

From the Editors

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Welcome to Volume 22, issue 1 of *Ethnomusicology Review*! This issue features an invited essay along with three peer-reviewed articles that cover a wide range of topics, geographical areas, methodological and theoretical approaches. As it seems to be a characteristic of ethnomusicology at large, this variety, even if it has become an object of critical inquiry itself (Rice, 1987, 2007; Laborde, 1997), has allowed the discipline, by grounding itself in reference to the context of study, to not take “music” for granted. It is in this perspective that we’d like to present this volume, and the *variety* of its contributions.

In his invited essay, Jim Sykes asks what ramifications of the Anthropocene, understood as a socio-ecological crisis, hold for the field of music studies and the politics of its internal disciplinary divisions. Drawing upon scholars who assert that the Anthropocene demands not only concern about our planet’s future but also critical attention towards the particular, historically situated ontological commitments that engendered this crisis, Sykes argues that music studies both depends on and reproduces a normative model of the world in which music itself occupies an unproblematic metaphysical status—one that, furthermore, occludes the possibility of “reframe[ing] music history as a tale about the maintenance of the Earth system” (14, this issue) urgently necessary as anthropogenic climate change threatens the continuation of life as usual. By taking seriously the material and discursive aspects of musical practice often encountered ethnographically, yet either explained away by “the worldview embedded in our disciplinary divisions or . . . squeezed through an ontological funnel to be made legible within them” (3, this issue), Sykes shows how attention to such ontological incommensurability not only allows scholars to do better by their interlocutors, but further offers alternatives to reproducing the toxic metaphysics at the heart of the Anthropocene.

Grounded in the methodological reassessment of the notion of “performance,” Anthony Grégoire reflects on what a musical performance entails. His article offers to investigate the non-musical dimension at stake in musical performances through his own fieldwork among the Sereer-noon of Senegal. By first contextualizing the Sereer-noon’s history and cultural conceptions, he intends to give special attention to community-building through choral-singing. He links those two activities through what he calls a “performancial community,” an idea that community builds and sustains itself through the continuous performance of music over time. In this way, the aim of the article isn’t so much about

asking “What a ‘performance’ is?” but rather “what it means to perform and how?” (36, this issue).

In their contribution, Bruno Deschênes and Nick Bellando deal with what they call “tone-colour” in Japanese music through the study of the shakuhachi flute and its playing. Further, the article offers a history of shakuhachi playing by contextualizing it in Japanese music and culture at large. By grounding their understanding of shakuhachi playing in its religious context of emergence, they identify its aesthetic dimension as linked to the player’s tentative to “express truth.” If they focus on tone-colour in Japanese music, they’re careful not to oppose European and Japanese musical sound traditions in binary terms, where tone-color would belong to one side, and pitch and melody to the other. As it develops a particular case on how the recognition of sounds as musical depends on socio-cultural contexts, the article questions what the aesthetic value of music can mean, and critiques determined notions of beauty associated to certain sounds.

George Murer’s article immerses the reader in the irreducible heterogeneity of music-making in the Baloch communities of the Makran Gulf. With exemplary ethnographic detail, he simultaneously traces the myriad regional influences on Balochi music and the changing meanings it holds for its performers and audiences. But he manages to do so without collapsing his object of research into a single model: “the contemporary popular music produced and consumed by Muscat’s Baloch community,” he argues, “refracts into multiple strains inscribed with specific geocultural orientations. No single current of cultural performance can comprehensively encapsulate this diverse community” (61, this volume).

Continuing our commitment to publish a diversity of voices, we are pleased that this issue features essays from authors representing a number of distinct career paths and points within them. In addition to a piece by an Associate Professor of Music (Sykes), we include articles both by graduate students in ethnomusicology (Grégoire and Murer) and scholar-performers (Deschênes and Bellando). Our Sounding Board, furthermore, acts as an online venue for ethnomusicological expression beyond the requirements mandated by the blind review process; here we also feature the many posts that have appeared since the publication of our previous volume. You can find book reviews, editorial news, and various essay sections. We hope you find our offerings as inspiring and thought-provoking as we do—our online format, furthermore, makes it possible to provide public comments on individual articles. For more substantial insights, whether related to this volume’s contents or something wholly different, please keep an eye out this coming summer for issue 2 of our

current volume, and keep in mind that our next call for papers has already been announced, with a deadline of March 23rd. In the meantime, enjoy!

