considerable number” of Sufis whose “love for the symbols, similes and metaphors drawn from Hindu mythology and the Indian environment” were the primary source of their prestige (vol. ii, 433). He was renowned for his composition of song texts in Hindi that, while designed to “invoke the favour of deceased sufis”, were intended to appeal to Hindus and Muslims alike. His

58 The vertical flute, the nay, has long been associated with Sufi ritual; according to Doubleday “its hallowed status derives from the opening lines of [Rumi’s] Mathnavi. . . in which it symbolises ‘the soul emptied of self and filled with the Divine Spirit’” (1999: 104)
extensive relationships with and respect for Vaishnavites and vairāgis, who “frequently visited him to recite their . . Kabiris” and vishnūpads, are well known, and he is famous for having composed his own vishnūpads in a new more “classical” style (278-9). It is therefore likely that Shaikh Bahauddin would have incorporated Vaishnavite devotional themes into his khayāl compositions, particularly those associated with the love of the human for the Divine. Both cutkulā and khayāl were chiefly concerned with the themes of love and separation, and the sole aim of samā‘ was to facilitate the brief, mystical union of the human lover with the divine Beloved. The Vaishnavite theme most prominently cherished in Sufi devotional contexts was the Radha-Krishna story. Thus it is possible that the devotion to Krishna so closely associated with modern khayāl texts was already part of the khayāl aesthetic at its genesis. Indeed, all the themes associated with khayāl from its first appearances in the Indo-Persian literature – love, the grief of separation, Sufi devotional themes, and the praise of Lord Krishna – still constitute the primary themes of modern khayāl59.

Summary and conclusions

Khayāl was not invented by Amir Khusrau. Neither was it created by Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi, nor by Ni‘mat Khan “Sadarang”. It was not created from the younger genre qawwālī, nor did it emerge from dhrupad, and it was popular in the Mughal Empire long before the reign of Muhammad Shah. Yet all the stories that have come down to us largely from the oral histories of hereditary musicians contain more than a grain of truth. Of the two ways in which the word khayāl was used in the seventeenth century, it was probably first used in its broader sense. Khayāl was therefore originally used to describe a number of similar two- to four-verse regional genres in local languages on the subjects of love and the grief of separation. While these genres were not necessarily Islamic in content, and could include both non-religious themes and Hindu devotional imagery, they were all developed within a Sufi environment for the purposes of inducing devotional ecstasy in the samā‘ gathering. The varieties of khayāl shared a stylistic framework, incorporating tarāna and other

59 See Wade 1984: 20-3 for examples.
techniques derived from the *ravish* of Amir Khusrau designed to arouse ecstasy in a Sufi context. A faint memory of the broader use of the word may remain in one regional genre that retains the name *khayāl* today, the Sufi mystical genre sung in the Deccan.

However, in the seventeenth century, *khayāl* also came to be used in a more specific sense, to refer to the most prestigious and possibly the oldest variety of *khayāl*, the “classical” variety most closely associated with the *ravish* of Amir Khusrau and its musical heirs, the *qawwāls* of Delhi. It is this variety of *khayāl* that eventually evolved into the *khayāl* of the present day. A critical reading of the seventeenth-century Indo-Persian evidence indicates that it was neither the personal genius of Amir Khusrau nor that of Husain Shah Sharqi that first gave rise to this variety of *khayāl*, but the *creative collision of their musical legacies at a later date*. More specifically, *khayāl* arguably emerged from the adaptation of the regional-language genre *cutkulā* to the stylistic traditions of the *ravish* of Amir Khusrau. Because of its association with Sufi musicians throughout the seventeenth century, and particularly with the *qawwāls* of Delhi, it must also have developed within a Sufi context in the Delhi region between 1593 and 1637, or slightly before. On this basis I have argued that *khayāl* most probably developed within the musical and spiritual traditions of the Shaikhs of Barnawa.

The Chishti Shaikhs of Barnawa were resident in the Delhi region, and possessed an unbroken spiritual lineage going back to Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. They were nearly as famous for their patronage of Indian classical music and their deep relationships with Hindu mystics as for their Sufi spirituality. More importantly, they are known to have had especially strong links with the musical legacies of both Amir Khusrau and Husain Shah Sharqi. The pivotal figure in whose *majlis* the musical traditions of these two great figures arguably first collided was Shaikh Pir Buddhan (d.1498). He was a great patron-connoisseur both of Indian classical music and of the *qaul* and *tarāna* of Amir Khusrau, the genres of his own Dehlavi Chishti heritage. More importantly, he was also the *pīr* of Husain Shah Sharqi. It is highly likely therefore that the “classical” genre *cutkulā* was introduced to his *majlis* by its inventor, his fellow Sufi and connoisseur, Husain Shah Sharqi. Most significantly, Shaikh Pir Buddhan’s great-great-grandson Shaikh Bahauddin (d.1628-9) is the earliest composer of

---

60 See N P Ahmad 1984: 106-8.
*khayāl* listed in the Indo-Persian literature, and the greatest musician of all of the Shaikhs of Barnawa. He was renowned as a musical innovator, and was the first of his lineage to synthesise in a single genre the style of Amir Khusrau with the “old classical Indian tunes”. Given his musical and spiritual heritage Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi was probably the first to adapt the old “classical” genre *cutkulā* to the style of Amir Khusrau, thereby creating *khayāl*.

As a wandering mendicant, Shaikh Bahauddin or one of the musicians in his entourage is most likely to have introduced *khayāl* to the *qawwāls* of Delhi in person, sometime before his death in 1628-9. Alternatively, given that Shaikh Bahauddin’s *khānqāh* in Barnawa was famed for its hospitality to visiting musicians, it could have been transmitted to Delhi via *qawwāls* travelling between Barnawa and Delhi on the pilgrimage routes. Whatever the case, by the time *khayāl* appeared in the *Pādishāhnāma* in 1637, it had been wholly reincorporated by the *qawwāls* of Delhi into their musical heritage, and was ascribed not merely to the *ravish* but to the “creation” of Amir Khusrau. This indicates both that it had been in their repertoire for some time prior to 1637, and that it had changed sufficiently to be considered different from, and intriguingly “more authentic” than, the *khayāl* of Shaikh Sher Muhammad. From this time onwards, *khayāl* was considered integral to the repertoire of the *qawwāls* of Delhi. By the late seventeenth century, the performance of *khayāl* had become central to the *qawwāls’* identity as a class of musicians.

Already by 1660, Khusravi *khayāl* was considered the most prestigious of the varieties of *khayāl* in circulation at the Mughal court. The *khayāl* performed during Aurangzeb’s reign was “classical” in nature, being an élite genre of high prestige incorporating both *rāga* and *tālā*. Stylistically it was related to *qaul* and *tarāna*, but the form and content of the *khayāl* text were probably primarily derived from *cutkulā*. Its central aesthetic quality was one of pathos or melancholy in keeping with its subject matter. Moreover, given its inclusivist religious origins, it is likely that its subject matter included Vaishnavite devotional themes. It was arguably a combination of its “classical” status and the wide appeal of its subject matter that was the source of *khayāl*’s popularity at the seventeenth-century Mughal court. The Indo-Persian evidence suggests that although *dhrupad* was still considered more prestigious, *khayāl* was already patronised by the Mughal élite in Jahangir’s reign, rising to popularity at Aurangzeb’s court, and increasing in
popularity and prestige as the century drew to a close. There is a suggestion in the Indo-Persian literature that as khayâl began to gain in prestige, it became identified more as a genre in its own right, rather than being considered an inseparable part of the ravish of Amir Khusrau, which Ras Baras Khan differentiates from khayâl as qawwâli. The absorption of the other main varieties of khayâl into the dominant genre, particularly of varieties like Khairabadi khayâl possibly associated with female performers, accelerated this process. The literary appearance of a courtesan performing “khayâl-ţappa” in the seventeenth-century Caurâsî vaishnavan kî vârtâ highlights khayâl’s increasing distance from its devotional origins. In any case, whether performed by courtesans or qawwâls, its natural place had been established in the “secular” courtly mehfîl since its first appearance in Baqir Khan’s biography.

Hence there are several areas of continuity between the khayâl of Aurangzeb’s reign and the khayâl performed at the court of Muhammad Shah. Although many of the varieties of seventeenth-century khayâl had been absorbed into the dominant genre by the mid eighteenth century, traces of them remained in the diverse languages used for khayâl texts by even the most “innovative” composers. Khayâl was already a popular genre by the time Muhammad Shah came to the throne in 1719. It was moreover one which derived from a “classical” genre in the first place, had itself been considered “classical” from at least 1660, and which probably possessed its distinctive Vaishnavite devotional themes from the beginning. Furthermore, as the Muraqqa’-i Dehlî testifies, the qawwâls of Delhi continued to be the quintessential exponents of khayâl in the eighteenth century. If this is so, what then was the role played by Ni’mat Khan “Sadarang” in khayâl’s development? Even his personal history demonstrates continuity with the musical traditions of Aurangzeb’s reign. It is an interesting coincidence that Ni’mat Khan gained his early training under the patronage of Muhammad A’zam Shah, the same patron who commissioned Mirza Khan to write the Tohfat al-Hind (V). Given that Mirza Khan states unequivocally that qawwâls were the primary exponents of khayâl c.1675, it is probable that Ni’mat Khan first learnt khayâl from

---

his teacher, Tatari Qawwal, who was also in Muhammad A‘zam Shah’s employ (Risāla-i Zīkr-i Mughanniyyān-i Hindūstān 1961: 30-1).

Ni‘mat Khan was not responsible for popularising khayāl. Moreover, Miner’s argument that he transformed it into a “classical” style by infusing it with dhrupad elements cannot be correct either. “Dhrupad” elements could have entered khayāl without the assistance of Ni‘mat Khan. The evidence of ‘Abdul Wahid Bilgrami suggests that dhrupad was performed in the Sufi majlis alongside vishnūpad and dhamar. Moreover, Sher Khan Lodi’s statement that cutkulā was a type of dhrupad in two verses, and of the Saṅgītānārāyana that it was “a form of dhruvapadā with only two verses,” indicate that the two may have been related. Whether or not there was cross-pollination between dhrupad and khayāl before 1700, other than the fact that a number of Sufi musicians performed both (Rāg Darpan 1996: 191-205), can only be a matter of speculation. Given Shaikh Bahauddin’s apparent antipathy towards dhrupad, it seems unlikely. Nevertheless, Miner is probably correct in arguing that the unique elements in Ni‘mat Khan’s khayāl style, which rapidly became the most popular style in mid eighteenth-century Delhi, did derive from dhrupad.

