“Words Without Songs”: The social history of Hindustani song collections in India’s Muslim courts c.1770–1830

Katherine Butler Schofield

In his important book on Ottoman song anthologies, *Words Without Songs*, Owen Wright noted that:

It is fair to say that such works have failed to receive the attention which the evident popularity of the genre would seem to justify. Reasons for neglect would not be hard to seek: the güfte mecmuası belongs functionally to the realm of music, but the early examples, for which there is little or no access to the accompanying melodies, could now be thought of as primarily literary in relevance as well as content, while for the musicologist the crucial absence of any notation has presumably meant that they have generally been deemed insufficiently informative to warrant detailed investigation.

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1 Formerly Katherine Butler Brown.

2 1992: pp. 1–2. This research was generously funded by the European Research Council as part of the project “Musical Transitions to European Colonialism in the Eastern Indian Ocean” (2011–15). Many of the song collections I discuss may be consulted at King’s College London via the database SHAMSA: Sources for the History and Analysis of Music/Dance in South Asia (2016). Thanks for input and advice to Francesca Orsini, David J Lunn, Azfar Moin and Southern Methodist University, Jane Chapman, Davesh Soneji, Pasha Muhammad Khan, Lalita du Perron, Peter Marshall, and especially my ERC Awadh Case Study team: James Kippen, Allyn Miner, Margaret E Walker and
The state of play with respect to North Indian song collections before 1900 is remarkably similar. In South Asian studies, the song collection has received considerable attention as a literary genre, especially in religious studies where sung poetry forms the major corpus for the study of Sikh and Hindu bhakti traditions. Musicologists and literature scholars have also examined the literary implications of anthologies of courtly dhrupad songs from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cheap mass-produced songbooks in colonial-era Hindi and Urdu, and collections of their art-music counterparts from nineteenth-century Bengal. Yet the implications for music studies of North Indian song collections made before 1900 have largely been left unexplored, essentially for the same reasons Wright outlined. The absence of notation has appeared to render the songs in these collections mute, and thus of limited interest to a field—ethnomusicology—that is essentially coterminous with the era of recorded sound. Separated from their melodies, earlier song texts lie still on the page, their bones enduring but their life force gone forever. These songs were, moreover, only ever fully

Richard David Williams. The standard transliteration systems for Persian and Indic languages sometimes use the same diacriticals for very different sounds, making them incompatible. I therefore use a simplified transliteration system based on North Indian pronunciation, in which diacriticals are only used for long vowels (ā, ī, ū), retroflex consonants in words of Indic origin (ṭ, ḍ, ṇ, ṣ, ṛ), khe and ghain (kh, gh), and ‘ain (‘).
embodied in the throats, eyes, hands and feet of singers and dancers long turned to dust. On the face of things, then, late Mughal and early colonial anthologies of Hindustani art-music songs give little away.

This apparent opacity has led to the thoroughgoing neglect of pre-twentieth-century song collections as a source for Indian musicology and music history. In this chapter I will consider for the first time the import of a significant corpus of collections of courtly Hindustani songs that emerged in unprecedented number between about 1770 and 1830.\(^7\) Wedged in between the imperial dhrupad collections of the Mughal era\(^8\) and the mass print culture of the nineteenth-century public sphere, these manuscript collections, mainly of khayāl, ṭappa, ghazal and tarānā, have hitherto gone unnoticed.\(^9\)

Figure 1: A khayāl in Brajbhasha and a ṭappa in Panjabi, both in Rag Bhairav.
Richard Johnson Songs (c.1780–5), f. 2r.

Given the key importance of the song composition—the bandish, the chīz—to contemporary connoisseurs and historians of today’s classical tradition,\(^10\) this seems something of an

\(^7\) Here I am using “Hindustani” to indicate North Indian classical musical style, not in its linguistic sense to refer to the precursor of Hindi and Urdu language.

\(^8\) e.g. 1990, 1993, 2000, 2010.

\(^9\) In previous scholarship, Sophia Plowden’s significant collection of North Indian lyrics from Nawabi Lucknow has largely been passed over and mis-characterised as a “set of miniatures” or “prints” (Woodfield 2000: p. 152; Farrell 1997: p. 36).

oversight. Fortunately, we have available to us quite a lot of contemporaneous information about the authors and collectors of songs and their performance practices that we can use to contextualise and round out these anthologies. Dealt with imaginatively, the song texts too are not as silent as we might hitherto have imagined.

The multilingual and multigeneric yet bounded repertoire these collections represent clearly circulated throughout the subcontinent from Bharuch on the west coast to Calcutta in the east and from Kathmandu in Nepal to Hyderabad in southern India. While many such collections were produced for Muslim patrons in courts such as Delhi, Awadh (Lucknow) and Hyderabad, some were collected by Europeans resident in these locations, including women. To render this extraordinary wealth of sources manageable, in what follows I am going to concentrate on three collections written in nastāʿīq (Perso-Arabic) script, supplemented with insights drawn from other contemporaneous anthologies:11

- the collection made c.1780–5 for the Deputy Resident of Lucknow, Richard Johnson, containing khayāls, tappas and other courtly repertoire (Songs, British Library);12
- Sophia Plowden’s collection made in Lucknow in 1787–8, a deluxe loose-leaf

11 Additional sources include: “Talib” Khan (c.1772); Mahlaqa Bai “Chanda” (c.1790); Shah ‘Alam II (1944 [1797]); Gilchrist (1798); d’Ochoa (early 19C; 1845); and a collection of dhrupads by the Delhi kalāwants Karim Sen “Nad Baras” and Fazil Khan “Tan Baras” for Rana Bahadur Shah of Kathmandu (1760s-80s) (Richard Widdess 2010: personal communication).

12 Richard Johnson’s priceless collection of manuscripts and paintings was mainly collected 1780–85 when he was Deputy British Resident of Lucknow and then Resident of Hyderabad (Marshall 2004). Songs includes lyrics that name the current Mughal Emperor in Delhi (f. 17r), but nothing specific to Hyderabad; and a large proportion are tappas, considered a Lucknow specialty.
presentation album of ghazals, ṭappas, tarānās, khayāls and horīs with exquisite miniature paintings garnishing each folio and an accompanying volume of the song tunes written out in European staff notation (Album, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge); and

- Khushhal Khan “Anup” kalāwant’s vast compendium of the canonical repertoire of the greatest Mughal court musicians of Delhi, the Rāg-Rāginī Roz o Shab, organised into two sections by day (roz) and night (shab) rāgs, made c.1818–32 in Hyderabad for Nizam Sikander Jah Asaf Jah III (Rāg-Rāginī, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad).13

I will be looking not so much at the song texts themselves contained within these and other manuscripts—a book-length study in itself—but at the different logics behind the making of song collections in this period of transition from late Mughal to early colonial regimes of patronage, c. 1770–1830. In doing so, I hope both to elaborate what song collections can tell us musically even in the absence of notation, and to make some preliminary observations about the changing state of patronage in the Indian musical field at a critical moment of political transition.14

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13 The colophon has 1832 (1248 AH), but the MS opens with a composition explicitly dated 1818 (1234 AH).

