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# INDIAN MUSIC AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM

by

Daniel M. Neuman

## INTRODUCTION

It has been said that Hinduism in its essence has been concerned with what is true, and Islam in its, with what is right. To tabulate the differences between these two ways of being and believing in the world would be to inventory a set of contrasts involving virtually every aspect of social and cultural thought and practice in South Asia. Some of the obvious differences, polytheism/monotheism; hierarchism/egalitarianism; iconic elaboration/prohibition; cremation/burial; marriage as religious prescript/social contract, merely adumbrate a catalogue of innumerable others. Perhaps the closest one comes to summarizing such a set and surely the most telling is the sheer existence of India and Pakistan. Yet for many centuries what we know as Indo-Islamic civilization flourished and at times reached extraordinary heights of cultural florescence constructed of just those elements seemingly so much in opposition. The study of the Muslim practitioner of Indian music encompasses and also encapsulates the general theme and problematic of Indo-Islamic civilization in South Asia. The theme, expressed not only in its music but in government and poetics, economy and painting, administration and architecture is the theme of cultural integration. The problematic generally stated is how such cultural integration was accomplished despite the multiplicity of oppositions, (and concomitant contradictions?) and what we can learn from its study.

My intention in this essay is to explore only a selected part of the general landscape of Indo-Islamic civilization: to chart the interaction of Islamic social organization with Hindu cultural expression and to focus on the question of how their interlocking came to create that exquisite engagement with aural splendor known as Hindustani music. In order to develop the argument convincingly I will contrast the social organization of music making of the Muslim-dominated North with the closely related Hindu-dominated music system in the South. My objective is to demonstrate some of the ways in which the Islamization of music patronage and production generated cultural adaptations through biological kinship, specialist vocation, and performance context, which fundamentally affected musical performance itself.

Specifically I will outline the role of music theory, the significance of composition, and the structure of rhythmic accompaniment in their mutual contribution to the evolution of the Hindustani style. If, as Clifford Geertz persuasively suggests, "art and the equipment to grasp it are made in the same shop" (1976), then this is an account of an Indian art - its classical music - adapted to somewhat different shops, the Islamic and the Brahmanic.

### **Caveat**

Before proceeding I wish to make clear what is not being assumed. The conventional wisdom in India, particularly in the South, concerning Islamic influences in Indian music is that Karnatak music was essentially untouched by Islamic ideas, whereas Hindustani music was essentially formed by them. Indeed this is often used as the basis for explaining the difference between the northern Hindustani and southern Karnatak music systems. A less often expressed corollary is that South Indian music is the "pure" indigenous Indian music, whereas North Indian music is a somewhat tarnished hybrid. But there is fairly substantial evidence that South Indian music was itself very much influenced by Islamic musical ideas from at least the 14th century on. The highly respected musicologist K. Brahaspati argued convincingly the Southern system had thoroughly adopted the Persian and Turkish modal (makam) system as had the Northern system (1979:79-102). Accepting his argument, I am not attempting a measure of direct Islamic musical influences in the North and South. On the contrary, I assume the musical influences as such to be unknown in any detail and accordingly assume these as constant in both systems. Rather, I am suggesting that the differences felt in Islamic influence between North and South derived not from musical forces as such - although these are probably a factor - but from social and cultural factors affecting the thinking, training, and performance of musical specialists. Put another way, I am suggesting that substantive musical influences occurred not directly because of outright musical borrowing, but indirectly because of social and cultural borrowing.

### **The Brahmanic Tradition**

Until about the 16th century the art music culture of India, both in the North and the South, was an essentially Brahmanical activity. This was due to the traditional Hindu associations between sound and its extensions in

speech and music, and to the role of Brahmans in the theory and practice of the production of speech and music. Because "cultivated" music was a Brahman cultural specialty, there were several features which characterized music specialization in India. First, music performance was ideally not to be considered a profession, but rather an avocation. One practiced music for its qualities of illumination not remuneration. To be sure professionals, defined as those who accepted remuneration for their performances, certainly existed and perhaps even constituted a significant majority of performers, but the ideal for performers was that music should not be performed for any sort of material compensation. This was much like the distinction between the professional and amateur musician in 18th century Europe. Tyagaraja, the archetypal musician of the South, refused even to teach professional musicians.

Another feature, closely related to the first, was that performance was ideally a devotional activity, music being a pathway to spiritual salvation. Today such an ideal is represented in India when music is performed on celebratory occasions such as weddings and certain holidays, and in devotional contexts singing devotional songs such as kirtan and bhajan. Again, Tyagaraja still today believed by many South Indians to be a saint, represents this ideal.