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The Anthropocene and Music Studies¹

Jim Sykes

The following claim, for some of us, seems obvious: the normative disciplinary boundaries of music studies—historical musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, and composition—are intimately linked to the discourses, processes, and values that facilitate the Anthropocene. (Or if you wish, the Capitalocene: for I will suggest below, in the limited space allowed, that these emerge from a symbiosis between a longstanding (pre-Reformation) Christian notion of the human, celebration of the divine, and art as glory (Agamben 2011), on the one hand, and the birth of capitalism, on the other.) To put this another way, we are living our academic lives through mid-twentieth-century disciplinary divides that embed much older European-derived ideas that—not coincidentally—helped produce and legitimize what Clive Hamilton describes as “active human interference in the processes that govern the geological evolution of the planet” (quoted in Angus 2016:53). Some of these include: a certitude in human triumphalism, demonstrated by investment in linear narratives of human progress and cultural development through music; anthropocentrism, via a conceptual split between nature and culture; and a sedimented disciplinary division between “the West” and “Rest”. Less obvious (though I will argue also vitally important) is a conceptual sheltering of creative or artistic labor in music departments so that it appears related simply to human expression and its commodification rather than to the production and maintenance of the Earth system, or what in the literature on the Anthropocene is known as Gaia; and lastly, we find a conception of “the world” in our disciplinary divisions that recognizes different ontologies of music/sound but—proceeding via human spatial and temporal scales—embeds uniform ontologies of the self, the social, territory, time, and how these (and all beings) relate (i.e., a specific “worldview”). All studies of music either fit the worldview embedded in our disciplinary divisions or must be squeezed through an ontological funnel to be made legible within them. This is not to say music studies shuns difference: it transforms it.²

The foundation of musicology and ethnomusicology, for instance, both utilize the “container model” for thinking about culture that has been long criticized in anthropology (e.g., Gupta and Ferguson 1992). This remains at the core of our normative conception of music history, in which an “understanding of the general and the global” (space) is used to conceptualize the local (place), after which places are considered able to be compared at the global scale (Messerli 2016:14). This includes the idea that music history just naturally

consists of distinct ethnic, religious, national, and other groups that “have” their music which, by definition, reflects or produces their identity. These supposedly pre-formed (that is, seemingly internally-constituted) communities are *then* conceived as converging upon one another through encounters (e.g., globalization) to produce new identities (e.g., cosmopolitans). Music studies’ belief in a uniform metaphysical reality despite evident differences among diverse peoples about what constitutes humans, space, and time is an example of what John Law dubs a commitment to the metaphysical truth of the “one-world world” (Law 2011). This is a Northern-derived notion of “a world that has granted itself the right to assimilate all other worlds and, by presenting itself as exclusive, cancels possibilities for what lies beyond its limits” (de la Cadena and Blaser 2018:3). Arturo Escobar writes that the one-world world (OWW) operates via “a twofold ontological divide: a particular way of separating humans from nature (the nature/culture divide); and the distinction and boundary policing between those who function within the OWW from those who insist on other ways of worlding (the colonial divide)” (2016:21).

I stand on the shoulders of many giant scholars, and what I’ve said above is not new. But let’s dwell on it for a moment. Consider, for instance, if I were to write music history as though reincarnation *actually exists*—as though two humans (or a human and nonhuman), separated by great distances and eras, have a shared music history because one is the reincarnation of the other. Consider if Feld had written *Sound and Sentiment* from the birds’ point of view, or better, as though the birds really *are* the Kaluli’s deceased ancestors (perhaps he did—but do we act this way when we read or teach the book?). Such ontologies beyond the nature/culture divide are branded “beliefs” and situated within music studies’ normative conceptions of music, territory, and culture, rather than be taken as the *form* through which we present our studies. (Rather than get hung up on what constitutes reality, let’s agree that adopting the forms and values of Others in our writing does not require us to actually believe what we are representing *per se* but requires respecting “the ontological self-determination of the world’s peoples” [Viveiros de Castro 2003:18; Holbraad et al. 2014; see Steingo and Sykes 2019]).