14 For cognate work that addresses the musical economy of courtly patronage in early colonial South India during this transitional period, see Peterson 2012 and forthcoming; Soneji 2012: pp. 27-69; Subramanian 2006; and Weidman 2006: pp. 59-110.
The landscape of North Indian music towards the end of the eighteenth century was undoubtedly complex, and despite what we think we know of its contours, it has not yet been properly mapped.\(^{15}\) The standard narrative has Mughal court musicians fleeing the decrepitude of Delhi for alluring Awadh \textit{en masse} during the reign of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1719–48), usually following the sacking of Delhi in 1739 by the Persian emperor Nadir Shah.\(^{16}\) The reality was more complicated. The Mughal emperors and the Nawabs of Awadh were utterly entangled in each others’ affairs until the 1770s, with the first two Nawabs based in Delhi, the Mughal emperor Shah ‘Alam II living in Awadh 1760–72, and several Mughal princes remaining in Lucknow well into the nineteenth century.\(^{17}\) In previous centuries, independent rulers and Mughal officers posted as regional governors throughout the empire customarily sponsored their own establishments of elite musicians.\(^{18}\) Conversely, many communities of musicians including courtesans (tawā’if), mendicants (e.g. bairāgīs), Sufi singers (qawwāls) and military-cum-panegyric singers (ḍhaḍhīs) had long pursued itinerant lifestyles, travelling from patron to patron along well-trodden trade and pilgrimage routes.\(^{19}\) Even the greatest of Mughal musicians, Tansen (d.1589), started his career in Gwalior, moved to the court of Rewa, and only then was sent to Akbar’s court, from whence his body was returned to Gwalior after death to be buried there.\(^{20}\) There had always been much more to the Indian musical economy than what happened in the Mughal capital.

\(^{15}\) Though see Barlow and Subramanian 2007, for a sophisticated overview.


\(^{20}\) Delvoye 1993.
But it is also true that the rapidly changing political and entrepreneurial dynamics of eighteenth-century North India, with the Mughal centre definitively on the wane, opened up Hindustan’s musical economy to unprecedented competition between an array of newly wealthy patrons eager to secure “elite” musicians to shore up their own, sometimes dubious, credentials—Rohilla Afghans, European adventurers, Maratha generals, upstart Mughal viziers, East India Company officers, and many others. Many newly empowered patrons had subtly different tastes from those cultivated at the old Mughal court—both \textit{tappā} and \textit{thumrī} were made fashionable in Nawabi Lucknow, for instance—and some of them facilitated a new wave of absorption of styles and instruments from beyond India’s borders. At the same time, these new patrons acknowledged Mughal cultural power and harboured pretensions to succeed the Delhi emperors in prestige, influence, and innovation.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that we should simultaneously find strong evidence for the persistence throughout this period of the idea of Delhi as the source of musical authority and prestige throughout the region. Indeed, the Mughal court itself remained a significant, though attenuated, centre of elite musical patronage until that world was destroyed after the Indian Uprising of 1857. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, therefore, a dramatic increase in opportunities for all sorts of performers to improve their fortunes and status seems to have gone hand in hand with attempts by the Delhi musical


\textsuperscript{22} See e.g. Miner 1997; McNeil 2004; Manuel 1989.

\textsuperscript{23} Williams 2015: pp. 37–52.

\textsuperscript{24} e.g. \textit{Rāg Darshan} (Hindavi) 1800; \textit{Hayy al-Arwāḥ} c.1780; Edinburgh \textit{tāl} treatise 1787.

\textsuperscript{25} e.g. \textit{Khulāsāt al-‘Aish} 1798; \textit{Asl al-Usūl} c.1815; Khan 1847; Dalrymple and Sharma 2012.
establishment to maintain their authority as arbiters of what was best in the Hindustani tradition. Unexpectedly, given the stereotype of the illiterate ustād bequeathed to us by nationalist musicologists, some Delhi musicians themselves were active in this endeavour through writing innovative works of musical scholarship in Persian, Hindavi and later Urdu.26

A major outcome of all this fresh energy in the musical marketplace was a new momentum in the decades either side of 1800 to compile the songs in the repertoire of elite court musicians. Those collections I cite in this chapter are all unambiguously anthologies of the songs performed by elite musicians in the Hindustani tradition in Delhi and the post-Mughal soirées of Lucknow, Hyderabad, Kathmandu, the Marathas, and even the British. Each compilation is visibly unique: they are in different scripts; some offer a smorgasbord of genres while others are more restricted; some have been more obviously systematised; some were hastily written; while others are fit for presentation to a Nawab. This reflects the eclectivity of a diverse economy constituted of patrons with differing tastes, performers with varied agendas, and multifarious local ideas of what constituted a good book. At the same time, these songs collectively embody a discrete repertoire: the more exclusive spectrum of song genres composed in rāg and tāl that were performed in elite and aspirational contexts, especially in the Mughal successor courts: dhrupad, khayāl, ṭappa, hoṛī, tarānā, sargam, ghazal and rubāʾī (both Persian and Urdu27), kabit, sheʿr, tuk, dohā and, usually marked in some way as set apart, the specifically devotional genres qaul, astut, and marsīya.28

26 e.g. Bhatkhande 1916; Schofield 2013a.
27 Then known as rekhta or Hindustani.
28 There is one “representative” marsīya in Plowden; a section of astut (or astūt, elegies) and jashn (celebrations) at the front of Khushhal Khan; and two pages of qauls at the back of Johnson.
Taken collectively these anthologies also clearly represent a new logic of collection. What is different about this logic compared with that of their predecessors, and what are the similarities between the eighteenth-century song anthologies that mark them out collectively as a new phenomenon? Unlike bhakti collections, they do not have any unity of theme or divine addressee, nor are they theological or hagiographical in their primary impetus, though such topics are included. It is clear just from the diversity of languages represented that their collation had a musical rather than lyrical logic.

Figure 2: The beginning of the “night rāgs and rāginīs” section of the contents table (fihrist) of the Rāg-Rāginī Roz o Shab (f. 5v), showing Hamir (“pages 1–6: 36 dhruṇāds and so forth, 6 horīs, 18 khayāls and so forth.”), Jit, and Kedara.