Lastly, the Brahmanical tradition of musical knowledge was also a scholarly activity, concerned with written theory as well as oral performance. Performance and theory tended to be separately practiced specialties, but both were still the domain of Brahmanical activity. The treatises which have come down to us were mostly the work of Brahmans, an activity which is still today dominated by Brahman scholars.<sup>1</sup> If we consider just these three features, namely, the cultural definitions of music specialization, music performance, and music theory and contrast each as they evolved in the Northern and Southern systems, a pattern emerges which suggests important consequences for their respective music systems.

### **Music Specialization**

Although Muslim musicians were an important force in India at least from the 13th century on (during the period of the Delhi Sultanate), it is only during the 17th and 18th centuries that musical activity in North India came increasingly to be virtually monopolized by them.

Extensive patronage by the Mughals and their nobility began in the reign of Akbar (1556-1605), who was himself patron to Tansen, the most important musical figure in Hindustani music history. Such patronage continued throughout and after the Mughals despite musical prohibitions of Aurangzeb (r.1659-1707), traumatic invasions from outside India (Nadir Shah in 1739), and the British expulsion of the two major Muslim rulers just before and after the Mutiny (Nawab Wajid Ali Shah to Calcutta in 1856 and Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal King, to Rangoon in 1858). Many formerly Hindu musicians converted to Islam, no doubt because of the political advantages of such a change but also because Brahman musicians often lost their caste status as servants of Muslim courts. (See Neuman 1980: 104-5, 124-5)

During these same two centuries in South India, principally in what is now the state of Tamilnad, the foundations of contemporary Karnatak music practice and theory were laid. By the end of the 18th century, the archetypal trinity of Karnatak composers, Tyagaraja (1767-1847), Syama Sastri (1762-1827), and Muttusvami Dikshitar (1775-1835), created the basic repertoire of Karnatak music. In marked contrast to the key musical figures of Hindustani music, the Karnatak Trinity were all Brahmans as were most of their followers into the first half of this century. The point then is that in the North, the profession of music had become essentially an Islamic one, whereas in the South, not only was it still dominated by Hindus, but in particular by Brahmans. My argument is that the Brahmanical features common to the art music tradition of all India up to the 16th century continued to characterize the Southern system into the 20th century.

The consequences of the Islamization of music specialization were manifold. The most immediate were the professionalization of musicians and a change in the definition of music as a cultural phenomenon. This is succinctly exemplified in the career of Tansen. Just as Tyagaraja provides the ideal model for being a musician in the South, Tansen performs an identical role for musicians of the North. What we know of his life personifies the transition from Brahmanical avocational to Muslim professional.

Although not known for certain, it is generally assumed that Tansen was originally a Hindu who converted to Islam. When he was brought to the Emperor Akbar's

court, he was counted as one of Akbar's nine jewels. His guru, Swami Haridas, was a Brahman of great reputation. The well known story concerning Emperor Akbar's appreciation of Swami Haridas illustrates the tension between Brahmanical and Muslim definitions of music as spiritual and worldly practice. Akbar, hearing Swami Haridas sing, asked Tansen why he was not able to achieve such musical heights. Tansen replied that Swami Haridas was singing to the Lord above, whereas he was singing only for the Lord before him. Although the Brahmanical ideal of music as a means of devotion was always part of the value system of Hindustani musicians, even for Muslims (enhanced and rationalized by similar Sufic traditions) the context of courtly performances necessarily subordinated the other worldly aspects of musical practice to the requirements of patrons.<sup>2</sup> The contemporary significance of Tansen is measured by the fact that most Hindustani performing musicians today trace some discipulary, if not actual kinship descent, from Tansen and such a relationship carries with it the most fundamental musical authority.

In the South most of the key historical musical figures were either non-professional Brahmans or members of the nobility practicing music as an avocation themselves. For example Swati Tirunal (1813-46)<sup>3</sup> was Maharaja of Travancore on the Malabar coast and is still considered one of South India's great composers.<sup>4</sup> There were undoubtedly many professional musicians performing in the courts of South India, but we hear little about them. Historically at least the focus of musical attention in the South was still the temple.