This highlights what I contend is Ni‘mat Khan’s primary contribution to the history of khayāl: not that he introduced dhrupad elements to the genre, but that he was the first kalāwant in the Indo-Persian corpus to be listed as a singer or composer of khayāl. This is significant. If Mirza Khan is correct, and kalāwants were considered exclusively to be dhrupad specialists at the end of the seventeenth century, the voluntary adoption of a lower prestige genre like khayāl – however popular – requires explanation. It may be that it merely reflects the declining popularity of dhrupad at the court of Muhammad Shah. By the time Dargah Quli Khan was writing, dhrupad had all but disappeared; he lists only two dhrupad singers in his entire text, the brothers Rahim Sen and Tansen. However, an early eighteenth-century treatise on tāla indicates that the prestige and popularity of the dhrupad singers Ras Baras Khan Kalawant and his brother Baras Khan were undimmed at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Risāla dar Tāl, f.59a). For such a prestigious genre as dhrupad to have fallen so far out of favour in less than twenty years (by 1719) that a kalāwant of such obvious talent as Ni‘mat Khan needed to take up khayāl, requires a different explanation than a
gradual decline. It is arguably not a coincidence that Ni‘mat Khan is the first known kalāwant to have taken up khayāl, and the reason is political.

The biography of Ni‘mat Khan in the Risa‘la-i Zikr-i Mughanniyān-i Hindūstān states that after the death of Muhammad A‘zam Shah in 1707, Ni‘mat Khan entered the employ of Aurangzeb’s grandson Muizuddin Jahandar Shah (Risa‘la-i Zikr-i Mughanniyān-i Hindūstān 1961: 31). It is not surprising that he joined Jahandar Shah’s entourage rather than that of the new emperor Bahadur Shah, because one of Ni‘mat Khan’s close female relatives, the courtesan Lal Kunwar, was Jahandar Shah’s favourite concubine62. In 1712, Bahadur Shah died, and Jahandar Shah ascended the throne, immediately scandalising the entire empire by making Lal Kunwar his chief consort and raising all her family, including Ni‘mat Khan, to the nobility. What appalled the old élite was that in doing so Jahandar Shah turned all social norms upside down, and in effect abdicated control of his kingdom to Lal Kunwar’s “low-born favourites” the kalāwants63. According to one contemporary chronicler:

Everybody high and low immersed themselves in a life of ease and pleasure, and music both vocal and instrumental reached such heights that in all quarters of the city, except the sounds of music and the lusty shoutings no other sound was to be heard. There was no one to pay heed to those oppressed by the kalawants, and whose life and property was in danger... Little by little, the prestige and dignity of the sovereign was forgotten by high and low alike, and the king appeared to be a king in the game of chess, being moved hither and thither [by the kalawants]. (Jahāndārnāma, in Chandra 1986: 211)

Within nine months of his accession, the nobles under the leadership of the powerful Sayyid brothers had assassinated Jahandar Shah, banished Lal Kunwar, and installed a puppet emperor, Farukhshiyar, on the throne. The latter ruled almost until the succession of Muhammad Shah in 1719, but the damage had been done, and the Mughal Empire never recovered its prestige64.

Ni‘mat Khan Kalawant is singled out for criticism in many of the contemporary historical chronicles. The cautionary tale about him getting his comeuppance over the

62 One of the contemporary chronicles states that Ni‘mat Khan was Lal Kunwar’s brother, but the names of their fathers are different; see Irvine 1971: 180, 193; Risa‘la-i Zikr-i Mughanniyān-i Hindūstān, 30.
64 Irvine 1971: 229; Chandra 1986: 212.
governorship of Multan is spurious65. Nevertheless, the Indo-Persian records reveal the extent to which all kalāwants, and Ni’mat Khan in particular, were resented by the political élite during Jahandar Shah’s disastrous reign66. It is almost certain that the kalāwants of Delhi fell out of political favour after the downfall of Jahandar Shah, possibly for the whole of Farukhsiyar’s seven year reign. This is indicated by the gap in Ni’mat Khan’s biography, where he is without a patron before the accession of Muhammad Shah. If that is so, it is likely that dhrupad also fell out of favour at this time, as a reminder of the decadence of Jahandar Shah’s reign and the disastrous consequences of subverting the class structure in such a dramatic way. It may be that upon his return to favour under Muhammad Shah, Ni’mat Khan was forced to take up khayāl, not simply because it had gradually overtaken dhrupad in popularity, but because dhrupad had become associated with a dark political episode in the all too recent past.

65 See Miner 1993: 80. He is confused in one version of this story with his nephew’s disciple’s son Khushhal Khan; it may simply be that because Ni’mat Khan was famous, his name became attached to any disreputable story circulating at the time.

66 These stories are also an invaluable commentary on the relative social status of musicians; one sometimes gets the impression that the great musicians of the Mughal court were considered to be of very high social status, but this was patently not the case, as this example makes clear.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

A painting of musicians performing for the emperor who “banned” music and painting

The Mughal past continues to be important to the self-definition of present-day Hindustani musicians. For a hereditary musician to draw their genealogy back to the court of Akbar, and to claim as a distant ancestor the greatest of Mughal musicians, Tansen, is to signify to modern audiences the authenticity and authority of the musical tradition they present and represent. However, the question of Aurangzeb’s role in music history exposes a contradiction in the picture some musicians present of their Mughal past. Sometimes, members of the same families who claim continuous Mughal patronage from the court of Akbar also retell the story that Aurangzeb banned music throughout his reign, a story given credibility by nearly all academic and popular histories of the Mughal period. But if Aurangzeb’s ban was successful throughout the empire, no hereditary musician today could be descended in an unbroken line from Akbar’s musicians. This

1 “Aurangzeb in a shaft of light,” attributed to Hunhar; St Petersburg Album, Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (Beach and Koch 1997: 124-5). Beach suggests that one of the singers is Khushhal Khan Kalawant. However, a comparison with known portraits of him during Shah Jahan’s reign shows that both singers are too young to be Khushhal Khan (Bor, Bruguière and Miner 2003: 29, 54-5). It would be nice to think that one might be Ras Baras Khan Kalawant.
has serious implications for the continuity and authenticity of their musical traditions. There is a brief gap in the literature in the genealogy of Tansen’s direct descendants, but it occurs after Aurangzeb’s reign, between the death of Ras Baras Khan Kalawant after 1698, and the reappearance at Muhammad Shah’s court (1719-48) of two acknowledged descendents of Tansen, Rahim Sen and Tansen (Muragqqa'-i Dehli 1993: 93). Tansen’s genealogy continues unbroken throughout Aurangzeb’s reign, demolishing the idea that any hiatus in the tradition had anything to do with his policies. It was this enigma that sparked my interest in finding out what did happen to Hindustani music under Aurangzeb.

The main aim of my thesis has been to investigate the culture of music in Mughal elite society during the time of Aurangzeb. The assumption that Aurangzeb successfully banned music throughout the empire from 1668-9 until 1707 has encouraged a widespread belief amongst musicologists that nothing of musical interest occurred during his reign. My research conclusively refutes this belief, opening up to scrutiny a pivotal fifty-year period of music history that has never seriously been studied before. In order to do this, I have concentrated on musical discourse in Persian language sources. The court language of the Mughal elite was Persian, and Mughal elite patronage is customarily considered a central influence on the shaping of the modern Hindustani tradition. Moreover, Aurangzeb’s reign saw an unprecedented increase in Indo-Persian writings on Hindustani music, a fact that sits uneasily with the idea that he banned it. However, for linguistic and historical reasons, very little research has previously been done on the large and remarkably rich set of Indo-Persian sources for Hindustani music during the Mughal period. Only a small handful of Indo-Persian musical treatises are cited in the secondary literature, and even those largely sporadically and superficially. Of the many texts I consulted in the course of my research, in this thesis I cite twenty-six separate musical treatises. To my knowledge, I am the first scholar to analyse the treatises of Kamilkhani, and the first English-speaking scholar since William Jones to study Ras Baras Khan’s important treatise, the Shams al-Aşwāṭ.

What do these sources tell us about musical culture, patronage, and performance during Aurangzeb’s time? In Chapter Two I constructed a genealogy and epistemology of seventeenth-century Indo-Persian musical treatises that establishes their multiple heritages and complex intertextuality. These texts cannot be read as straightforward descriptions of contemporary practice. Rather, descriptive elements must be disentangled
from and set in the context of past, legendary, utopian, and prescriptive material, and considered as expressions of the particular communities that produced and consumed musical texts. I have established that there are two groups of Indo-Persian musicological writings; those that self-consciously derive their justification and prestige from the authoritative Sanskrit tradition, and those that are independent of it. Both draw on a common stock of Perso-Arabic musicological and literary notions, the theory of performers, and Sanskrit tradition, either directly, or mediated through oral transmission. However, the first group primarily venerates two major elements of the more conservative stream of Sanskrit theory at this time. Based on the precedent Abul Fazl set in his seminal Â’în-i Akbarî, this group uses the saptâdhyaya format and the rāga-rāginî system to root and structure their musicological thought, but selects from them only material of relevance to Mughal élite patronage. Faqirullah’s verbatim citations of the Â’în-i Akbarî without acknowledgement in his important Rāg Darpan established a tradition in Indo-Persian musicology of paying ritual obeisance to older sources already venerated as authoritative, while simultaneously borrowing heavily from a later Indo-Persian source, often unacknowledged.

At the same time, however, this stream of Indo-Persian musicology used Abul Fazl’s substantial original digressions as a justification and springboard for their own descriptive commentary on important areas of current performance practice. While such material is often prescriptive in intent, it is also representative of real performances witnessed and participated in by the authors. Moreover, the structure and contents of the Indo-Persian treatises reveal a great deal about the culture of the people who produced and received these texts, and who were instrumental in dictating trends in musical performance. Firstly, the embeddedness of these texts in Mughal discourses of princely adab emphasises the need to approach Hindustani music in this period as an expression of Mughal male élite culture. Secondly, the clear influence of Sufi contexts on many of these treatises narrows the focus to one particular faction of the male élite, the group most influential in setting Mughal musical trends – those who embraced music as a means of approaching union with the Divine in the Sufi majlis. My brief analysis of the seven most important treatises of Aurangzeb’s reign also shows that some works customarily hailed as “seminal”, like the Tohfat al-Hind (V), are far less important than have previously been thought in uncovering contemporary developments. In contrast, other treatises that have
languished unread in the archives, like those of Kamilkhani, provide unprecedented material of great relevance to such a quest.