Khushhal Khan’s, for example, is systematically organised by rāg, not language (Figure 2), and it is hard to believe that even in the multilingual environment of early-modern North India 29 many patrons could have fully understood lyrics in all of Persian, Brajbhasha, Urdu, Purabi, Marwari and Panjabi, let alone the wordless vocables of tarāṇā and sargam that only have rhythmic and melodic meaning. 30 Rather, their pleasure for the listener lay more in the combination of melody, mood and general sense of meaning than in the actual lyrics. The diversity of the songs’ languages thus reflects the precedence of musicality over poetry in their collection logic.

Figure 3: sargam (L) and tarāṇā (R), Plowden Album (1787–8), ff. 36, 35.

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29 Orsini 2012.

30 e.g. Plowden ff. 1, 7, 12, 29, 21, 15 and Figure 3.
Likewise, the lyrical subject matter is exceptionally diverse, from the stereotypical cupbearers and languishing glances of the ghazal, to Krishna’s playful antics with Radha, to songs in praise of mortal patrons, Sufi saints, and Maula ‘Ali. Only a minority of songs include authors’ pen-names (chāp or takhallus), but where they do they are eclectic in one sense but unified in another. Authors range from Amir Khusrau and Hafiz writing in Persian to Tansen and Jagannath Kabirai composing in Brajbhasha to Sadarang, Shori, Sauda and Hazin in various vernaculars to the recent ghazals of Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II and Nawab of Awadh Asafuddaula. The spread of authors may have been eclectic, but all were considered classics. In the cases of hereditary musicians’ collections, they also included their own compositions amongst those of their distinguished forebears.

These eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collections are also unlike their great Mughal predecessor, the Sahasras, a compilation for the Emperor Shah Jahan (r.1628-58) of 1004 dhrupads by the great sixteenth-century singer Nayak Bakhshu. The impetus behind the Emperor’s order to collate and standardise their song texts—removing, for example, the names of their original patrons and replacing them with “Shah Jahan” —was to monumentalise and canonise a single genre and composer. This exercise was in the vanguard of the efforts of Mughal patrons to “classicise” Hindustani music for new aficionados in the

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31 e.g. Plowden, ff. 8, 11, 27; Johnson; ff. 1v–5v; Khushhal Khan, Rāg-Rāgini: ff. 8r–11v, 16r; Shah Alam, pp. 134–5; etc.
32 e.g. Plowden, ff. 1–2, 10, 12, 24; Khushhal Khan, Rāg-Rāgini: ff. 16v–22v; Johnson, ff. 13r–v 16r–17r; Shah Alam; etc.
34 Delvoye 1990.
mid seventeenth century. Shah Jahan’s compilers deliberately reshaped what they collected in order to transform it into what should be sung. In contrast, the eighteenth-century compilers collected but did not reshape the repertoire; they did not create what should be sung, but collected what was sung, and in some cases for singing, in order that it might be sung again.

This is not to say that there was an absence of a canonising imperative in all of these collections. Plowden and Johnson collected only the repertoire they personally heard without any attempt to be comprehensive, but the named composers in their anthologies are all the usual suspects. It is already clear from these that a canon of poets and composers was firmly in existence in the performed repertoire. Furthermore, although clearly no collective effort at systematising a repertoire of “classical” genres is represented here, the spectrum remains the same across the collections – genres performed in rāg and tāl known to be the intellectual property of elite hereditary musicians—kalāwants and qawwāls—and high-class courtesans. I will return to what the kalāwant Khushhal Khan’s collection represents in terms of the canonisation of Delhi traditions at the end.

The mark of the rootedness of all of these collections in the repertoire of elite court musicians as it was performed lies partly in the fact that such a ragbag of compilations, made in geographically distant places by and for all sorts of people, could produce such synchronicity in the genres, composers and languages represented. But it also lies in the traces of orality

35 Schofield 2010.
36 e.g. Plowden, Album; Woodfield 2000: pp. 149–80.
37 Woodfield 2000.
evident in all the collections: in the way the songs have been written down, but also in the writing out of rhythmic and melodic syllables that have no meaning outside a musical performance context. For example, in the Plowden version of a Persian *rubā’ī* known to her by its first three words “Ā’ī parī-chihra” (Oh fairy-faced one), her scribe repeated this same fragment at the end, indicating the need in performance to return to the first line; this corresponds exactly with the A-B-A melodic construction used to sing Hindustani *ghazals* today.\(^3^9\) We also know that the Persian *ghazals* Plowden included were sung in Hindustani musical style because one of them incorporates a section of *sargam*, the Indian oral notation used in melodic improvisation.\(^4^0\) Khushhal Khan, meanwhile, included swathes of *sargam* and *tarānā* syllables in his transcriptions, which give us a reasonable idea when read alongside their *rāg* and *tāl* titles of what the tunes sounded like. He also consistently misspelled words derived from Arabic: the clearest indication that he wrote down these songs from the orally remembered repertoire of his ancestors is that he spelled Arabic words as they are pronounced in Indian languages, and not as they are spelled.\(^4^1\)

I will now look more closely at the similarities and differences between the Johnson, Plowden, and Khushhal Khan collections. This exercise suggests that the localised forms of the pan-regional repertoires they embody reveal a disparity between the major Mughal successor states of Awadh and Hyderabad in the late eighteenth century over the status of traditions born in Mughal Delhi. I will attempt to unpick the slightly different social logics of these collections’ compilation in order to ascertain what the entry into the marketplace of British and Awadhi tastes and patronage meant for North Indian elite musical traditions.

\(^{3^9}\) *Album*: f. 27; Manuel 1991: pp. 348–9.

\(^{4^0}\) *Album*: f. 36.

\(^{4^1}\) e.g. *Rāg-rāgini*, ff. 16v (Moinuddin Chishti), 20v (Hajrat), 24r (Kutb Din).
Finally, I will consider what this competition might have meant for the keepers of the flame of Mughal courtly traditions throughout this century of upheaval: the kalāwants of Delhi.

**The music connoisseur’s collection**

Richard Johnson was in many ways the most stereotypical collector amongst our three protagonists: an “imperial collector” in Maya Jasanoff’s characterisation. Johnson went to India in 1770 as a Writer in the Bengal Civil Service, becoming Governor-General William Hasting’s Assistant in 1772. Due to Johnson’s facility in Arabic, Persian, Turki and Hindustani, in 1780 he was appointed the East India Company’s ambassador to the Mughal emperor, Shah ‘Alam II, but was diverted instead to the court of the Nawab of Awadh, Asafuddaula, as the Deputy Resident 1780–2; and then in 1784–5 as Resident to the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, ‘Ali Khan Asaf Jah II. Johnson spent the last five years of his stay in Calcutta, and he returned to London in 1790 a fully-fledged and fashionable Nabob. Throughout his time in India, Johnson developed deep, long-lasting friendships with Muslim noblemen and poets and spent a fortune on Oriental manuscripts and paintings, many of which he personally commissioned. His anthology of song-texts (*Songs*) is just one of an extraordinary collection of music-related manuscripts and paintings unparalleled in size and scope for a single collector of his period, now held in the British Library.