The shift of specialist status from Brahman to Muslim as also from avocational to professional affected the role of musical theory. In both traditions, theory dealing with performance practice was taught largely as an oral tradition. However, in the Karnatak line of musical succession, there was not only a transmission of performance through the oral tradition, but also a transmission of theoretical treatises through a written one. Text and context were embodied in the same instrument, i.e. the Brahman musician and his community. Theory and performance, both of which were descriptive and prescriptive for one another, came to have an integrity in the Karnatak system. This condition was simply non-existent in the Hindustani tradition. Although the degree to which theory acted on performance in the South is arguable,<sup>5</sup> there is no doubt that theoretical writings

were considered highly prestigious as an activity and that the texts assumed an almost sacred character and were passed on through generations as quasi-sacred heirlooms. Theory had some effect on practice in at least one important area, and that is the now classic melakarta system. Originally developed in the 18th century this was a classification system of 72 parent scale types, which like the periodic table of elements included some empty categories, i.e. scales types which were not known to be performed. The melakarta system was quickly adopted as a theoretical system, and ragas were soon developed to fill in many of the missing places in the classificatory scheme.

Professional Muslim musicians, in very marked contrast, did not write theoretical treatises. Indeed the significance of the kinship or discipular link to Tansen is related to the fact that for Muslim Hindustani musicians, musical theory was coded in an essentially oral medium, and ultimate authority consequently lay not in quasi-sacred texts, as in the South, but in quasi-sacred pedigrees. Neither prescriptive nor descriptive, musical theory for Muslim musicians was essentially ascriptive. One inherited the theory as one inherited one's identity as a musician. The substance of Muslim musical theory was never, save in occasional private writings, inscribed on paper; it was embedded in memory. It was transmitted through the medium of what theory was thought to be, namely performance, which was learned and memorized by each successive generation. Because theory existed in memory, the authority for theoretical assertions rested not on theory itself but in the person who proclaimed it. The source of a person's authority was dependent on the identity of the person, and that identity was socially defined by his musical pedigree. Musicians who could trace their ancestry to one or more historically important musical figures - a Tansen, a Sadarang, a Khusrau - were by virtue of such connections accepted as the main carriers of the musical tradition.

The distinction between theory and practice based on the separation of the written from oral tradition did not really exist for Hindustani music until this century, when North Indian Brahmans, especially Bhatkhande, codified and systematized what had appeared, to a newly awakened Hindu consciousness concerning their musical traditions, a very chaotic and little known system.

The reason for the absence of a written theoretical tradition among Muslims revolves around the social

definition of a performer in the context of court and other forms of private patronage. Musicians employed by courts were, as I have said, professionals. They received either a regular stipend or income from villages granted to them. With the professionalization of music the social definition of the musician shifted to what it had been in other Islamic societies, that of a skilled artisan or craftsman. Some musicians were, to be sure, celebrated in court circles and honored with elaborate titles, and some were so much in demand that courts competed for them. But these outstanding individuals, although certainly models for the aspirations of the ordinary musician, did not define the musical profession as such. It was the ordinary not the extraordinary musician who provided the standard social definition of the musician as artisan, much like any other artisan who was skilled at his craft and exchanged his product for some kind of remuneration. And whatever else the artisan or craftsman might hope to become - even an honored member at court - he was virtually never a scholar.<sup>6</sup> There was no place then for theoretical speculations and system building to be written down in treatises.

The craftsman-like definition of musician is maintained even today in the ustad-sagird relationship, the term used for master and apprentice whether it be for musician or automobile mechanic. The craftsman-like social definition of these Muslim musicians should not obscure the fact that many of these individuals were consummate artists as performing musicians. However, with the professionalization of music performance, musical knowledge became a commodity, albeit not palpable or visible, but no less real than a brass plate. In order to control and preserve this rather special kind of commodity, there developed a practice of keeping musical knowledge in small circles of stylistic schools, and the guild-like qualities of these institutions put a high premium on secrecy concerning musical knowledge.