Taken together with the substantial testimony of other Indo-Persian literature such as historical chronicles, biographies, letters, manuals of etiquette, poetry, and so on, the Indo-Persian musical treatises demonstrate beyond doubt that Aurangzeb did not ban music during his reign. In Chapter Three I address the central obstacle to the study of music under Aurangzeb: the enduring legend of his burial of music. Modern scholars have overwhelmingly understood this episode as both historical “fact”, and as an allegory of Aurangzeb’s fanatical, oppressive, and unpopular “Islamic” rule. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Aurangzeb placed some restrictions on music in 1668-9. However, only two near-contemporary accounts, Manucci and Ma’muri, include the story of the burial. Even using familiar published material it is possible to demonstrate that both were unreliable sources whose enmity towards the emperor distorted their narratives. I have argued that the burial story was most probably nothing more than a rumour propagated by Aurangzeb’s enemies. This undermines the view of Aurangzeb scholars continue to espouse despite the manifest impossibility of reconciling even the well-known accounts.

The power of the burial story over the historiographical imagination has acted to silence the vast majority of contemporary evidence, which refutes the idea that Aurangzeb banned music. In this thesis I have created a space that allows the conflicting testimony of other historians and travellers, biographers, poets, patrons and connoisseurs, hereditary musicians, and other contemporary writers including Aurangzeb himself, to be heard. In doing so it becomes apparent that although Aurangzeb was an enthusiastic connoisseur of music, he did renounce it for reasons of personal piety c.1668-9. This was possibly because he recognised music’s power over him in the past to distract him from his duties and make him lose self-control, something incompatible with his public, political persona as a good Muslim prince. However, Aurangzeb did not prohibit anyone else from patronising music. Instead, he maintained an attitude of official tolerance towards music in public, and unofficial encouragement of musical patronage in private. This encouragement extended to his son, Muhammad A’zam Shah, who became the most important patron of music in the empire. In this way, Hindustani music continued to flourish in the Mughal empire throughout Aurangzeb’s reign, under the patronage of the North Indian élites.
Aurangzeb’s abdication of his role as chief arbiter of musical fashion in the empire had a significant impact on long-term developments in Hindustani music. No longer did the personal whims of the emperor determine what genres and communities of musicians should be patronised. Instead, the wider cultural values of the Mughal male élite, and changes in the political and social statuses of different factions of noblemen, began to dictate musical trends. The inclusion of detailed codes of conduct for the *mehfil* in the relatively conservative British Library *Mîrzânâma* demonstrates that musical patronage was considered integral to even the strictest expressions of princely *adab*. However, the most influential group of Mughal patrons is revealed through the evidence of friendship circle networks involving many of the top Mughal *amîrs*, and confirmed by the known authorship and audience of the Indo-Persian musical treatises. These indicate a significant connection between the patronage of music and poetry, and an interest in Sufism. It was arguably this group of *amîrs* that primarily brought about change in the Hindustani tradition, through innovations in patronage that at times were criticised by more conservative groups as transgressing the boundaries of élite masculinity.

The cultural values that shaped musical fashions were largely determined by the paradoxical nature of musical patronage in the life of a Mughal nobleman. The intimate space in which musical performance took place, the *mehfil*, was a space in which men of high social status cooperated with men and women of low social status to attain emotional release, an effect that momentarily subverted cherished notions of masculine self-control. Successful negotiation of the rules controlling the *mehfil* could publicly enact the nobleman’s control over people of lower status and over music as a manifestation of feminine power, thus confirming his status as an élite male. However, if not carefully controlled, the *mehfil* had the potential to subvert male élite codes of gender and social difference.

It was the complicated conjunction of Mughal ideas of gender, social, and sexual difference, and the need to maintain these in the potentially transgressive space of musical performance, that determined which communities of musicians, and therefore which genres and musical instruments, rose to popularity amongst Aurangzeb’s *amîrs*, and which were out of favour. The ability of indisputably masculine, high-prestige communities, such as the *kalâwants* and *qawwâls*, to enter the *mehfil*, and the exclusion of communities construed as feminine or low status, such as the “concubines” or the
*bhānds*, were not in question. However, the positions of other communities were changing in the seventeenth century, and their acceptability was therefore contested in the literature. As the example of the *dhāḍhīs* shows, changes in patronage trends were wrought over time both by musicians choosing to submit to the hegemonic values of the strictest masculine codes, and through the actions of noblemen deliberately expanding the boundaries of what was acceptable. In this way the construction and conduct of the musical *mehfil* acted as a barometer of changing ideas of gender and social difference amongst the Mughal élite.

Other cultural values influencing Mughal élite patronage of music played an important role in effecting change and stability in the Hindustani tradition during the late seventeenth century. In the last two chapters of my thesis I explored two primarily musical phenomena – the maintenance of the *rāga-rāginī* system of modal classification and the rise to popularity of *khayāl* – in which the influence of Mughal cultural imperatives was pivotal. In the case of *rāga*, ideas of the legitimate place of music in the life of a Mughal nobleman affected the relative preeminence of different principles by which seventeenth-century *rāgas* were classified. Listening to music was primarily justified in Mughal society by its efficacy as a medical cure. In the seventeenth century, the Mughals began to attribute the famed aesthetic effects of the Hindustani *rāgas* to each *rāga*’s influence on one of the four bodily humours of Unani physiology. At the same time, a scale-based method of conceptualising the *rāgas* as belonging to a discrete number of fret patterns called *ṭhāṭs* was also widely used in musical practice. The *ṭhāṭs*, however, did not replace the *rāga-rāginī* system as a classificatory scheme, but simply complemented it on a practical level as a shorthand for performers. The reason aesthetic criteria remained the preeminent principle of *rāga* classification in North India was arguably because music’s medicinal properties were essential to its identity in Mughal culture. In other words, the maintenance of the *rāga-rāginī* system had a cultural rationale, not a musical one. Nevertheless, the treatises of Kamilkhani and Ras Baras Khan attempt to reconcile cultural and musical classificatory concepts by suggesting a scale-based rationale for the *rāgas*’ effects on the humours, in assigning astrological and geomantic correlations to individual *swaras* in the scales of the *rāgas*.
In comparing the treatises of Kamilkhani and Ahobala, and Mirza Raushan Zamir’s translation of the latter, my main aim was to demonstrate the extensive use of ḥāṭḥ systems to conceptualise North Indian rāgas in performance practice as early as the seventeenth century. A brief look at later treatises also indicated the continuity of seventeenth-century ḥāṭḥ systems on the bīn and ṭanbūr with the nineteenth-century systems on sitār that apparently inspired Bhatkhande. An analysis of Kamilkhani and Ahobala also suggests the extent to which Hindustani musicians had appropriated techniques derived from Persian theory and instrumental practice, particularly from the ṭanbūr, onto the seventeenth-century rudra vīṇā. This primarily concerned the use of string ratios to set up the frets of the vīṇā, either in Ahobala’s case because the traditional method of fretting the vīṇā crosswise was too laborious with a Pa-Sa-Pa-Sa tuning, or in Kamilkhani’s case because his method of fretting the vīṇā was derived entirely from ṭanbūr technique, with its moveable frets, use of a single playing string, and adoption of the harmonic proportions. Faqirullah’s, Kamilkhani’s and Mirza Raushan Zamir’s treatises testify to the fact that during Aurangzeb’s reign, ṭanbūr and rudra vīṇā were both fretted in the same way, according to ḥāṭḥs, and that both could be used interchangeably to play either Persian or Hindustani music. This evidence of instrumental construction, tuning, and performance practice is testimony to a tangible rapprochement during Aurangzeb’s time between Indian and Persian musical systems.

Further musical evidence of synthesis between Indian and Persianate cultural worlds is provided in the history of khayāl. Khayāl’s rise to popularity under Aurangzeb testifies to the continuing influence on musical trends of the more liberal faction of Mughal patrons, with their significant interest in Sufi devotionalism and its musical expressions. The Indo-Persian treatises demonstrate that none of the traditional figures associated with khayāl’s emergence – Amir Khusrau, Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi, and Ni’mat Khan Kalawant “Sadarang” – were directly involved in its creation or early development. Rather, the musical legacies of Amir Khusrau and Husain Shah Sharqi were implicated in the sixteenth-century emergence of the ancestor of modern khayāl. Khayāl as a distinctive musical entity had two definitions in the seventeenth century. It originally referred to a popular style found in several variants across Mughal India, in which compositions in regional languages were combined with the unique musical
techniques of the ravish of Amir Khusrau, and performed in the Sufi majlis. However, it later came more narrowly to signify the most prestigious of these genres, which in the seventeenth century belonged to the qawwāls of Delhi, and which evolved into modern khayāl. This variety was created in the sixteenth-century Delhi region from a combination of the Jaunpuri genre cutkulā and Khusravi style, amidst the inclusivist Sufi environment fostered by the Shaikhs of Barnawa. Its most likely inventor was Shaikh Bahauddin Barnawi (d.1628-9), whose deep relationships with Vaishnavite sects and appropriation of bhakti concepts into his poetry made his life and the musical genre he created metaphors of synthesis between Sufi and bhakti, Indian and Persian. Classical khayāl was already patronised by the élite in a courtly setting by the reign of Jahangir, but its rise to popularity coincided with Aurangzeb’s reign, not the reign of Muhammad Shah as is commonly supposed. Nevertheless, the Indo-Persian evidence for the origins and development of khayāl confirms that orally-transmitted histories today can act as reliable guides in the search for historical origins, not necessarily as endpoints in themselves, but as signposts showing us where to start.

At the end of my chapter on khayāl, I connected the decline of dhrupad and the conclusive triumph of khayāl in the early eighteenth century directly to the upheaval of the social and political status quo associated with the “crisis” of empire after Aurangzeb’s death. In connecting the near-disappearance of dhrupad to the fact that for political reasons the kalāwants temporarily fell out of favour after the death of Jahandar Shah, I demonstrated that extramusical factors have as much a role to play in musical development as musical ones. Throughout my thesis I have argued that issues of culture, social and gender relations, and even high politics, are central to understanding musical developments. However, I also argue that the multifaceted relationships I have exposed between musical culture and the Mughal élite provide new insights into the wider historical questions of Aurangzeb’s reign. Firstly and most importantly, the fact that Aurangzeb did not ban music, let alone bury it, puts another nail into the coffin of his reputation for iconoclastic zeal. The evidence that musical activity was freely pursued during his reign, with his acquiescence, confirms the growing view that Aurangzeb’s rule was less intolerant than has previously been assumed, making it less likely that his bigotry was the principal cause of imperial decline. It also indicates that in the area of
cultural policy, the Mughal state may have been less centralised than some historians have suggested.