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44 Sims-Williams 2014.

45 For details of his entire collection, see Ethé 1903; Eggeling 1887; Falk and Archer 1981; Royal Asiatic Society 1973.
Jasanoff theorises eighteenth-century European devotees of Indian “collectables” as, at once, cosmopolitan and knowledgeable connoisseurs of Indian artistic and artisanal products and provincial Europeans-on-the-make engaged in a life-long project of self-reinvention. Her analysis assumes that the efforts of “imperial collectors” at self-fashioning primarily aimed to impress the imagined metropolitan elites they had left behind in class-bound Europe. 46

Certainly, Johnson’s library of Oriental manuscripts and paintings would have marked him out on reaching home as having finally arrived in London society, even though he had to sell the lot to the India Office in 1807 to pay off his debts. But his consuming interest in collecting musical manuscripts in the 1780s suggests that the audience whose acclamation he craved at the time was located rather closer at hand: amongst the Muslim connoisseurs of late Mughal Lucknow and Hyderabad with whom he mixed on such close terms. 47

Connoisseurship has formed the glue of similar elite male social formations across cultures and time periods; what differs according to time and place are the specific objects of connoisseurship and the usually unwritten rules of etiquette for their appreciation. 48 To be sure, eighteenth-century Indian noblemen and rulers such as Asafuddaula of Awadh collected standard objet d’art and scientific novelties, as their European counterparts did. 49 But the objects of connoisseurship par excellence in Mughal culture were things that could not be collected – the transient experiences of human and natural beauty, perfume, wine, food, intimate conversation, recited poetry, and music. Of these, the greatest monetary and cultural

47 Sims-Williams 2014.
value was placed on performances of poetry and music.\(^{50}\) It was Hindustani music in particular, with its elaborate and often esoteric etiquette and written theory, and the melodic setting of vernacular and Persian poetry as songs, that were the centrepieces of elite connoisseurship in Delhi, Hyderabad and Awadh in the eighteenth century.

Johnson’s collection of music-related manuscripts indicates that he intended to participate in this late Mughal culture of connoisseurship on a fully informed basis, and even to influence it from within. This set of materials reveals his strong desire to obtain an insider’s understanding of how the Hindustani rāg system of melodic modes worked. Johnson collected several canonical musical treatises of the high Mughal period in Sanskrit, Brajbhasha and Persian (Figure 4), and hundreds of rāgmālā paintings—icons of the six male rāgs each with five female rāginīs depicted as heroes, heroines and deities—including several partial sets that he had completed with newly commissioned miniatures.\(^{51}\) More importantly, for the first time since two Persian treatises produced in the seventeenth-century

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\(^{50}\) Schofield 2010: pp. 497–8.

\(^{51}\) Falk and Archer 1981.
Deccan, Johnson commissioned *rāgmālā* paintings specifically as illustrations for pre-existing musical treatises. He furthermore ordered at least one new treatise in Persian, the *Usūl al-Naghmāt-i Āsafī*, to be written by one Ghulam Raza, who may be the same Ghulam

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52 This work was completed in 1793 and dedicated to Asafuddaula of Lucknow, but a draft was prepared for Richard Johnson, probably before he returned to Calcutta in 1785.

53 Schofield 2014b.

54 Johnson Albums 34 (*Tuḥfat al-Hind*, IO Islamic 1861), 35 (*Saṅgīdarpana*, Skt 2231), and 36 (*Thakur Das*, IO Islamic 1739).

Raza that Johnson commissioned to paint fourteen illustrations for Thakur Das’ *Risāla-yi Rāgmālā*. The two Ghulam Razas were certainly working for Johnson at the same time.

It is as one of the circle of genuine European connoisseurs of the Hindustani music system, fluent in Persian and North Indian vernaculars, respected for his cultural knowledge even by renowned poets like Sauda and Minnat and intimate with local courtiers, that we need to place Johnson and his collection of songs. And his anthology does appear to be representative of the elite song repertoire that late Mughal connoisseurs of the *rāg* would have appreciated in Lucknow in the 1780s. By this point, the prestige genre *khayāl* was fully established in Awadh due to the famous sons of Taj Khan *qawwāl* Dehlavi, Jan Muhammad Khan “Jani”, Ghulam Rasul, and Jivan Khan, who took both their hereditary *khayāl* traditions and the fashionable compositions of Ni’mat Khan “Sadarang” with them from Delhi to Awadh in the mid eighteenth century. But it was Ghulam Rasul’s son, Ghulam Nabi “Shori” (fl. 1770s-90s), who took an element of that hereditary repertoire and transformed it into a genre the Lucknow court could call its own: *ṭappa*. So closely is *ṭappa* associated with Asafuddaula’s Lucknow that Shori is commonly believed to have invented it. It was already popular over a century earlier in Delhi, but until the late eighteenth century, *ṭappa* was merely considered a Panjabi form of *khayāl*. It was Shori who, by specialising as a *ṭappa* virtuoso in Lucknow, transformed it into a separate genre in its own right that took

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56 Johnson Album 42; I O Islamic 1739.

57 For other examples of such “White Mughals”, see especially Dalrymple 1993 and 2003; Alam and Alavi 2001; Llewellyn-Jones 1992; Woodfield 2000.


59 Ziauddin: f. 54r; Karam Imam 1959: p. 18.

over from khayāl as the flavour of the age, and asserted Awadh’s regional identity as an arbiter of elite musical taste—at precisely the time when Awadh was seeking to emphasise cultural autonomy from the Mughal centre.⁶¹

Johnson’s anthology includes 210 courtly song texts, which are followed by a few qauls, devotional songs in the repertoire of the hereditary Sufi shrine singers called qawwāls who were also the preeminent exponents of the “secular” courtly forms khayāl, tappa, and tarānā.⁶² Nearly 50% of the courtly songs are in Brajbhasa, the high-vernacular language of early-modern poetry, and nearly 40% are in Panjabi, with 10% in Persian and Urdu (here called rekhta). Over 40% are khayāls, the pre-eminent classical song genre made popular in seventeenth-century Delhi, and the 40% in Panjabi are, of course, newly fashionable tappas. The remainder are Persian and Urdu ghazals etc., and Brajghasha genres like horī.