The stylistic schools (known as gharana) which emerged in their present form after the mid-nineteenth century became primary badges of artistic identity. The gharana, usually named after the ancestral towns and cities of their putative founders, were structured through a hereditary group of lineal male descendants of the founder(s).<sup>7</sup> The social and concomitant musical stylistic integrity of each gharana was maintained through very extensive cousin marriages, a marital practice that is strictly prohibited to North Indian Hindus. These gharana

as tightly structured kinship groupings monopolized the production of professional musicians until well into this century.<sup>8</sup> It is only during the last two decades that one observes a significant break in the monopoly of hereditary Muslim musicians as performers and primary musical authorities. Guild-like in this respect, gharana controlled occupational competition and the tradecraft secrets of their traditions. This was perhaps an important motivation for keeping musical knowledge, including musical theory, in an oral medium. As repositories of such knowledge, gharana can be interpreted as the functional equivalents of theoretical texts in the Karnatak tradition and in this sense were an essentially ascriptive system of music theory. Thus kinship and marriage, pedigree and memory became, for Hindustani musicians, the vehicle of their tradition.<sup>9</sup>

### PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS

With the increasing Islamic political domination and concomitant court patronage from the 12th century on in North India, the focus of musical attention and the locus of musical preparation shifted away from the temple and into the court. The shift was of course neither an immediate nor ever an absolute phenomenon. There were Hindu musicians in Islamic courts and Muslim musicians in Hindu courts, and temples continued to patronize musicians as they still do today.<sup>10</sup> Similarly there continued to be court musicians in South India until this century. But in the North, more and more, the important musical developments occurred in courts. And to become a court musician, it helped much to have been trained by one.

Tyagaraja, eschewing court performances, provided the continuing model in the South of how music was to be culturally defined, at least as a cultural ideal, even for court musicians. Similarly the ideal model for performance venues remained the temple or ashram, even for court performers and audiences. To this day, this model persists in contemporary concert performances, in which both music and dance performances are always initiated with an homage to a deity. In contrast the Northern model is courtly and very "secular." Tansen, symbolically when not actually the apical ancestor of Hindustani musicians, was a court musician throughout his professional life. He continues to be the role model for Muslim performers, even to the point where the tension continues in ambivalence between music as a way for and a way of life.

## MUSICAL RAMIFICATIONS

In the absence of musical scores and little written history, the musical effects of this changed venue and social definition are elusive. The general movement from music as devotion to music as diversion is marked by the relatively 'lighter' genres which succeeded one another in Hindustani music. From the austere, Brahmanically-derived dhrupad in the 16th and 17th centuries, to the khayal introduced in the 18th century and the thumri in the 19th, the direction of classical forms moves towards the worldly romantic, more and more thinly disguised as spiritual affect. Thus for example, although Krishna texts emphasizing the devotional/romantic are found in all three forms, there is no mistaking the seriousness of intent in the context of a dhrupad performance, whereas, at the other extreme, the thumri can as easily be communicated in actual performance as secular eroticism as it can sacred devotion. More specific details concerning the manner in which musical change occurred in Hindustani music emerge if we compare the major vocal genres of North and South India, the khayal and the kriti, respectively.

The kriti in its basic form is a three part composition, which can include optional composed sections. The texts, which are usually devotional in theme, are clearly enunciated, even though the language of each text, whether Telegu, Sanskrit, or more recently Tamil, may be foreign to listeners. The khayal in contrast is a very much collapsed composition consisting of just two relatively short parts and including no other composed sections. The texts are usually in Braj Bhasa Hindi<sup>11</sup> and the themes are usually Hindu, (typically revolving around episodes from Krishna's life) not Islamic despite the Persian-derived name for the genre.<sup>12</sup> Most likely because of the Hindu thematic orientation, texts in most khayal performances become very much a vehicle for tune and not the other way around. This contrasts not only with Karnatak musical practice but also with Islamic musical practice in other performance traditions, outside of India, where texts assume an exceptionally important place.<sup>13</sup>

This apparent devalorization of Hindu texts in Muslim performance contexts occurs at the same historical time as the separation of instrumental music from vocal music. Instrumental music has become distinctive from vocal music in performance practice in a number of respects. Repertoire is somewhat separate, although overlapping

exists. Additionally there are a number of specifically instrumental structures which do not exist in the vocal tradition. This distinction is signified by the different terms used for the basic composition, known as gat for instrumental music and chiz for vocal music. In one account, the introduction of khayal in the court of Muhammad Shah Rangile is explicitly related to the development of a separate solo instrumental tradition (See Neuman 1980). This was historically significant because vocal music had always been considered in India to be the primary form of musical expression - itself a Hindu conception - and instrumental music was always considered subordinate to vocal music.<sup>14</sup> It may not be too speculative to suggest that the dominance of instrumental music in Hindustani music today, or perhaps more accurately, the dominance of instrumentalists, in terms of prestige and remuneration is related to the devalorization of texts in a musical system which otherwise always put a higher premium on vocal music. In this regard it is noteworthy that in South Indian music there is no separate instrumental genre; instrumental and vocal genres are essentially identical.