Secondly, the unprecedented upsurge in Indo-Persian writings on Hindustani music testifies to the Mughal élite’s increasing cultural indigenisation in India under Aurangzeb. A comparison with sixteenth-century developments also suggests that contrary to popular belief, much of the famed Mughal synthesis of Indian and foreign cultural elements occurred later than Akbar’s reign. There is plenty of musical evidence to suggest that Aurangzeb’s reign was a prime period for such experiments in the cultural arena. Thirdly, an analysis of the codes for the musical *mehfil* and their negotiation in historical situations sheds new light on Mughal constructions of masculinity, on gender, social, and sexual relations, and on the complex dynamics of social space in the Mughal empire. In particular, a study of the *mehfil* suggests that the prescriptive codes of *mirzā’i* in the British Library *Mirzānāma* were not “normative”, and were acceptably ignored by high-status noblemen in Aurangzeb’s reign. Instead, they were the product of a conservative reaction to more liberal conceptions of élite masculinity under Shah Jahan, which continued to be supported by one faction of the male élite during Aurangzeb’s period. Thus two alternative conceptions of masculinity coexisted during the second half of the seventeenth century, the creative tension between them resulting in long-term musical change. Finally, the evidence of friendship circles suggests that a number of Indo-Muslim noblemen openly espoused religious views more liberal than the orthodoxy credited to Aurangzeb, without any known censure except where religious heterodoxy was also combined with political rebellion. Contrary to popular belief, the Indo-Persian evidence shows that, just as Aurangzeb did not place public prohibitions on musical performance, he did not ban poetry, painting, or historical writing. These cultural expressions found significant patrons in the more liberal faction of the Mughal élite.

Much work remains to be done on the Indo-Persian sources for Hindustani music during the time of Aurangzeb. I have been unable to include a study of Ras Baras Khan’s important *rāga* notations, or his chapters on *tāla* or the performance of *dhrupad*. Mirza Raushan Zamir’s significant contributions to Ahobala’s chapter on instruments remain to be analysed, and an extensive study of the most important community of musicians in the empire, the *kalāwants*, is missing from my social history of the period. The significant amount of material on Persian music included in the Indo-Persian texts has also lain
beyond the scope of this thesis. Several of the musical treatises urgently need to be edited and translated, particularly the *Tarjoma-i Pārījātak*, Kamilkhani’s treatises, and the *Shams al-ʿAṣwāt*. One major drawback of concentrating so narrowly on the Indo-Persian texts is that although they reveal much about the musical culture of the Persian-speaking élite, their ability to illuminate the contributions of other major patrons, or to provide an alternative perspective on Mughal contributions, is severely limited. A comparison of the Indo-Persian texts with regional language sources for Aurangzeb’s period, particularly Rajput texts and paintings, is urgently required.

Nevertheless, in opening up these sources to scholarly scrutiny, I hope this thesis will encourage further explorations of this extensive and extraordinary documentation of a pivotal period in both Mughal history and the history of Hindustani music. On a larger historiographical stage, I hope I have shown that “purely” musical questions are indeed inseparable from political, social, and cultural ones, and that music history can correspondingly provide new and illuminating perspectives on larger historical questions.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources: manuscripts


Khulāṣat al-‘Aish (1798), anonymous. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, handlist 2551.


Mānakūtāhālā (early 16C), anonymous. Oriental Institute, Central Library, Baroda, acc. no. 2125.

Ma‘rifat al-Arwaḥ (post 1666), anonymous. Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, Mus.12.

Miṭṭāḥ al-Sarūd ASB (1664), by Qazi Hasan bin Khwaja Tahir. (Miṣbāḥ al-Sorūr) Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata, 1629 M136.

_____ SJ. Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, Mus.13.


_____ GOML. (Risāla-i Rāgmālā) Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras, D507PMS.


Nishaṭārā (early 18C), anonymous. Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, Mus.8, f.14b-21b.


Risāla dar navākhтан-i rāg dar jānbar (18C), anonymous. (Risāla-i ‘ilm-i mūṣīqī, chapter 4) National Library, Kolkata, no. 237.

Risāla dar Rāg R (c.1719-40), anonymous. Raza Library, Rampur, no. 1252, f.140-50.

Risāla dar Tāl EUL (early 18C), anonymous. Edinburgh University Library, Or. MS 585, f.37b-66a.

Risāla-i Háji Ḥussain Zāhri Esfahānī dar fān-i mūṣīqī (Aurangzeb 1658-1707), by Hāji Hussain Zāhri Esfahānī. Edinburgh University Library, Or. MS 585, f.1b-17a.


Risāla-i Musamma ba-Naghmāt (1690), by Sayyid Mir Ahmad bin Mirza Muḥammad. Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University.

Risāla-i Rāg (1657), anonymous. Raza Library, Rampur, 1254b, f.1a.


Shams al-Aswāṭ GOML (1698), by Ras Baraṣ Khan Kalawant son of Khushhal Khan Kalawant. (Risāla-i Mūṣīqī) Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras, D517 PMSS.

_____ SJ. Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, Mus.9.
Sarūd al-Bahr (1663), by Qazi Hasan bin Khwaja Tahir. Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, Mus. 8, f.1b-14a.


Tohfat al-Hind ASB (c.1675), by Mirza Khan. Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata, 1629.


_____ KB. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, handlist 882.

Tohfat al-Naghmāt (post 1744), by Muhammad Ruhullah bin Shah Wajhullah. Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras, D774PMS.

Uṣūl-i Ghinā (1764), anonymous. National Library, Kolkata, 236, f.1b-14a.


Primary sources: editions


**Primary sources: translations and English**


**Secondary sources**


Neuman, Daniel (2003 forthcoming) “Bowing bards (dhadhi, mirasi, manganiar, and langa).” In Joep Bor, Françoise Delvoye and Emmie te Nijenhuis, eds. *The history of North Indian music*.


_____ (1976) “The structure of musical meaning: a view from Banaras,” *Perspectives of New Music* 14/2-15/1:308-34.


Richards, John F (1975) *Mughal administration in Golconda*. Oxford University Press.


Rizvi, S N Haider (1941) “Music in Muslim India,” *Islamic culture* 15: 331-40.


Teltscher, Kate (1997) India inscribed: European and British writing on India 1600-1800. Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks.


APPENDIX ONE

Music, masculinity, and the Mughal mehfil
Center for Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 4th April 2003

Shuja’at Khan is one of the kalawants in the service of His Majesty Muhammad Shah. Through his songs (kabitas) he pleads and supplicates appropriately, but he makes no impression on the heart. His conduct is inferior and presumptuous, and he composes like a rustic. He sports a turban ornament and his eyes are always enhanced with collyrium, but we, the blind, do not acknowledge his verdant beauty.

So wrote Dargah Quli Khan in the Muraqqa’-i Dehli, his famous travelogue of the Mughal capital between 1738 and 1741. An unusual work, it skips over Nadir Shah’s humiliating invasion of Delhi in 1739 in favour of a flamboyant description of the male social spaces of the city – the bazaars, religious shrines, and private parties – and its inhabitants, from the great noblemen to a plethora of male and female musicians, dancers, and entertainers. Despite its late date, historians have used Dargah Quli Khan’s account as an authoritative, even normative, source for cultural history across the Mughal period. Stephen Blake, for example, relies on the Muraqqa’ extensively for his discussion of Mughal elite culture in Delhi between 1639 and 1739. More recently, Rosalind O’Hanlon, Saleem Kidwai, and Indrani Chatterjee have drawn attention to the significant homoerotic dimensions of this text, partly obscured by a history of bowdlerised editions.

With some caveats, all three seem to accept that Dargah Quli Khan’s homoerotic descriptions of male musicians and dancers accurately portray their sexual role in Mughal society. Dargah Quli Khan’s matter-of-fact descriptions of widespread same-sex desire, and relationships between noblemen and beautiful young male performers, are thus treated as evidence that these were tolerated in Mughal society, if not actively promoted.

Within this context, historians have accepted without question Dargah Quli Khan’s naming of the kalawants amongst those beautiful young men whom noblemen could procure for erotic purposes. Specifically, he uses the phrase amrad-i rangin az kalawant-bachha-ha; amrad (plural amrad) being the word used customarily in Persian, and consistently in the Muraqqa’, to refer to a young man considered sexually available. Dargah Quli Khan’s overall vision of the kalawants is of a musical community of little contemporary worth, a degraded status signified bodily in their adoption – or perceived adoption – of effeminacies in dress and behaviour. He depicts the older kalawants of Muhammad Shah’s reign as antiquated has-beens, poor musicians, and the butt of jokes questioning their masculinity, and the younger ones as legitimate objects of homoerotic desire. However, to anyone well versed in music history, Dargah Quli Khan’s view of the kalawants is strikingly anomalous. For the kalawants have consistently been accorded the highest prestige of all musicians in North India. From Akbar’s (r.1665-1605) patronage of the greatest kalawant Tansen, right through to the end of Aurangzeb’s reign (1658-1707) the kalawants were the favoured imperial musicians. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Indo-Persian writers treated them with reverence, venerating them for their musical abilities, with not a hint of transgression
attached to their name. This was the case until at least the early eighteenth century. It was also true of the early nineteenth century. And today, Daniel Neuman argues the kalawants are still “considered the elite of the musical world,” their title conveying high standing, authority, prestige, honour, and rectitude. Either Dargah Quli Khan’s vision of musical life in eighteenth-century Delhi was unusually singular – or there is a mystery to be untangled here.

The key to its disentanglement lies in the changed relationship between patron and musician in one of the most exclusive of Mughal male social spaces, the princely mehfil. Towards the end of this paper I will look in particular at temporary changes in the prestige of the kalawants, and how these reflected the wider upheaval of the social order associated with the years of political “crisis” following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. The fate of the kalawants also has much to tell us about changes and important continuities in elite conceptions of masculinity and transgression from the Great to the Late Mughal period. We therefore need to put Dargah Quli Khan’s construction of eighteenth-century patron-client relationships in historical perspective, by comparing it with the culture of patronage at the height of empire, in the time of Aurangzeb.

It is necessary first of all to dispel the long-held myth that Aurangzeb banned music during his reign, a ban supposedly of at least forty years’ duration. On the basis of two well-known, near-contemporary sources of questionable veracity, historians have traditionally argued that Aurangzeb banned a whole host of cultural expressions in 1668-9, including music, for the rest of his reign, in line with his implementation of shari’a law. In stark contradiction of this, the vast majority of Indo-Persian sources written between 1658 and c.1750 show that, far from having been banned, musical practice thrived throughout Aurangzeb’s reign, with his acquiescence, and even in some cases his encouragement. There is, however, sufficient evidence to suggest that Aurangzeb himself renounced music at this time for reasons of personal piety. Although this had no implications for public policy, Aurangzeb’s renunciation of the emperor’s traditional role as the arbiter of cultural trends in the empire did have an important impact on cultural developments. Under Aurangzeb, neither imperial policy nor the emperor’s personal taste determined what was deemed worthy of support. Instead, the leadership of cultural fashion devolved onto the Mughal noblemen, the mirzas or amirs, men who ordinarily held positions (mansabs) in the Mughal hierarchy of at least 1000 personal ranking (zat), 1000 horse (savar). In this way, the wider cultural imperatives of elite male society dictated the directions of musical trends at this time.