In order to make further sense of what Johnson’s collection represents, we must read it in dialogue with the other two collections discussed below, because it is the ways in which it overlaps with and diverges from them that has led me to conclude that this is a Lucknow-specific music connoisseur’s repertoire. Critically, the genres represented overlap considerably with Plowden—particularly the Lucknavi emphasis on tappa—but the balance is very different. Difficult genres that emphasise rāg improvisation and melodic and rhythmic virtuosity, khayāl and tappa, take up nearly 90% of Johnson’s collection, whereas nearly 60% of Plowden’s collection emphasises the word-dominant, “light-classical” Persian and Urdu sung-poetry genres of ghazal, rubāʾī and tarānā. Conversely, Johnson’s collection shares with Khushhal Khan’s anthology—which embodies the canonical repertoire of

Mughal Delhi—the emphasis on rāg-dominant genres. Moreover, they both include several khayāls by famous Delhi composers such as Sadarang and Adarang and/or in praise of Delhi patrons, including the current emperor Shah ‘Alam II. 63 Delhi khayāl was the marker of the most exclusive musical taste in eighteenth-century India: this is key to my estimation of Johnson’s collection as connoisseur-based.

In contrast, however, Khushhal Khan includes a great deal of much older, more revered repertoire found nowhere in Johnson’s anthology, particularly dhrupad and even fifteenth-century bishnupad. 64 In sum, this seems to indicate two things: that Johnson’s and Plowden’s collections are region-specific, representing two different sub-sets of the courtly repertoire performed specifically in Lucknow; and that by the 1780s, in deemphasising dhrupad 65 Lucknow repertoire had already departed from the tastes promulgated as most elite in Delhi and Hyderabad.

A colonial repertoire?

I will now turn to the slightly different logic of Sophia Plowden’s collection of North Indian songs, whose accompanying musical notations have previously been scrutinised as a major source for the Hindustani Airs phenomenon. 66 Plowden was the wife of an English East India Company employee, Richard Chicheley Plowden, who served most of his term (1777–90) in Lucknow and Calcutta. 67 Sophia Plowden’s principal pastime was collecting North Indian

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63 e.g. Songs: ff. 13v, 15v, 17r, 22v; Khushhal Khan, Rāg-Rāginī: ff. 10v, 13v, 16r–v, 22r.
64 e.g. f. 40v.
65 But see Williams 2015: pp. 82–175.
66 Woodfield 2000; Farrell 1997; Cook 2007; Chapman 2015.
songs she heard at music and dance, or nautch, parties in Lucknow; and arranging them for her own performances at private soirées, often wearing full Indian dress.\textsuperscript{68} The final product was a loose-leaf album of 68 song texts in Persian, Urdu, Brajbhasha, Panjabi, and Purabi, and an accompanying book of 77 tunes in European musical notation.\textsuperscript{69} Although the folios of lyrics have become disordered over time, by cross-referencing with William Bird’s \textit{Oriental Miscellany} (1789), John Gilchrist’s \textit{Oriental Linguist} (1798) and William Crotch’s \textit{Specimens of Various Styles of Music} (1808), I have reunited about 25% of Plowden’s lyrics with their tunes (Figure 5). Taken together, the musical notations and the song texts tell us a remarkable amount about how the songs were performed and collected.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|p{10cm}|c|}
\hline
Tunebook & Album & Textual peg, genre, author (if known) & Correlation \\
\hline
no. 5 & 32 a & “Sun re sujan ke tumse”, rekhā, Wali & Tunebook title, only rekhā by Wali in the album folios \\
7, 36, 49 & 21 & “Sun re ma’shuqāl be-wafāt”, \textit{khayāl} of the “snake men” & Bird no. 6; Crotch \textit{Specimens} no. 336; album folio illustration \\
8 & 6 a & “Ā’ī yād lutfī kon be-tū dar”, Persian ghazal, Amir Khusrau & Tunebook title, same page and folio as Plowden no. 9 \\
9 & 6 b & “Komānī rānā”, \textit{tappa} & Crotch no. 327 \\
10 & 1 a & “Har shab manām”, Persian ghazal, Amir Khusrau & Same tunebook page and folio as Plowden no. 11 \\
11 & 1 b & “Mutrib-i khush-navāv beglī kzā ba tāzā”, Persian ghazal, Hafiz & Bird no. 4; Gilchrist \textit{Oriental Linguist, Nashtar} \\
14, 20 & 8 & “Saqqūl Fasīl-i bāhār asīr”, Persian rubā’ī & Bird no. 2 \\
15 & 9 b & “Awal ke mārā be-‘ishqā”, Persian rubā’ī & Bird no. 5; Johnson Songs \\
16 & 9 a & “Ki bāshād o ki bāshād”, Persian rubā’ī & Bird no. 7 \\
18 & 11 b & “Sāiyā saqqāl bar-in tā”, Persian ghazal & Preceding tunebook page and same folio as Plowden no. 19 \\
19 & 11 a & “[Surwā] ruwān-i khist”, Persian ghazal, (after?) Khaqani & Bird no. 30; Gilchrist; Crotch no. 331; \textit{Nashtar} \\
21 & 12 & “Kyā kām kyā dīl”, rekhā, Sauda & Bird no. 3; Gilchrist; Crotch no. 332 \\
43 & 25 a & “Āwā akeli merī yekatū”, \textit{tappa} & Same tunebook page and folio as Plowden no. 44 \\
44 & 25 b & “Ā’ī binā ā’ī binā”, \textit{tappa} & Crotch no. 337 \\
68 & 38 & “Ran hain zohrī nahīn”, Urdu maršīya & Crotch no. 338; album folio illustration \\
3 a & & “Dūdar vī ki būndī”, \textit{tappa} & Bird no. 13 \\
7 b & & “Āī se bōl band ko jāīt āśe”, \textit{khayāl} & Bird no. 9 \\
15 a & & “Merī bālā sinā… machārt ki band yāī”, \textit{tappa} & Bird no. 21 “Mera Mutichelli” \\
27 b & & “Ā’ī part-chhāna be-yek nū”, Persian rubā’ī & Bird no. 8 \\
29 a & & “Ā’ī bībī mon karela”, \textit{khayāl} & Bird no. 23 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Correlation of Plowden texts with their tunes.}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{68} Woodfield 2000.

\textsuperscript{69} Album.
As Woodfield, Farrell and Cook have demonstrated, the Hindustani Airs, which enjoyed a brief fashion in 1780–90s Anglo-Indian society, were North Indian courtly songs transcribed into European notation and harmonised as keyboard arrangements. The transformation process began with formal nautch performances in Lucknow at which Plowden was a guest. It was not just the Indian elite who employed Hindustani musicians and dancers in the 1780s; it was common for European men, generally those “White Mughals” wealthy and cosmopolitan enough to enjoy such a lifestyle, also to keep what was called a “Set” or a tā’ifa, “troupe”, of nautch girls. The most famous troupes in Lucknow in the 1780s were a set probably in the employ of Richard Johnson called Johnstone’s Set; the Kashmirian Set; and a star troupe headed by another Kashmiri courtesan, the celebrated Khanum Jan, who arrived in Lucknow in 1786–7 from Kanpur.