In addition to the changed cultural value put on song texts, with the probable consequence of separating instrumental from vocal genres, there is yet another musical feature - rhythm - which seems to have evolved differently due to changes in music consumption patterns. The contextual distinction between temple and court, and the cultural differences between the Brahmanical and the Islamic appear to have led to differences in the musical role and consequent structure of rhythm systems between North and South India.

#### **RHYTHM**

Rhythm in India is governed by a recurring cycle of beats which never change their number in any given composition. Within the cycle drummers can play a variety of precomposed and improvised pieces which are made up of patterns established by stresses in pitch, dynamic, and timbre collectively known as bol. While these patterns are played, the cycle of beats continues, and although every beat is not always sounded and therefore audible, most will be in order to insure the integrity of the cycle. It is in the manner in which the integrity of the cycle is maintained that the two systems differ markedly.<sup>15</sup>

In the South the drummer (performing on the mridangam<sup>16</sup>) maintains his relationship to the cycle of beats by reference to external timekeepers, other musicians in the ensemble who keep time - more exactly keep track of where the drummer is in the cycle - by showing the structure of the rhythmic cycle with a recurrent pattern of claps, waves, and finger counts. Indeed South Indian audiences also participate with their parallel keeping of time. The drummer can always see where he is by observing the pattern which is, so to speak, declamatory.

The North Indian drummer performing on the tabla drum pair<sup>17</sup> has no corresponding external time keeper. The drummer in effect becomes his own timekeeper by playing the skeletal structure of the rhythmic cycle itself, known as the theka (a term meaning "support").<sup>18</sup>

If we return to our archetypal context models (the temple out of doors and the court inside, the one devotional, the other virtuosic), the difference in rhythm performance structures corresponds markedly to the difference in performance contexts. The South Indian system is the standard pattern of keeping time in Indian musical traditions and is pre-eminently characterized as being participatory. The theka is almost certainly an importation originally from the Middle East, entering the classical North Indian system through regional folk traditions.<sup>19</sup> It is characterized by the independence of the drummer from other sources of timekeeping support, and indeed, as the term theka implies, provides support.

The fact that the theka was adopted from the Middle East is not at issue although it is unquestionably an important datum of the Islamization of North Indian music. The question of why it was adopted is still open.<sup>20</sup> It would appear that the entry of professional folk musicians into the classical system, beginning perhaps in the middle 18th century and certainly consolidated by the end of the 19th, was a function of the increase in the importance of entertainment as a function of Hindustani music.

In the evolution towards a courtly and later an urban-based entertainment system,<sup>21</sup> the cultural definition of music making, as I have said, became quite separated from its original Indian denotation as a devotional mode. Connoisseurs participated by expressing appreciation for a performance with the exclamation of "vah-vah" as they reclined on their large round bolsters,

but they did not intend to participate in the performance.<sup>22</sup> The musicians were separate and distinct from the audience. Indeed, given the evidence that musicians were also being recruited from folk traditions (see Neuman 1980, 1982 and Stewart 1974), it is likely that accompanists were sometimes quite distinct from soloists as well.<sup>23</sup> The theka as an independent structural support for musical performances seems to have been eminently adapted to a musical culture which was changing in its social context, the ethnicity of its specialists, and its cultural modality.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Autonomous timekeepers, condensed compositions, and lineage-encoded theory are three very general developments in Indian musical culture, all of which I suggest are directly coincident with its Islamization. The adoption of Islam allowed a marriage system, encouraged by a musical system of transmission, in which musical property could be carefully controlled by strategic marriages of cousins and the ability to transmit theory through practice in lineages which in turn defined discrete stylistic units known as gharana. Muslim musicians, most of whom were originally converts from Hinduism, continued the Indian - that is, Hindu - musical tradition of singing songs with Hindu themes, but for them as well as their Muslim patrons, a (culturally necessary) de-emphasis of the meanings of the texts and a reduction in the structure of the texts evolved. And last, a changed performance model was adopted which required drummers to use a new system of independently counting time.

The cases discussed here ought not to be regarded as definitive but only suggestive. There are many other problems concerning the evolution of Indian musical traditions which could be considered, for instance, the differences in raga definition (tunes vs. scales; see Powers 1980), improvisation vs. pre-composition, vocal vs. instrumental genres, and so forth. My aim here is to demonstrate that all such examples exhibit the possibilities of explaining features of a musical system in social and cultural terms.