The term “Anthropocene,” so widespread in the academy and now even in popular culture, has been surprisingly under-defined in music studies (even in ecomusicology; e.g., Allen and Dawe 2011; see Ochoa Gautier 2016). Popularized by atmospheric chemist and Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen in the early 2000s, the term refers to “a new geological epoch displacing the Holocene epoch of the last 10,000 to 12,000 years” (Angus 2016:9) in which “human activities, not natural processes, are now the dominant driver of change on Earth’s

surface.” The term thus does not refer simply to the climate crisis but to the fact that “changes resulting from human actions in this world...are so large and ubiquitous that humans are now behaving as geological forces” (Pereira Savi 2017:945). Writings on the Anthropocene in the popular press have fostered discussions on the impact of humans on the environment and the question of sustainability, while scientific discussions have centered on interpreting data on the anthropogenic impact to propose a starting point for the Anthropocene (ibid. 371). Crutzen and Stoermer (2000) locate the Holocene-Anthropocene boundary in the second half of the 18th century, when trapped air in polar ice cores were found to have elevated levels of carbon dioxide and methane, a period that includes Watt’s 1783 invention of the steam engine (Braje 2015: 373). Numerous scientists since have argued this periodization denies the “millennia-long history of human impacts on the planet and fails to focus on the causes of human domination of the Earth in favor of the effects” (ibid. 369).³ For my purposes here, I am interested in how the Anthropocene crosses “one of modernity’s fundamental intellectual boundaries,” between “the ‘natural’ and ‘human’ sciences” (Moore 2016:3). My interest is in the use of aesthetics to reshape the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière 2004:12)—the sensed hierarchy of social relations—through the questioning of fundamental metaphysical categories that arises when we put ethno/musicology’s area studies paradigm into dialogue with (on the one hand) the conception of globality and its transformation named by the Anthropocene and (on the other hand) the ontological differences music studies has so often encountered.

“Gaia” was coined by James Lovelock and promoted by Lynn Margulis to refer to the Earth as a self-regulating system, and it has become a core concept in discussions of the Anthropocene. While “Anthropocene” forges a “new age of time” in which human history is considered within the scale of the biological and geophysical sciences, “Gaia” denotes “a new way of experimenting space” (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2018:172; Latour 2017). When I refer to a relationship between music studies and the Anthropocene, I refer in large part to our historic inability to promote a conception of music, on a global scale, that enhances the capacity of the Earth to exist as a self-regulating system. This is because, as I suggest in more detail below, many musical/sonic actions conducted in world history for precisely the purpose of protecting and regulating the planet have been misunderstood or rebranded as expressions of a particular human cultural identity.

To take one example—it would be easy to trot out a long list here—consider the original job of the *devadasi* (dancers in South Indian Hindu temples) whose job it was to safeguard “the generation of Cosmic Energy in the *linga*,” which if not “safeguarded...cooled off (by various offerings) and reabsorbed into an undifferentiated unity” would “burn up the entire

kingdom and *bhutiloka* would come into existence” (Kersenboom 1987:120). This genre is now called Bharata Natyam, has seemingly been disenchanted, and is a hallmark of South Indian cultural (and Tamil ethnic) identity. What was about protection through showing respect to Others has become about pride through performing for oneself and one’s cultural or ethnic community—and this is perhaps the dominant ontological transformation in the world’s music history. All the while, the anthropocentrism and human triumphalism promoted by our normative conception of music history feeds into a willful ignorance of humans’ capacity to relate to the environment (“The expression ‘relation to the world’ itself demonstrates the extent to which we are, so to speak, *alienated*” [Latour 2017:14, his italics]). It undergirds our neglect of how our exploitation of the Earth’s resources are straining the planet’s capacity to exist. All this may sound cheesy, but that does not make it untrue. I take this argument as my starting point here (see Sykes 2018 for an elaboration); I’m more interested for the rest of this short essay in what to do about the situation, intellectually and disciplinarily. Of course many other aspects related to the Anthropocene will have to be taken into account by music studies, such as reducing the carbon footprint of our academic conferences, considering sustainability for musical instrument building and the ecosystems in which musics are situated (e.g., Titon 2009), and critiquing the waste of the music industry (DeVine 2015; Silvers 2018); but I fear we may only focus on those (worthwhile) aspects while ignoring how the very problems that constitute the Anthropocene deeply shape our academic disciplinization, areas of inquiry, and modes of representation.