By the beginning of Aurangzeb’s reign, the patronage of elite music had become a key signifier of a man’s high social status as a mirza. This is demonstrated by the appearance of detailed rules for the conduct of the mehfil in the mirzanama literature c.1660, which O’Hanlon has demonstrated embodies normative codes of late seventeenth-century princely etiquette that were explicitly masculine. The mehfil was an intimate gathering of elite male friends who were connoisseurs of music, and musicians, in which the full mental, emotional, and bodily engagement of both listeners and performers was necessary to achieve the ideal effect of musical performance, emotional release. The carefully differentiated yet complementary roles of patron and musician were embedded in Indo-Persian discourses of gender and social status, and the mirza’s successful negotiation of his prescribed role in this relationship signified his mastery of elite male codes. But the mirza’s patronage of music was also highly paradoxical, because the mehfil simultaneously subverted these codes. It acted as a space in which high and low status groups, and masculine and feminine forms of power, converged and interacted in the emotionally charged moment of performance.
mehfil was therefore a unique, liminal space in which Mughal conceptions of masculinity were both performed and contested.

What then were these conceptions of masculinity, and how were they manifested in the mehfil? In considering this, two kinds of Indo-Persian source need to be compared, prescriptive writings and descriptive writings. Prescriptive writings pre-scribed ideal norms of masculine knowledge, behaviour, dress, and consumption, which may or may not have been acted upon in practice. The most detailed of these for our purposes is the 1660 British Library *Mirzanama*, which includes an extended passage on the proper conduct of the mehfil. To give a flavour of this type of discourse: the author instructs the mirza that he should choose “for his musical assemblies. . . the qanun, chang, da’ira and tanbur as musical instruments. Of the Indian musical instruments, he should prefer the rubab and the bin.” The section on the mehfil corresponds closely with other prescriptive writings of the time, particularly in musical treatises. It needs to be noted that just because something is proscribed in this literature doesn’t mean it didn’t happen; more probably that it did, but that the author and his social circle disapproved of it.

Descriptive writings, by de-scribing real examples of patron-client relationships, suggest how these norms were enacted or contested in reality. A particularly good example is the last chapter of the 1666 musical treatise the *Rag Darpan*, written by the high-ranking mirza Faqirullah (3000 zat, 2500 savar). This chapter includes a list of biographical notices (tazkira) of patrons and performers Faqirullah had personally seen in mehfils he himself organised and attended. In calling this “descriptive” writing, I am merely drawing attention to the fact that most (but not all) of these notices consist primarily of straightforward factual information; for example, Salih Rababi came to Delhi from Koh-i Jud, he played the rabab, Faqirullah was his patron, etc. In other words there are few constructional elements, apart from the matter of selecting whom to put into the list and whom to leave out.

Perhaps most instructive are stories about princely transgressions of the social or political status quo in the historical chronicles, which de-scribe real situations, but construct them as cautionary tales to make a pre-scriptive point. Musically, these stories most often concern the scandalous love of a nobleman for a courtesan, such as the story of Khan Zaman and Aram Jan in the *Akbarnama*.

A comparison of a range of prescriptive and descriptive writings for the late seventeenth century demonstrates that the specifics of acceptable masculine comportment described in the British Library *Mirzanama* were being contested at this time. We will look at this in more detail below in relation to how social roles in the mehfil were differentiated. Nevertheless, on the level of general principles, the two perspectives were largely in agreement.

As O’Hanlon has argued, elite masculinity was synonymous with the public display of power and control – over knowledge, over material commodities, over women and people of lower status, and over oneself. Conversely, elite masculinity was defined in opposition to what it was not – passivity, powerlessness, and lack of control. These attributes belonged firstly to women. The segregation of elite social space into male/exterior and female/interior worlds, with the wall of the harim clearly demarcating the separation between them, is a good metaphor of the oppositional construction of Mughal masculinity. To be a woman was to lack social power and to be controlled, not merely by men, but by the irrational whims of the lower self, the nafs. Thus, it was also to wield a kind of raw, irrational power – erotic power – that was a potential threat to masculine control. Hence the separation between masculine and feminine worlds, embodied in the wall of the harim, was necessary for a man to maintain control over
himself, and for the political and social order to be maintained. The need to sever male
from female space is seen very clearly in the construction of the mehfil. All music and
musicians associated with the harim were unequivocally excluded from the princely
mehfil. In line with Indo-Persian consensus, the Mirzanama forbade the mirza from
allowing his private concubines – in this case female musicians and dancers employed in
the harim – from performing for his male companions, lest he be cuckolded. This
would not only be an affront to his masculine dignity, but a real subversion of the social
status quo. Conversely, the courtesans, female musicians and dancers who belonged to
male space, were traditionally forbidden from entering the harim. Although this rule
was relaxed by Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb reinstated it to popular approval in 1663.

However, passivity, powerlessness, and lack of control also defined men of low
social status, men who were clients of the amirs, and often slaves. Equally, therefore,
the maintenance of Mughal political power required the male elite to distance themselves
from men of low social status, both literally, and bodily in their rejection of
unsophisticated behaviours that identified men of low status, lest they be mistaken for one
of them. This differentiation was again set in stone in the imperial fort, in the physical
division of male/exterior space into the daulat-khana-i khass (Hall of Private Audience),
the daulat-khana-i khass o ‘amm (Hall of Public Audience), and the world of the bazar
beyond its walls. What is interesting in the Mirzanama is its frequent conflation of
gender and social statuses. Because masculinity was synonymous with power, gender
differentiation could also be a potent signifier of social difference between men. Thus to
be a man of inferior social status was to be analogous to a woman; and to demonstrate
overly passive, or feminine attributes was to signify low social status. Again this can be
seen in the Mirzanama’s mehfil, where musicians associated with the elite and therefore
of high musical prestige were categorised as “masculine”, whereas musicians associated
with the bazar and therefore of low musical prestige were considered “effeminate”. The
gendering of social status required high status men to eschew effeminarities. As the
Mirzanama puts it: “Mirza-hood is to be mirza-khan or mirza-beg; not to be a mirzada-
begum or mirzada-khanum”. In other words, to be a mirza was to be a man, not a lady-
boy.

The explicit gendering of social status extended into the conduct of romantic and
erotic relationships outside the Mughal harim. It is important to note that the censure
meted out here to overtly effeminate mirzas had nothing to do with homosexuality, but
rather with the mapping of elite ascriptions of social difference onto sexual roles in
intimate relationships. Love and the grief of separation from the beloved were valorised
in Persian and Hindavi poetry, and formed the most cherished themes of the classical
vocal genre khayal. Romantic and erotic liaisons between noblemen and both men and
women outside the harim were commonplace in Mughal society. It is interesting to note
that the Mughal scholar Mirza Khan stated in c.1675 that the beloved in both Persian and
Hindavi love poetry was explicitly gendered male – that the ma’shuq was mard. While
homoeroticity was undoubtedly controversial in Islamic jurisprudence, the Mughals
largely turned a blind eye to same-sex relationships. The Mughals did not regard
masculinity as synonymous with heterosexuality, nor femininity with homoerotic
inclinations. This is made clear in the Mirzanama, which considers it undignified to run
after a male or female beloved (ma’shuq) who belongs to someone else (the ‘ashiq, or
lover).

Instead, what did violate the mirza’s manhood was for him to take the passive role
of the beloved, the ma’shuq. According to the Mirzanama, the mirza should shun the
effeminate behaviours of the (obviously male) ma’shuq, like putting flowers in his turban,
because “it is a blemish for the mirza, who is a lover” – the ‘ashiq. In this way, the
conflation of high status with masculinity and low status with passivity mapped directly onto elite ascriptions of roles in erotic relationships. Passive sexuality in a man was heavily stigmatised in Indo-Persian discourse, despite the poietical idealisation of the male beloved, and passive erotic behaviours were customarily tolerated only in men of low social status. For the mirza to adopt passive modes was highly transgressive – as Chatterjee argues potentially threatening to subvert the established social order52.

Thus the bastard mirzas stigmatised here as lady-boys were not condemned for their homosexual inclinations53, but for their violation of status norms, in their aping of public erotic mannerisms associated with the passive sexual partner – the catamite. To sustain his masculinity, the mirza must be perceived publicly to take the active role in erotic relationships, whatever happened in private. This is an important distinction, because in Indo-Persian discourse what was not spoken or seen in the public arena effectively did not happen54. So long as the markers of status/gender differentiation were preserved in public, discreet sexual relationships with men of lower status – slaves, young men, lower-class men of other kinds – fell within the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, because they embodied and reinscribed the social order. Passive eroticism belonged to women, and to men of low social status. For a mirza to be seen as erotically passive was thereby to lose all political and personal power55.

It is revealing in this respect that a mirza’s wayward lower self or nafs, over which he was required to exert self-control in Indo-Persian literature, was often troped poetically as either a woman or a catamite56. For what really threatened the mirza’s masculine status, according to Mughal discourse, was the beloved’s latent potential, whether male or female, to exert erotic power over the nobleman to gain political or social power. In other words, the true threat to the social order was unrestrained love. To love was to lose control, to be seduced by the erotic power of the passive partner and, as Chatterjee notes, to become a slave to the beloved57. Such metaphorical reversal of roles was idealised in Persian poetry, and pursued as an allegory of submission to Divine Love in the Sufi devotional realm58. But in the political and social world, excessive love was a threat to the mirza’s power. This is exposed most clearly in the Indo-Persian historical chronicles, in stories of princely transgression. Cautionary tales of great men sapped of their political power and brought low by their all-consuming love for a catamite or more frequently a courtesan, are so plentiful as to constitute a standard rhetorical trope59. Erotic relationships with low status beloveds could enact the social order, with emotional distance replacing the barrier of a physical wall. But excessive attachment threatened to blur the mandatory class and gender separation between mirza and beloved.

And this is where the paradoxical nature of the elite mehfil comes in. Music has always been highly controversial in Islamic cultures60. It is no accident that those who played the roles of courtesans and catamites in the Mughal empire were often musicians and dancers. The Indo-Persian musical treatises argued that music had the power to arouse tranquillity, melancholy, longing, grief, regret, attachment, and most profoundly feelings of love, desire, and ecstasy in the heart of the listener61. Because this emotional power was considered raw and overwhelming, music was deemed, like love, to have the potential to rob a man of his self-control and virtue. It was believed to possess the same, subversive erotic power as the beloved62, and like homosexuality was the subject of condemnation by the most conservative streams of Islamic jurisprudence63. The important seventeenth-century hadis scholar Abdul Haqq Dehlavi put this position most succinctly: “Some have said that listening to music inflames passion. The way of piety is not to listen to it”64.
Because of its potentially destabilising emotional power, music itself threatened the mirza’s masculinity. Moreover, the whole point of the mehfil according to Faqirullah was to seduce the listener and excite ecstasy – an emotional power knowingly possessed and purposely exercised over the mirza by men and women of low social status, often in songs of love and longing. Contrary to the traditional assumptions of music historiography, as we shall see the Mughal elite viewed all musicians as being of low social status. Ordinarily, for a mirza to associate with such classes risked their inferiority rubbing off. But within the mehfil, musicians were uniquely permitted to mingle in intimate proximity with men of high social status, and, in a subversion of social norms, to exert emotional power over them through music.