Na‘utch performances were the chief entertainment at private parties hosted by Awadhi courtiers and Europeans alike. As such, the Sets, canny commercial operators that they were, needed to pander as far as they could to European tastes while still pleasing Indian connoisseurs.

Sophia Plowden became entranced by the songs performed at these parties, and had the tunes transcribed for her into staff notation so that she could perform them herself; interestingly, of the song-text collections under discussion it is only hers that bears the unmistakeable trace in the form of pencil markings of having been studied, perhaps to prepare for performance. Her method was to invite performers into her home to sing to her. Most prominent amongst these was Khanum Jan, and from William Bird’s 1789 published arrangements of tunes from

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70 Doley and Williamson 1813: plate xv; Dalrymple 2003.


72 e.g. Album: ff. 26, 29. The loose-leaf folios of the Plowden lyrics bear a number of different page markings. I am using the modern pencil markings in the corner of each folio.
Plowden’s collection, which named their Indian performers, it seems much of her album represents Khanum Jan’s repertoire. During these private song-collection sessions, a Portuguese or Goan musician John Braganza would pick out the tunes on the harpsichord and then write them down. Other European residents also gave Plowden copies of their own transcriptions, most notably the famous long-term Lucknow resident Colonel Polier. Braganza would then arrange the tunes into the simpler, more regular rhythms of European music and write a bass line upon which a harmonic accompaniment would be improvised in performance.

What set Plowden apart from other European collectors of “Hindustani Airs” was that she collected the lyrics, not just the tunes. She would then sing these songs with harpsichord accompaniment in the original language (which she didn’t understand) at private soiréees, not only for European guests but upon at least one occasion for Asafuddaula himself. The Nawab reciprocated by providing the text of one of his own compositions, “Jo shamsher terī alam dektī [sic]” for her collection. Plowden asked for particular songs by first-line fragment or refrain—even though she didn’t understand the languages in which they were sung, she clearly knew much of the repertoire well enough by tune and “textual peg” to make knowledgeable requests. In her performances, she even went so far as to don Kashmiri courtesan dress to present a more “authentic” appearance.

It is easy to disparage the “authenticity” of such mimesis, but not only did European connoisseurs of Hindustani music think her performances very close to the original, she was awarded the title of Begum by the

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73 At least 12 of the 29 songs in Bird’s Miscellany are from Plowden’s album.
74 Woodfield 2000.
75 Exact transliteration, Album, f. 24: Plowden, Diary: f. 69v.
76 Plowden, Letter: ff. 10v–11v.
Emperor Shah ‘Alam II for her “exceptional devotedness, and rare fidelity, high titles and honourable address”.\(^{77}\) I doubt this honour would have been bestowed upon her if the Lucknow court had found her masquerade insulting.

Looking at Plowden’s collection as both representative of the repertoire performed by courtesans at the Awadh court in front of mixed Awadhi–European audiences, and as representative specifically of the songs a British woman liked enough to want to sing herself, several things are striking. The first is that 40% of the collection is in Persian—ghazals, rubā’īs and tarānās with at least three by the celebrated poet Hafiz (d.1379)—but sung in Hindustani musical style. This underlines the continuing importance at this time of Persian poetry, read, recited and sung—and especially that of Hafiz—in the cultural lives of North Indians.\(^{78}\) Even such an unlikely figure as the Maratha general Daulat Rao Scindia of Gwalior (r.1794–1827) used to cast omens in the dīwān of Hafiz daily to direct his best course of action.\(^{79}\) The second is the predominance of ghazals and tappas versus the small number of khayāls, despite the fact that we know khayāl was extensively patronised by the Lucknow elite under Asafuddaula.

It is here that the differences between Plowden’s and Johnson’s collections become salutary, because the songs were collected in the same time and place, some probably from the same musicians. Khayāls comprise only 7% of Plowden’s collection (just five songs), as opposed to 40% of Johnson’s. I suspect this discrepancy is partly accounted for by the fact that Sophia Plowden didn’t possess the ability in rāg improvisation to tackle khayāl. But the strong

\(^{77}\) Plowden 1914: pp. 173–5. The original sanad (decree) is held in the British Library.

\(^{78}\) Tabor 2014.

\(^{79}\) Broughton 1813: p. 241.
emphasis on the text-heavy ghazal in Plowden’s collection may also suggest the emergence in this period of a colonial repertoire of Hindustani styles—of genres amenable to European tastes and catering to the average Anglophone audience member who, in contrast to rare individuals like Johnson, had no pretensions to connoisseurship.

The evidence lies in Plowden’s comment that she didn’t much like tappas because they were “a sort of Wild harsh music without any air”. There are, of course, many tappas in her collection due undoubtedly to their fashionable status in the 1780s. What differentiates them from the ghazals is their length—the tappas are all very short: two to four lines maximum. This suggests that, like modern tappa, the performance consisted of intricate and very rapid improvisation beneath which a fixed, easy to discern song-composition was largely obliterated. Khayāl similarly is a genre in which the text is usually only stated fully at the beginning of lengthy vocal improvisations—but with the key additional complication that a connoisseur’s understanding of the rāg was required for proper appreciation. As Bird put it in his preface, the rāgs “are so void of meaning, and any degree of regularity, that it is impossible to bring them into a form for performance, by any singers but those of their country (Hindostan)”. In other words, an “air” was anything that Europeans could readily distinguish as a fixed song composition, largely because it emphasised text over rāg; the fact that it emphasised a text that at least some of the European audience could understand made it a more approachable genre for European listeners. Quoting Bird again, “The Rekhtahs [Urdu

80 Diary: f. 48r.
81 Bird 1789: p. v.
ghazals] are most admired because they are comprehensible, and exceed all others in form and regularity”.

Interesting too, is the prominent number of texts in Plowden that have distinctive refrains, like the Hafiz ghazal “Mutrib-i khwush-navā begū,” with its famous refrain “tāza ba tāza nau ba nau”. This refrain was set to a single, catchy melodic line that was easily represented in staff notation in Braganza’s transcriptions (Figure 6). Repeated refrains such as these would have been readily recognisable even to listeners who didn’t understand the language. This would have made songs with refrains all the more pleasureable and therefore popular with European audiences. Thus the preponderance of ghazal and related genres in Plowden’s collection may indicate the existence by the 1780s of a repertoire in Awadh deliberately catering to colonial taste.