Difference and the Global

In his famous 2009 essay, Dipesh Chakrabarty argued that while critiques of capital remain important, an emphasis on globalization “allows us to read climate change only as a crisis of capitalist management” (2009:212). For him, the problem is not just capitalism but the difficulty for humans of identifying with the concept of species that was “politically mobilized by naturalists such as Edmund Wilson . . . a collective identity that is phenomenologically empty” (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2018:174). What is needed, Chakrabarty asserts (as Viveiros de Castro and Danowski put it in their summary of his essay), is a new historical subject that is “impossible: humankind as a subject, precisely” (ibid.).⁴

This global and inclusive rendering of the human—as species and thus, presumably, without culture or with a uniform culture—would seem to be impossible and ethically problematic for music studies. For decades, music scholars have retreated (for good reason)

from the universal. But as William Connolly notes, to consider the universal as the opposite of difference “reduces the essentially relational character of difference to the bland idea of diversity among independent identities” (1995:xx). As Alain Badiou puts it, “The single world is precisely the place where an unlimited set of differences exist . . . far from casting doubt on the unity of the world, these differences are its principle of existence” (2008:39). As I hinted above, music studies *already* produces a uniform notion of the global through a discourse on difference (multiculturalism) that embeds a Western ontology of the human, space, and time.

The crisis called the Anthropocene, I suggest, requires a new orientation to the universal for music studies and this does not mean suppressing difference. In this light, the power of music studies is not so much in giving voice through representation but in helping conceive and promote understandings of the human and how humans relate to each other and the world. It is less about pride and more about protection through the promotion of narratives of relation. What needs to be addressed, then, is how music studies might facilitate different articulations of the global that allow for local comparisons outside the terrain of one-world metaphysics. I contend this means making “a transition from one-world concepts such as ‘globalization’ and ‘global studies’ to concepts centered on the *pluriverse* as made up of a multiplicity of mutually-entangled and co-constituting but distinct worlds” (Escobar 2016:22). This requires not just acknowledging different *musical* ontologies as though they exist in isolation but acknowledging historical entanglements between differing ontologies of music/sound, personhood, community, human-nonhuman relations, territory, time, and so on. Methodologically, it requires what Giorgio Agamben calls “a politics of vital forms, that is, a life that cannot be separated from its form,” and this does not mean such forms are static.⁵

Sonic Protection / Immunity

My Buddhist interlocutors in Sri Lanka would be surprised to know that many in the West feel that Western classical music is exceptional because in the Romantic period music was theorized as transcendent from society. For my interlocutors, the music they play—conceived as sacred speech so that it will be acceptable as an offering to the Buddha—is the music the gods played to celebrate the Buddha’s Enlightenment. It stands outside time and is conceived as unchanging; it is transcendent. Drummers are not the composers of this speech but the handlers of it. It was sent to them via a gift exchange in which the gods gave it to an indigenous group called the Vāddas, who gave it to the Sri Lankan (Sinhala) Buddhist caste of drummers I work with, called the Berava (Sykes 2018). What makes Western classical music different, I suggest, is not the notion of transcendence but, first,

how it hinges on the idea that music emanates from an inner self that is ontologically closed (not permeated, for instance, by godly or demonly possession, not stretched across time and distance via reincarnation) in which music is presumed to say something about what constitutes that inner self; and (second) a failure to recognize music *ontologically* as a gift that may be conceived as having nothing to do with an internal self, which is offered to and connects people with Others, from different human communities to beings like gods, demons, spirits, animals, and objects imbued with value. I suggest such a view—which emerges in any number of ways among diverse peoples—is a more globally justified understanding of music history than the Western notion of musical selves and expression that emanated from the West and then has been uniformly applied elsewhere.