The mehfil therefore had unusual potential to generate transgressions of gender and status boundaries. If music was potentially so subversive, why then did the Mughal elite patronise music at all in the seventeenth century? Of course, some chose not to, the most famous amongst them being Aurangzeb himself. I argue that, as a known connoisseur and lover of music, the reason he renounced music was because he was aware of the immense hold it had over him to lead him astray and bring about his political downfall, as exemplified in the tragic tale of his fated love for the courtesan Hira Bai Zainabadi; and because music undermined his reputation for piety upon which he built his initially tenuous hold on power. But many other amirs were celebrated during Aurangzeb’s reign for their patronage of music, most notably his third son Muhammad A’zam Shah, who was the most important patron in the empire.

The answer revolves around the place awarded to music in Indo-Muslim tradition. The Mughal elite were able to justify their patronage of music on the grounds that, pursued in strict moderation, it had medicinal and spiritual benefits. The power of music to cure melancholy was a long-standing belief in Indo-Persian culture. Music was also an integral part of Sufi devotional ritual in the Mughal empire as a means for attaining ecstatic union with the Divine. Nearly all Indo-Persian treatises on music open with a justification of music as a means of realising the truth of God. Qazi Hasan, writing in 1663, clinches his argument by stating that

Music is pure (pak) either if its contents dwell on Truth, the worship of God, and other such subjects, or if the contents are worldly but the hearer is godly and (inclined) towards Truth. In such cases, music is lawful and acceptable for every musician who is associated with it, and for those initiated into the ways of mysticism (ahl-i tasawwuf). It is even correct for the scholars of hadis! [After all], the science (‘ilm) of music is food for the soul and the ears.

At root, however, the real purpose of patronising music was exactly what Faqirullah said it was – to affect the listener’s heart. The adab of the listener in the mehfil to be knowledgeable and to encourage the performer to fulfil his adab – perfection in his bodily, emotional, and technical execution of the music – were designed to achieve this specific, affective end. The mehfil was thus a space in which the cherished themes of Indo-Persian high culture – love and the grief of separation from the beloved – could safely be performed, in an aesthetic rather than a political space, thus diffusing their threat. Moreover, if the mirza performed his role as listener and connoisseur correctly, he successfully enacted for the benefit of his peers, who were his political and social judges, his power over people of lower status, and over manifestations of feminine power as music. But the danger of transgressing the boundaries was still present. The primary reason Abul Fazl gives for the political downfall of Baz Bahadur, ruler of Malwa in Akbar’s reign, was his excessive love of music. The moral of his cautionary tale is this:
Prudent and wise persons have sanctioned music at the time of care and melancholy – such as are produced by engrossment in worldly matters – with the object of recruiting the faculties, but have not approved of making music [or wine] the great objects of life and of ever sacrificing to them precious hours for which there is no exchange.  

The intimate space of the *mehfil* therefore needed to be painstakingly constructed to avoid real transgressions of the social order flirted with in the heightened moment of performance. Thus, the seventeenth-century texts deliberately codified the roles of patron and musician to create and maintain social and emotional distance between them.

This distance was effected primarily in two ways. Firstly, the most widely agreed injunction in the Indo-Persian literature was that the *mirza* should never perform the musician’s role in the *mehfil*. Although the nobleman was permitted to sing infrequently in the company of his social equals, it was disgraceful for him to sing when professional musicians were present, lest he be mistaken for one. Worse, according to the British Library *Mirzanama*, “singing can lead to dancing, and that necessarily to other disgraceful and ignominious actions.” Professional male dancers in Indo-Muslim culture were stereotyped as objects of erotic desire. Other than in the Sufi assembly – often an exception to the rules – for a male to dance was to indicate his receptivity to erotic attention, a passive erotic behaviour that was unacceptable for a *mirza*. The consensus of prescriptive and cautionary writings was that singing in public was also potentially feminising, and therefore a role suitable only for the musician in the *mehfil*. It is here that Faqirullah’s descriptive list first sounds a potentially dissonant note. He names two noblemen who were renowned for their singing, but he gives little other contextual information, describing only their performances in the Sufi assembly for the exhilaration of the *dervishes*, and not in the courtly *mehfil*.

Secondly, distance was maintained by restrictions on which classes of musician were permitted to enter the *mehfil*. In this case, prestige-differentiations between musicians were of decisive importance in establishing which would enhance a *mirza’s* masculinity, and which would make him look vulgar or effeminate. And it is here that Faqirullah’s descriptions disagree most pronouncedly with the British Library *Mirzanama*. Once again they agree on the principles. Only the highest prestige musicians, whose genres and instruments were considered suitably masculine, were uncontroversial entrants into the *mehfil*. At the very top of this list were the *kalawants*, the primary exponents of the highest prestige vocal genre *dhrupad*, and the two most venerated instruments, the *bin* and the *pakhwaj*, the latter explicitly gendered in the *Mirzanama* as masculine. The only other musicians fully acceptable in the *mehfil* were the *qawwals* of Hazrat Nizamuddin, all men, who were the preeminent exponents of the most unworldly form of *khayal*. In contrast, musicians like the *bhands* who belonged to the vulgar space of the *bazar*, or musicians belonging to the female space of the *harim*, were excluded from the *mehfil*.

What Faqirullah and the *Mirzanama* disagree on is precisely where the boundary of acceptability lay. The main controversy concerned the prestige of the male *dhadhis*, originally wandering rural musicians and, in the Mughal period, accompanists to female performers at the imperial court. The *Mirzanama* stigmatises players of the *dholak*, a small cylindrical drum, and the *khanjari*, a small frame drum, both of which were associated with the *bazar* and women’s music, as both “effeminate” and “vulgar”. The only musicians in this period known to play both instruments in the first context
described in the *Mirzanama* – at wedding celebrations – were the *dhadhis*. In contrast, Faqirullah notes with approval the male *dhadhis*’ widespread appearance in elite *mehfils* at this time. This was partly because of the *dhadhis*’ successful employment of strategies for transcending low prestige, by taking up instruments and genres associated with the *kalawants* and *qawwals*, particularly the *pakhawaj* and *dhrupad*. However, at least one miniature painting of Shah Jahan’s reign, depicting the private party of Izzat Khan, governor of Sindh, shows the *dhadhis* performing in their traditional guise in an elite *mehfil*.

More questionable was the prestige of musicians who also performed erotic functions: courtesans and male dancers. The combination of sex and the erotic power of music was arguably doubly explosive in the carefully stratified *mehfil*. The *Mirzanama* stigmatises musicians who are known to have offered sexual entertainment as low prestige, and references to eroticism in real performances are conspicuously absent from Faqirullah’s high-minded text. In particular, the *Mirzanama* censures the patronage of a community of male dancers called the *bhands*, who danced in the *bazar*. In a passage Aziz Ahmad left out of his translation, the *Mirzanama* notes that the *mirza* should shun the performances of the *bhands* because they led men astray with their generosity and seductive movements, so leading men to their disgrace. Moreover, apart from including young male dancers who dressed as women and deliberately adopted homoerotic styles, in a passage Blochmann mysteriously censored from his translation of the *A’in-i Akbari*, the *bhands* performed such amazing feats as sword-swallowing, and swallowing marbles and spitting them up one by one, which could hardly be justified on the grounds of medicinal or spiritual value.

However, in the case of the courtesans, another commentator, Mirza Kamran, confirms their customary appearance in private male space well into Aurangzeb’s reign, as do a number of European travellers, who seem to have had something of an obsession with dancing girls. Faqirullah also obliquely praises one female singer he had heard perform, who despite his reticence was almost certainly a courtesan.

What the discrepancies between the prescriptive and more descriptive evidence indicate, is that some *mirzas* like Faqirullah were indeed challenging the strictest codes of elite masculinity in the late seventeenth century, something also testified to by the anxious tone of the British Library *Mirzanama*. O’Hanlon has argued that the late seventeenth-century *mirzanama* literature may represent an attempt on the part of established *mirzas* to distance themselves from lower status upstarts at a time of increasing social mobility and lowered service morale under Aurangzeb. However, as we have already seen in the case of Izzat Khan’s *mehfil*, musical evidence in paintings from Shah Jahan’s period (r.1628-58) suggests that the *mirzanamas* of Aurangzeb’s reign reflect a reactionary position against perceived transgressions of masculine codes prior to 1660 under Shah Jahan, and at the very highest levels. The clearest pictorial transgressions of the *Mirzanama*’s dictates are found in the paintings Shah Jahan commissioned for what is now known as the Windsor Castle *Padishahnama*. The portrait of Dara Shikoh’s wedding (plates 25-6) constitutes the clearest evidence that male *dhadhis* were celebrated for playing the *dholak* and *khanjari* in the very context censured by the *Mirzanama*. Furthermore, the painting of “The weighing of Shah-Jahan on his forty-second lunar birthday” c.1635 (plates 12-13) is likely to represent the very practice of “[allowing] the Kenchens [kancani, courtesans] to enter the seraglio” that Aurangzeb overturned in 1663. Even more strikingly, one of the male musicians in this painting is playing a quintessentially feminine instrument, the *kath-tala*. Of all the Mughal emperors, Shah Jahan exerted the most influence over what his artists portrayed.
would therefore propose that the blurring of earlier, more rigid demarcations of masculine and feminine106 may have been a hallmark of Shah Jahan’s cultural aesthetic. His reign thus saw a period of tolerance for standards of manliness that had previously been considered, and were still seen by some amirs, as transgressive.

It therefore seems that there were two alternative codes of masculinity coexisting in Aurangzeb’s reign, one more conservative and anxious about change, the other more liberal and confident, and reflective of the worldview of many of the top amirs. While the British Library Mirzanama probably does reflect the highest standards of princely etiquette in 1660, the evidence of friendship circles throughout Aurangzeb’s reign107 indicates that Faqirullah and the circles in which he moved were an accepted group within the upper echelons of elite male society – Faqirullah for example was one of Aurangzeb’s top 160 mansabdars108. Moreover, the provenance of nearly all musical treatises written during this period indicates that the social context Faqirullah describes was the most important one in which music was patronised109. Faqirullah writes out of an explicitly Sufi context that is only tangentially present in the Mirzanama. Moreover, like all good Sufis he celebrates love and the musical expression of emotion without fear. While explicit eroticism is erased from the Rag Darpan probably for reasons of etiquette, Faqirullah was famed elsewhere for his life-long love for his intimate male companion, the poet Miyan Shah Nasir ‘Ali110. In contrast, the Mirzanama demonstrates a deep anxiety about the dangers to the mirza of all love relationships outside his harim, whether with men or with women111.