## NOTES

1. For example Bhatkhande in the early 20th century and Brahaspati more recently.
2. Additionally, there existed the cultural ambivalence concerning music production in Muslim courts characteristic of music traditions in many other Islamic societies. In India it took a somewhat bivalent form, music being a highly prized cultural expression in Indian terms, but one which was rendered suspect among the Muslim orthodoxy as at best, something to be merely tolerated and at worst, banned. This is an issue that was first brought to a head in India around the turn of the 14th century during the Delhi Sultanate. The great Sufi Saint, Nizamuddin Auliya, was attacked by the orthodox for holding musical parties at his devotional gatherings. Although he successfully defended himself in a court hearing, music has nevertheless been less than completely tolerated in some Muslim circles.
3. Powers 1980 gives the dates 1829-1847 (p.85).
4. See the biography of Swati Tirunal (Venkita S. Iyer 1975).
5. In a verbal response to the original form of this paper, Harold Powers objected to the assertion that written theory had any more relevance to performance practice in the South than in the North.
6. Muslim scholars who did write on music were members of the nobility, not professional musicians. Indeed Walter Kaufmann claims that many of the great musicians he knew earlier in the century were functionally illiterate. (Walter Kaufmann 1968:8).
7. For a more complete treatment of the structure and evolution of these stylistic schools which at their core were lineage descent groups see Neuman (1978). For a recent and excellent analysis of the musical features of these gharana performers see Bonnie Wade (1984).
8. Although there were always some numbers of Hindu professional musicians, largely from Western and Eastern India (Maharashtra and Bengal), all acknowledged their discipular origins in these Muslim originated gharana.

9. A corollary of the development of the gharana was the evolution of named regional musical styles in the North, a feature not found in the Karnatak system.
10. The extent and nature of musicians associated with Hindu temples in contemporary India is an essentially unstudied phenomenon although some sense of who they are and what they do can be found in Norvin Hein 1972 and John Hawley 1981.
11. A dialect of Hindi spoken in the area around Mathura.
12. Khyal is a Persian word meaning 'imagination.'
13. For example see Geertz 1976 on his analysis of Moroccan poetry.
14. Not only in terms of an ideal hierarchy but in actual practice as well, where instrumental music was believed appropriate only as accompaniment to the voice.
15. In fact the two systems are different in a number of other important respects as well: the presence of a pair of drums, the "empty" beat (khali), and acceleration within a performance are all characteristic of Hindustani drumming and absent not only in the South but also in the earlier pakhawaj drumming tradition (see Stewart 1974:76-129). Indeed Stewart suggests a relationship between the separation of poetical from musical meter in the evolution of the distinctive tabla style (pp.410-11). However only the presence of the theke is explored here. I should mention here also that much of the data on Hindustani drumming mentioned subsequently comes from Stewart's outstanding dissertation.
16. The South Indian barrel drum used in classical performances.
17. The tabla is the drum characteristically associated with khayal performances and their corresponding instrumental performances.
18. The distinction between vocal and instrumental genres in North India is important here. During a vocal performance the tabla player typically plays only the theke. He only performs solo virtuosic passages and then rarely, if the accompanying melody instrument

- (the sarangi, harmonium, or less commonly the violin) performs the composition recurrently (known as a lahra). Where one typically hears tabla solos is in accompaniment to instrumental music. The tabla player plays the theka as the solo instrumentalist performs but also plays solo himself by having the instrumentalist play the lahra, thereby maintaining the metric structure for the tabla player.
19. The evidence for which Stewart summarizes in 1974:94-101.
  20. The theka as timekeeping formula is probably a relatively recent innovation in Hindustani music, measured by the fact that the North Indian barrel drum, the pakhawaj (also sometimes referred to as a mridang, cf. mridangam mentioned above), which is used in accompanying dhrupad performances, has adopted theka in theory but it is rarely performed in practice. Indeed, timekeeping in dhrupad performances, the one North Indian genre known to have been derived from a Brahmanic performance tradition, has retained not only the barrel drum tradition but also the external timekeeping structures of its southern cousin. See Stewart (1974).
  21. This is discussed in Neuman (1978).
  22. A good representation of such a context is to be found in Satyajit Ray's excellent film Jalsaghar. The drums themselves, in their differences, corroborate such an interpretation. The tabla (the name itself bespeaks its Middle Eastern origin) is more suited to indoor performances in which the delicacy of fingers rather than the dynamic of palms (characteristic of the the mridangam) become the focus.
  23. As genealogically they still often are.

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