"Tā-za ba tā-za nau ba nau"

Figure 6. Refrain of the Hafiz ghazal “Mutrib-i khwush-navā begū” (Plowden tune-book, f. 12r)

Taken together, though, I think that Plowden’s and Johnson’s collections indicate primarily that the Awadh court repertoire had moved on from Delhi traditions to explore different worlds of taste. One source in particular suggests that the new balance of this repertoire was not designed solely to cater to Europeans. The source is an Urdu novel, Nashtar, the “Surgeon’s Knife”, written in 1893 but purporting to be a translation of a Persian

82 Bird 1789: p. iv.
autobiography narrating events ending in 1787.\textsuperscript{83} Multiple uncanny resemblances with the known biography of Plowden’s Khanum Jan suggests that \textit{Nashtar} may indeed be based on a contemporaneous Persian rendition of the real Khanum Jan’s life story.

\textit{Nashtar} concerns the ill-fated love of the author, Hasan Shah, for the leading light of a Kashmiri \textit{nautch} set called Khanum Jan. This set was in the service of a colonial official in Kanpur called “Ming Sahib”, for whom Hasan Shah also worked as a \textit{munshi}, or secretary. Khanum Jan’s fate was to sacrifice her virginity on the altar of commerce, but because he loved her, Hasan Shah married her in secret to subvert her destiny. The set, however, decided to leave Ming Sahib’s employ and relocate to richer pastures in Lucknow, unknowingly separating the newly married couple. Hasan Shah followed them a few days later, but tragically Khanum Jan fell sick on the journey and died when she reached Lucknow in 1786–7. Is this, in fact, a life of the real Khanum Jan, albeit fictionalised to serve the demands of tragic romance as it had to play out in the classic courtesan tale\textsuperscript{84} It is the patronage of English colonial audiences in Kanpur, and her relocation to Lucknow in 1786–7 that are highly suggestive. The real Khanum Jan had also been a feted Kashmiri performer in European circles in Kanpur, and her departure for Lucknow in 1786 was lamented by English officers in satirical verse:

\begin{quote}
“Let others of Tippoo hard-hearted complain
Of our losses by land, our defeats on the main;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{83} Shah 1993; the 1893 translator was Sajjad Hussain Kasmandavi. Christina Oesterheld argues that the “translation” was merely a narrative device and that Kasmandavi actually wrote the entire thing himself; but she is unaware that there was a historical Khanum Jan. Oesterheld 2004: p. 201.

\textsuperscript{84} Schofield 2012.
Another, but much greater loss, I deplore,
I mean the late loss we’ve sustained at Cawnpore.
How sweetly of late did our time pass along
With a Nautch from Connum, from Connum a Song;
And who to lament will deny we have cause?
For Connum is going—Weep, weep Shawke’aws!”
Poor Davis! But why should I tell you his case,
His grief is depicted too plain in his face […]
There’s Morris too swears ‘tis a terrible bore—
When the Connum is gone—who’d remain at Cawnpore?

One of the main features of the novel is to showcase Khanum Jan’s repertoire of Persian and vernacular song texts. What is interesting from the point of view of the current discussion is that the range, proportion, and authorship of the repertoire in Nashtar is remarkably similar to Plowden’s collection: Persian ghazals and rekhtas by luminaries such as Hafiz and Sauda; ṭappas; and horīs. There are no khayāls, nor are there any ṭumrīs, which one would expect to see should this story have been freshly composed in 1893, when ṭumrī had taken over as the primary weapon in the courtesan’s musical arsenal. The repertoire in Nashtar is the same kind of repertoire as in Plowden’s collection.

The audience for the autobiography was North Indian, not European, and this repertoire must have resonated with that audience. Nashtar indicates that Plowden’s collection is at once representative of an elite Awadhi courtesan’s repertoire and a colonial repertoire. I would

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suggest that the courtesan’s repertoire of late eighteenth-century Lucknow was one that had already been substantively tempered by colonial presence and the need for even the most elite Hindustani courtesan to be able to look two ways at once: towards a local elite audience that appreciated the tiniest subtleties of emotional nuance in lyric and rāg; and—often in the same moment—towards a new audience whose pleasures were located in recognising shorter repeated lyrical forms.

But Plowden’s and Johnson’s were by no means the only stories at this time. Both collections are quite different from Khushhal Khan’s, to whose anthology we finally turn.

The “authoritative” Mughal repertoire

Maula ‘Ali Dargah, one of Hyderabad’s most important Shi’i shrines, is musically most famous for being the final resting place of the courtesan Mahlaqa Bai “Chanda” (d. 1824). An extraordinary poet, singer, and dancer, Mahlaqa Bai boasted amongst her patrons the second and third Asaf Jahi Nizams, their prime ministers Aristu Jah and Mir ‘Alam, and two Maratha ministers of state, Raja Chandu Lal and Raja Rao Ranbha. Famously, in 1799 Mahlaqa Bai gave the British Resident John Malcolm a copy of her collected lyrics in the middle of performing a nautch.\(^7\) Her fame, known devotion to the Maula ‘Ali Dargah, and the beauty of her mausoleum and garden there have overshadowed the original prominence of several other donors to the shrine. According to inscriptions on the buildings, the naqqārakhāna (drum house) was built by Raja Chandu Lal and the barahdārī (summerhouse) by Raja Rao Ranbha. But the great arch (kamān), the mosque, the ‘ashūrkhāna (Muharram

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\(^7\) Kugle 2010a and 2010b; I O Islamic 2768.
commemoration hall), the sarāy (caravanserai) and the takya (pilgrim’s rest stop) were all sponsored by the Delhi master musician, Khushhal Khan “Anup” kalāwant.88

Khushhal Khan was intimately connected with the key circle of patrons and performers in Hyderabad. Like Mahlaqa Bai, he is buried at Maula ‘Ali Dargah, and was reputedly her ustād; he certainly wrote about and quoted her, and he too was patronised by Raja Rao Ranbha and Nizam Sikander Jah.89 But Khushhal Khan’s importance to Hindustani music history goes well beyond the boundaries of Hyderabad. While the stories of Sophia Plowden and Richard Johnson introduce the British as substantial patrons of Indian music and dance at this time, Khushhal Khan’s biography roots the music of courtly Hyderabad firmly back in the soil of Mughal Delhi. Khushhal Khan traced his blood and musical descent from the two most important lineages of Mughal court musicians: those of Tansen and Sadarang.90 I refer to this group of intermarried hereditary dhrupad singers and bīn and rabāb players as the Delhi kalāwant birādarī.91

The main Delhi kalāwant families were united through a dynastic marriage in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Delhi kalāwant families seem to have encountered considerable turmoil pertaining to the survival of their traditions—a classic reason for dynastic marriages. The Emperor Muhammad Shah’s chief musician Anjha Baras Khan, paternal grandson of the first Khushhal Khan “Gunasamudra”, was married to Sadarang’s


90 Khushhal Khan, Hindavi Rāg Darshan: ff. 3v–4r.

91 Schofield 2013b.
daughter and became his “special disciple”. This, plus the fact that Sadarang also trained his nephew Firoz Khan “Adarang” to succeed him, who then in turn took Khushhal Khan “Anup’s” father Karim Khan on as his “special disciple”, suggests that neither Sadarang nor Adarang had sufficiently worthy sons to succeed them.