In this way, the conservative position of the Mirzanama, rather than being that of an established nobleman, arguably exposes its author as a low-level mirza, who needed to adhere to the highest standards of princely etiquette in order to shore up his more precarious social standing. In contrast, high-ranking and established mirzas like Faqirullah could get away with stretching the boundaries and effecting changes to old codes without it affecting their high status, in a way that low-ranking mirzas could not. Nevertheless, the discrepancies between Faqirullah and the Mirzanama are largely of degree, and not of principle. Members of Faqirullah’s circle arguably continued to play by the rules. The dhadhis he celebrates didn’t play the dholak or the khanjari, and the noble performers he mentions may only have sung in the Sufi majlis. During Aurangzeb’s reign, the principles of separating the mirza’s role from that of the professional musician, and of minimising the intrusions of the harim and the bazar into the mehfil, seem to have held across elite male society.

The circles in which Faqirullah moved, in their interest in Sufism and their likely acceptance of homoeroticism, seem to have had much in common with the contexts Dargah Quli Khan later wrote about. What is therefore immediately striking about the mehfilis he describes in 1740 is their departure from the seventeenth-century principles on which Faqirullah and the prescriptive literature agree. Firstly, Dargah Quli Khan praises unequivocally two high-ranking noblemen, A’zam Khan and Latif Khan, who regularly performed in the courtly mehfil, outside of a devotional setting, in front of the musicians they patronised112. Secondly, the reticence of Faqirullah, and the censure of the Mirzanama, concerning the overt display of eroticism in the mehfil, are gone. To my knowledge, Dargah Quli Khan is the first and possibly the only Indo-Persian prose writer of the Mughal period to name courtesans and male dancers in order to celebrate them for their musical and erotic desirabilities, rather than to censure their catalytic role in the downfall of a prince. His evocations of the mirzas’ – and his own – erotic longings for beautiful performers, from the highest-prestige qawwals to low-prestige, gender-transgressive male dancers; and especially his explicit sexualisation of the kalawants, are
unprecedented\textsuperscript{113}. In Dargah Quli Khan’s Delhi, the once forbidden, overtly erotic bhands have apparently not only colonised the princely \textit{mehfil}, but at the highest level, the court of Muhammad Shah\textsuperscript{114}. The emotional distance mandated in the seventeenth-century \textit{mehfil} between patron and musician has disappeared in Dargah Quli Khan’s vision. More than that, some \textit{mehfils}, like those of the noblemen A’zam Khan and Sadiq Quli Khan, seem to have become a space primarily for the performance of erotic desire, in which the patron deliberately took on the performer’s role, and willingly submitted to the erotic power of music actually embodied in the musicians\textsuperscript{115}.

The most startling difference, however, is the dramatic fall in the kalawants’ prestige. Dargah Quli Khan’s satirical treatment of Shuja’at Khan Kalawant as a pathetic old catamite who didn’t realise he was past his use-by date\textsuperscript{116} is particularly telling. Shuja’at Khan’s allegedly rustic manners and passive erotic behaviours, are together definitive indicators of low prestige, and Dargah Quli Khan’s satire is designed to puncture his unworthy pretensions to a higher level than is currently allocated to him. Rather than appearing in their rightful place at the head of his list, the older kalawants are listed after the instrumentalists and only just above percussionists, the lowliest entrants into the strictest \textit{mehfils}. The best he can say about any of them is that Boli Khan is still an honoured servant of the emperor and that his singing was once praised\textsuperscript{117}. However, what is more revealing about the kalawants’ current prestige is what he \textit{doesn’t say}. For three of the top musicians in the empire, including the great Ni’amat Khan “Sadarang,” were undoubtedly kalawants – but Dargah Quli Khan makes no mention of their social background, venerating them as high prestige in the traditional manner\textsuperscript{118}. Ni’amat Khan is named as a kalawant in several historical chronicles of the period immediately before the reign of Muhammad Shah, and again by his descendants in early nineteenth century treatises\textsuperscript{119}. Dargah Quli Khan states that Rahim Sen and Tan Sen – the only dhrupad specialists in his entire text – were direct descendants of the great Tansen of Akbar’s reign, their “immense talent testifying to the purity of their genealogy as sons of the greatest of all lineages of musicians”\textsuperscript{120}. If true, they were certainly kalawants, possibly sons or nephews of the last of Tansen’s direct family to be definitely identified, Ras Baras Khan Kalawant, who was alive in 1698\textsuperscript{121}. Either Dargah Quli Khan was unaware of these musicians’ kalawanti background, as an outsider to Delhi’s history, or he didn’t \textit{want} to mention it. The only reason for not doing so would have been that a kalawanti background was currently considered shameful, and unsuited to their present eminence. To speak publicly of a shameful episode in the life of a respectable person in Indo-Muslim culture, even if it was common knowledge, was unthinkable\textsuperscript{122}. Either way, it seems that three top kalawants in the empire were hiding their social backgrounds to protect their high prestige – and recognised kalawants were considered to be of low prestige, even possibly despised.

Why? The reason for the dramatic decline in the kalawants’ fortunes is contained in the salutary story of the reign of Aurangzeb’s grandson, Jahandar Shah\textsuperscript{123}. In 1712 Jahandar Shah inherited the Mughal throne, only to be overthrown and executed within a year. His entire reign is portrayed in the contemporary historical chronicles as a cautionary tale about the political suicide of excessive love, for music, and for a musician. In a breathtaking subversion of social norms Jahandar Shah raised his favourite courtesan, Lal Kunwar, to the status of chief consort, and elevated the kalawants, including Ni’amat Khan, to positions of high political power over the heads of the established elite. Their outrage at this blatant transgression of the social order clearly exposes the kalawants’ true social status, as “low-born”. Jahandar Shah is portrayed in the contemporary chronicles as being completely under their sway, “a king in the game of chess, being moved hither
and thither” by his musicians\textsuperscript{124}. The kalawants are despised as low-born, wicked fools, who oppress the people with impunity. In the famous statement of Kamwar Khan, “the owl dwelt in the eagle’s nest, and the crow took the place of the nightingale.”\textsuperscript{125} History’s revenge was swift and merciless. After an overwhelmingly popular coup, Jahandar Shah was killed and Lal Kunwar banished forever behind the walls of the “widow house” in the imperial harim. Throughout the story the kalawants share fully in Lal Kunwar’s glory – and her fate, disappearing from the story when her fate is sealed.

The kalawants should be understood here as symbols of the reversal of social norms under Jahandar Shah, and his trampling on Mughal sovereignty and power. The male protagonists signify the terrible fate that befalls any man who transgresses his social role, whether he be a princely patron who violates his masculinity by being enslaved by his love for music, eroticly embodied in a courtesan, or whether he be a low-born musician, however well-regarded musically, who tries to grab political power, thus transgressing his preordained, passive role. It is little wonder that the kalawants were punished for such a violation of the social order. The kalawants undoubtedly fell out ofavour with the Mughal nobility at this time. Mid-eighteenth-century biographies of Ni’amat Khan Kalawant – including the one in the Muraqqa’-i Dehli – indicate he was without a patron for at least seven years after Jahandar Shah’s death\textsuperscript{126}. But the kalawants’ downfall is most powerfully demonstrated in the near extinction of their quintessential vocal genre dhrupad. Ni’amat Khan’s disappearing act and his reappearance in disguise at the court of Muhammad Shah ensured his survival and continuing eminence. But the kalawants who were recognised as such suffered the ignominy of being stripped of their erstwhile prestige, and having their masculinity questioned and denied by observers like Dargah Quli Khan.

How then should we read Dargah Quli Khan’s vision of musical life under Muhammad Shah? The Muraqqa’-i Dehli is notable for two things: its copious descriptions of Sufism in Delhi, and of the social world of mirzas who were homeerotically inclined. It seems from his use of first-person, and his enthusiasm, that Dargah Quli Khan was a participant in both. With respect to the mehfils, his evidence of high-ranking mirzas who personally performed in their mehfils, and of the entry of the bhands into elite musical space all the way up to the level of the emperor, arguably indicates real and significant changes in cultural practice from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. The increased fluidity of the patron’s role in some mehfils, and the eroticisation of musical performance space, do seem to indicate a greater blurring of the late seventeenth-century separation between masculine and feminine, high and low statuses. This may indeed be symptomatic of the crumbling of old social and political norms and the much greater social fluidity that accompanied the eighteenth-century decline of central Mughal power.

However, it may be that Dargah Quli Khan’s vision is relevant only to a specific subculture of the city at a single historical moment, with which he was personally intimate. Notably, some exactly contemporary noblemen still upheld in their writings the old injunctions designed to maintain distance between patron and musician, including Shah Nawaz Khan, who began writing his famous biographical dictionary the Ma’asir al-Umara’ in 1741\textsuperscript{127}. More importantly, Dargah Quli Khan’s gaze arguably says more about him than about the performers he observed\textsuperscript{128}. He uses the name bhagat-bazan to describe in highly erotic terms a troupe of male dancers, led by the famous eunuch Taqi, who were almost certainly not bhagat-bazan at all, but bhands\textsuperscript{129}. Writing in the same century, the Urdu poet Mir also confuses different communities of male dancers whom he perceives as objects of erotic desire\textsuperscript{130}. These authors’ fluid use of terminology arguably represents an inability to see beyond their own Mughal preconceptions about male
dancers, to significant differences between gender-transgressive Muslim erotic dancers, and Hindu actors who performed scenes in the life of Lord Krishna. At the very least, we should henceforward be cautious in our use of the *Muraqqa’-i Dehlī* to derive general observations about Mughal cultural history.

But what cannot be accounted for by Dargah Quli Khan’s unusual vision is the unexpected downgrading of the *kalawants*’ prestige, a prestige that was fully restored by the end of the eighteenth century, once memories of their political transgressions had faded. The old principles of gender and sexual roles still held when it came to clear violations of the social order. The humiliating metamorphosis of the *kalawants* into catamites in Dargah Quli Khan’s Delhi was not to do with sexuality, but with power. He is not here describing the normative performance of sexuality in the eighteenth-century *mehfil*, but the old *mirzas*’ triumphant reestablishment of the political and social status quo on the bodies of the *kalawants*.

---

1 Different versions of this paper were presented in 2003 at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, New York, the Center for Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, the South Asian History Seminar, SOAS, and the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge University. I am grateful to Richard Widdess, Shailaja Fennell, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, Radhika Chopra, Sunil Sharma, Indrani Chatterjee, and the discerning audiences at these seminars for their insightful critique.

2 Panegyric songs in praise of the patron, written in Hindavi and sung in classical *raga* and *tala*.


4 Which Blake mistakenly labels “popular culture”, as Sanjay Subrahmanyam has pointed out: “The greater part of [the *Muraqqa’*] is simply not about ‘popular culture’, as generally understood... Blake is clearly unfamiliar with the [elite] traditions [described],... to group art-music, as well as the poetry of Mirza Bedil and Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan under the head of ‘popular culture’ suggests either that Blake is providing a radical redefinition of the spheres of ‘elite’ and ‘popular’, or that from his perspective the ‘popular’ can be subsumed under the elite... Subrahmanyam, “The Mughal state – structure or process? Reflections on recent western historiography,” *IESHR* 29.3 (1992), p. 313.


9 Stephen O Murray, “Corporealizing medieval Persian and Turkish tropes,” in Stephen O Murray and Will Roscoe eds., *Islamic homosexuality: culture, history, and literature* (New York: 1997), p. 139. Murray quotes Southgate’s definition of *amrad* as “the boy one sodomized”, as opposed to “the boy one loved passionately [without sodomising]”, the *shahid*. Murray’s definition is doubly problematic in the case of the *Muraqqa’-i Dehlī*. As Chatterjee has pointed out, the *amrad* was frequently not a “boy” at all, but a young man or a slave of any age (“Alienation” (2002), p. 62-3). Moreover, as we shall see, it is not at all clear that Dargah Quli Khan’s perception of the *kalawants* as catamites had anything to do with real instances of sexual behaviour.


14 Note, for example, the veneration accorded to Ras Bara Khan Kalawant and his brother in early eighteenth-century MSS: see *Risala dar Tal* [early 18C], Edinburgh University Library, Or. MS 585, f. 59a; editor’s introduction to Ras Bara Khan Kalawant, *Shams al-Aswat* [1698], Edinburgh University Library, Or. MS 585, f. 1b.


Niccolao Manucci’s Storia do Mogor [begun 1699], and a late seventeenth-century source known as “Ma’muri” paraphrased by Khafi Khan in the Muntakhab al-Lubab [begun 1718]. These are the only two sources that mention the famous “burial of music” anecdote, and which suggest a complete cessation of legitimate music making. The earlier account, “Ma’muri” – a pen name covering at least three anonymous Mughal officers – was written at best thirteen years after the events described. Both Manucci and “Ma’muri” were fiercely antagonistic towards Aurangzeb, and neither are reliable witnesses; see Brown, “Hindustani music in the time of Aurangzeb” (University of London PhD thesis: 2003), pp. 81-117 for a full rebuttal of the ban myth.


See Brown, “Hindustani music” (2003), pp. 81-117.

ibid; see also Bakhtawar Khan, Mir’at-i ‘Alam, in Sir H M Elliott and John Dowson, The history of India as told by its own historians (Calcutta: 1877), p. 157; and Saqi Musta’idd Khan, Ma’asir-i ‘Alamgiri, Jadunath Sarkar trans. (Calcutta: 1947), pp. 45, 313.


I am indebted to Rosalind O’Hanlon for drawing my attention to this text; see O’Hanlon, “Manliness and imperial service” (1999); Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 90b-1a.

e.g. Faqirullah, Rag Darpan (1996); see Brown, “Hindustani music” (2003), pp. 50-2, 58-62, and 132-46 for an extended discussion of relevant treatises.


Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 91a; see also Abul Fazl, Akbarnama (1873-87), vol ii pp. 128.

The word Ahmad translates here euphemistically as “a great deal of mischief” is dayusi, “cuckoldom”, or the state of being cuckolded.


ibid, pp. 63, 67; O’Hanlon, “Manliness and imperial service” (1999), pp. 82-3.

see also O’Hanlon, “Manliness and imperial service” (1999), pp. 49.

Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 91a; the approved pakhwaj was traditionally played by the high-prestige kalawants, and the censured dhola and khanjari by the dhadhis, whose relative prestige was contested in this period; see below.


Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 105; Mirzanama, f. 94a.
Khan and beg ("lord, prince") were titles given to Mughal noblemen, and khanum and begum ("lady, lady of rank") designated their wives; a mirzada was the son of a prince or nobleman, here implying an adolescent.  


Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 106; *Mirzanama*, f. 95b.

ibid. In both cases the author uses the masculine *ma‘shuq*. It might be possible to use *ma‘shuq* to imply both male and female beloveds, but if the author wanted to specify that the beloved was female, he would need to use the feminine *ma‘shuqa*. In the second case, the beloved is wearing a turban and is hence indisputably male.


See also Chatterjee, “Alienation” (2002), pp. 71-3.


KBOPL, handlist 2551, f. 56a; Qazi Hasan, *Sarad al-Bahr*, SJML, Mus.8, f. 2b.

For almost identical modern attitudes in Afghanistan and Muslim South Asia, see especially Doubleday, “The frame drum” (1999), 104, 116 and 121-2; and Qureshi, pp. 24-7, which includes a detailed description of the intimate relationship between music, female musician, and the arousal of helpless love in the patron.  


Faqirullah, “Sarangi” (1997), p. 26; Brian Silver, “The adab of musicians,” in Barbara Metcalf ed., *Moral conduct and authority: the place of adab in South Asian Islam* (California: 1984), p. 323. Silver notes here that male classical musicians deliberately exercise this power over their listeners in the modern context: “Musicians feel that music has its own inherent power to charm...‘Abd al-Karim Khan...is said to have subdued a school full of unruly boys with his singing, knowing as he did that ‘music presented with understanding could control the devil in man’.”

Jahandarnama [early 18C], quoted in Satish Chandra, “Cultural and political role of Delhi, 1675-1725,” in R E Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi through the ages: essays in urban history, culture and society* (Delhi: 1986), p. 211.


309

[523x795]309

[108x751]72 Bindraban Das, Safina-i Khushgu [1721-34], KBOPL, handlist 225, f.36a; for a list of other patrons see Brown, “Hindustani music (2003), pp. 105-8.

73 e.g. Muzaffar Husain, Jam-i Jahan-nama, ff.230a-1a.

74 This belief first became enshrined in Islamic philosophy through the work of the ninth-century Arab scholar Ya’qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (d. 870); see Amnon Shiloah, Music in the world of Islam: a socio-cultural study, (Aldershot: 1995), pp. 50-1.

75 See Brown, “Hindustani music” (2003), pp. 52-8.

76 Qazi Hasan, Miftah al-Sarud [1664], SJML, Mus. 13, f.3a. Here Qazi Hasan uses the phrase ghiza-i rauh, “food for the soul.” Qureshi notes that the primary reason of the courtesan’s mujra-mehfil for her elite Lucknavi audience – “what [they have] come for. . . is ruhani ghiza (literally: soul food), an essential emotional-spiritual nourishment that is inherent in music;” “Sarangi” (1997), p. 24.

77 Faqirullah, Rag Darpan (1996), p. 79.


81 Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 91a.

82 Faqirullah, Rag Darpan, pp. 199, 203-5.

83 I use the term “status” to differentiate between communities across the whole of Mughal society; thus the nobles were high status and musicians low status. I use the term “prestige” to differentiate between communities of musicians; thus kalawants were of low social status relative to the amirs but of high musical prestige, and therefore permitted into the mehfil. Male dancers from the bazar, on the other hand, were low status and low prestige, and therefore excluded.


85 Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 90b.

86 Lahawri, Padshahnama (1867-8), vol.ii p. 5-6.

87 Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 91a.


89 More specifically, only the male dhadhis – and not their female counterparts who were universally regarded as auspicious – could possibly have been the subject of the Mirzanama’s censure here; see Brown, “Hindustani music” (2003), pp. 154-72, for a full discussion of this identification.


92 Bonnie C Wade, Imaging Sound: an ethnomusicological study of music, art and culture in Mughal India (Chicago: 1998), fig.152.

93 Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), p. 101; Mirzanama, f. 90b-1a.

94 Abdul Halim Sharar, Lucknow: the last phase of an oriental culture (Delhi: 1994), pp. 142-3.

95 Abul Fazl, A’in-i Akbari (Calcutta: 1876-7), pp. 143.

96 Mirza Kamran, Mirzanama (1913), pp. 12.


100 Published in Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch eds., King of the world: the Padshahnama (London and Washington: 1997).

101 ibid, pl. 25-6

102 ibid, pl. 12-13


104 Wade states this is the only known Mughal painting to depict a man playing the kath-tala (fish shaped castanets of stone or wood); they are normally seen in the hands of female musicians accompanying female dancers; Imaging Sound (1998), p. 184-5.

105 Beach and Koch, King of all the world (1997), p. 131.


Compare the author’s sanction against employing beautiful male dinner attendants in case his guests “abuse his hospitality”, with his prohibition on allowing female *harim* musicians to perform in the *mehfil* – both are tantamount to enabling his friends to cuckold him; Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), pp. 102, 101.


*Compare the author’s sanction against employing beautiful male dinner attendants in case his guests “abuse his hospitality”, with his prohibition on allowing female *harim* musicians to perform in the *mehfil* – both are tantamount to enabling his friends to cuckold him; Ahmad, “Mirzanama” (1975), pp. 102, 101.*

Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa’-i Dehli* (1993), p. 97. Dargah Quli Khan calls the troupe of dancers described in this passage *bhagat-bazan*, but his description indicates they were almost certainly not *bhagat-bazan* at all, but *bhand*; see below.


ibid, pp. 94-6.

ibid, pp. 90, 93.

e.g. see extracts in Kidwai, “Dargah Quli Khan” (2001).


Ras Baras Khan Kalawant, *Shams al-Aswat* [1698], f. 3a. Ras Baras Khan, whose patron was Aurangzeb, was considered the greatest musician of his day; see *Risala dar Tal*, f.59a. He was the son of Aurangzeb’s chief musician Khushhal Khan Kalawant, the son of Shah Jahan’s chief musician Lal Khan Kalawant, the son-in-law and principal disciple of Jahangir’s chief musician Bilas Khan, the son of Tansen. Chatterjee, “Alienation” (2002), p. 65; cf. Murray, “Will not to know” (1997), pp. 16-17.


It was written between 1741 and 1747; Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma‘asir al-Umara’* (1999) vol.i p. vi.

I will discuss the singularity of Dargah Quli Khan’s perspective at length in forthcoming work; Katherine Butler Brown, “Dargah Quli Khan’s strange vision: Mughals, music, and the *Muraqqa’-i Dehli*” (Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies: forthcoming).


Abul Fazl, *A’in-i Akbari* (1876-7); see also a near-contemporary description (1733) of the *bhagat-bazan* in Baqir Ali Khan, *Bahr al-ma’ni*, SJML, A/Nm. 98, ff.13a-16a.