There are two important things to note about this genealogy: firstly, that the head of the Tansen family down to Ras Baras Khan (fl. 1670–1700), and then the head of the Sadarang family down to Himmat Khan (fl. 1790–1840), were retained by the Mughal emperors as chief musicians from the sixteenth century all the way down to 1857. This gave Khushhal Khan, as a blood and musical descendent of both families, unparalleled authority to represent the Mughal court tradition. The second is that while kalāwants were traditionally famous for their composition of dhrupad, Sadarang was the first kalāwant famed for composing khayāl, which had previously been the intellectual property of qawwāls. Thus, with the dynastic marriage of the two families, Khushhal Khan inherited song compositions and performance styles from both dhrupad and kalāwanti khayāl traditions.

His greatest gift to posterity lay in his preservation in writing of the musical traditions of his ancestors. Khushhal Khan wrote at least four works on music: three different versions of the Rāg Darshan, all of them based on the canonical Mughal Persian treatise, Mirza Khan’s Tuḥfat al-Hind ch. V (c.1675)—a lavishly illustrated Hindavi translation (1800) for Raja Rao

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92 Risāla: f. 386v.
93 Persian Rāg Darshan: p. 7.
94 See Schofield 2013b. Ras Baras’ son, Anjha Baras, was joint chief musician to Muhammad Shah together with Adarang.
Ranbha; an 1808 Persian recension for the Nizam, Sikander Jah; and a mixed Hindavi–Persian version for Mahlaqa Bai (1815)—and a comprehensive collection of the song repertoire of his family, the Rāg-Rāginī Roz o Shab. The book he presents to Raja Rao in the painting on f. 4r of the Hindavi Rāg Darshan, and the iconographical presentation on f. 3v of his descent from Tansen, Sadarang, Adarang and his father Karim Khan, are highly significant: Khushhal Khan’s song collection is rendered the written embodiment both of the genealogy of the Delhi kalāwant birādarī and its musical traditions.

The Rāg-Rāginī is a vast and complete compendium of Khushhal Khan’s repertoire divided into day and night rāgs, with the song genres further collated into loose groupings within each rāg. It includes all the genres found in Plowden and Johnson, but gives pride of place to dhrupad and includes a substantial number of related Brajbhasha genres such as horī, kabit, dohā and dhamār. It has no prefatory material, save for a very detailed table of contents complete with page numbers and an enumeration of the number of songs in each genre included in the volume that is curiously European in style. Without a doubt it needs to be placed in dialogue with Khushhal Khan’s other literary output.

All of his textual production aims to document and to valorise the genealogy, intellectual credentials and musical output of the Delhi kalāwant birādarī; this is most evident from the self-aggrandising illustrations of the Hindavi Rāg Darshan, in which Khushhal Khan is consistently placed very close to power. There are several other texts of this period written by other members of the lineage that aim to do the same thing through the production of

96 See Shekhar 2014. The date of the Nizam’s copy is 1223 AH (1808), contra Shekhar, not 1229.
97 The full manuscript is digitised: <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/d/medren/4952995> [last accessed 25 January 2015]
collective biographies (taṣkīras) and genealogies of the Delhi kalāwant birādarī, and through several highly innovative treatises on tāl systems. Like these writings, Khushhal Khan’s collection both validates the musical traditions of his ancestors, authenticating them through his physical person, and innovates within those traditions by including several of his own song compositions for patrons in Hyderabad. This draws Hyderabad, and its courtly musical traditions, firmly into the imagined sovereign space of the Mughal court in Delhi. Undoubtedly, Khushhal Khan’s collection represents and is designed to project into a new space the “authoritative” Mughal repertoire of the Delhi court, embodied in its musicians and now written down for the very first time.

It is unclear whether Nizam Sikander Jah saw himself as the new Great Mughal and wanted that reflected in a song collection, or whether Khushhal Khan was acting on his own behalf, canonising the traditions of his family because the rise of upstart repertoires threatened to eclipse the Delhi traditions. Why use the medium of a song collection to do so, when it is obvious that oral transmission was still an adequate mechanism for preserving his family’s repertoire—we know that Khushhal Khan had disciples? Did European interest in collecting songs suggest this medium? The curious European-style table of contents certainly gives pause for thought. Or was anxiety about potential loss in the tradition now a factor—a function of his mobility and the fact that the key performing members of the Delhi kalāwant birādarī were now so far flung and forced into competition with musicians doing new things in new cultural centres like Lucknow? What is clear is that through his writing and performing activities, and the simple fact of his physical presence, Khushhal Khan was

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98 Especially Hayy al-Arwāh, c.1780; Edinburgh tāl treatise, 1787; Asl al-Usūl, c.1815.

99 Hindavi Rāg darshan: ff. 2v, 20r.
attempting to recreate Mughal court music culture, insofar as was possible, at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad.

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In conclusion, this new wave of song collection tells us several things about musical culture in North India c.1770-1830. Firstly, by the end of the eighteenth century there was a commonly agreed, eclectic and multilingual but nonetheless bounded repertoire of song genres performed in Hindustani rāg and tāl by elite court performers across North India and in significant courtly settings beyond, including Kathmandu and Hyderabad. Secondly, and qualifying this first point, local repertoires—what was taken and sung out of this overall spectrum, by whom and for whom—nonetheless differed considerably due to local factors; this diversity reflected the general energy and dynamism of the rapidly changing eighteenth-century North Indian political and musical economies. Thirdly, these collections testify to a considerable rise in performance opportunities for all kinds of court musicians (or those who could pretend to be) consequent upon the recent arrival on the scene of a number of newly wealthy patrons with aspirations to elite status, which likewise enabled a great deal of geographical movement for performers. A particularly important corollary in this was the consolidation of local genres or local twists on pan-regional styles as emblematic of new political configurations, such as Shori’s ōppas in Lucknow and Khushhal Khan’s various jashns and munājāts for Shiʿi festivals and the Nizams in Hyderabad. Finally, and conversely, certain courts, notably Hyderabad, Kathmandu and Delhi—and in particular members of the Delhi kalāwant birādarī wherever they were—began to use the song collection and other modes of writing, such as taṣkiras and treatises, to reassert the authority
of the old Mughal courtly traditions over the new upstart repertoires—particularly those associated with Lucknow.

I would suggest it is indeed this increased competition for the attention of new kinds of patron, coupled with anxiety about the effect on memory of migrating away from centres of traditional embodied knowledge like Delhi, that are the principal explanations for the rise of both the song collection and the musicians’ tazkira in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

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