It will help to consider a few examples. Consider the Iñupiaq of Alaska, who receive music as a gift from whales (Sakakibara 2009); the Temiar in Malaysia, a rainforest peoples who receive songs from nonhuman animals and inanimate objects in dreams (Roseman 1991); or the Suya in Brazil, who accept music as a gift from neighboring communities (Seeger 2004). Music-as-gift is just as evident in world religions: I’ve already provided a Buddhist example from Sri Lanka (see also Wong 2001) and a Hindu example from South India above. One could argue the entire core of Carnatic classical music (compositions called *kritis*) were conceived as gifts to gods. From a casual perusal through the *Excursions in World Music* textbook alone, we learn that in Japan, “until the Edo period, musical creation was regarded as a gift from god” (Wong in Nettl et al. 2016:212), in South Korea, “two times a year...on the grounds of the Munyo shrine in Seoul, a ceremony is performed in which highly formalized court dances are performed and sacrificial gifts are presented to the great Chinese Confucians” (Pilzer in *ibid.* 173), in Java the sacred dance *bedhaya* was “clearly a gift from He Who Is Great and Holy and meant to be a *pusaka* [treasure, heirloom] for the kings of Java that would bring blessings” (Warsadinigrat cited by Capwell, in *ibid.* 240), and that among Native American communities it was traditionally common for songs to be received (be given?) in dreams (Nettl in *ibid.* 437). It is widely believed that Bach conceived of his music as having come from God (Sykes 2018:5). Why stop there? Music is probably a gift more often than it is not in secular contexts (and in capitalism, e.g., the “free download” [*ibid.*:15]). Saying as such does not mean musical offerings always connect people (or do so positively), for gifts mark differences between individuals and groups (Weiner 1992)—my purpose here is to locate them simply as a ubiquitous social field relevant for music history. I suggest that once we notice commonalities across the globe that differ from the Western worldview—a widespread

belief in music-as-gift is just one example—we have some basis for an alternative method for conceptualizing the world’s music history outside OWW.

I emphasize that my call here should *not* be taken as a wish to amplify supposedly pre-existing, homogenous, racially essentialized practices that—especially when linked to religion—favor elite perspectives and today form the core of religiously-based ethnonationalist movements (such as Hindutva in India, the 969 movement in Myanmar, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka, and so on). Rather, the historical narrative has to recognize similarities and historical connections across cultures and species without resorting to a naïve retread of comparative musicology and refusing to position itself as a chance to “make each culture great again.” Such a recognition of heterogeneity should be positioned as a fulcrum towards an equitable future, not a reclaiming of a mythologized, elite-oriented, precolonial past. Recognizing that “*the* plane of existence is not *one* plane of existence” (Povinelli 2014; her italics) does not necessitate a return to the figure of “the primitive,” as Bessire and Bond (2014:444) memorably put it: “is there anything more banally modern than that orthodox dialectic of Otherness wherein Indigenous ontological legitimacy is restricted to the terms of an alterity grounded in myth with which many do not agree and from which many are always already excluded?”⁶ Rather, I suggest this project will require building a new music history for the world (not: “world music history,” a term that somehow typically occludes the West) that re-situates and re-animates the persistence of alterities and sonic exchanges in the wake of modernity’s physical and intellectual transformations—not as lying at the margins but at the center of our global narrative. This is indeed a provincializing gesture. I mean no ill will towards my colleagues who study Western classical music; rather, the point is that the way of framing the world that emanates from that tradition is intellectually a bad one when considering the history of music throughout the *longue durée* of world history, including in the West itself.

One might misread me above as suggesting we should go back to “myths” and “refute science.” But as Talal Asad puts it, “Myth was not merely a (mis)representation of the *real*. It was material for shaping the possibilities and limits of action,” a “desire to display the actual” that “became increasingly difficult to satisfy as the experiential opportunities of modernity multiplied” (2003:29). What I am suggesting is that we utilize narratives of music history to construct a vision of humans in which we think about music as a kind of action that connects us to human and nonhuman Others, that this is a “desire to display the actual,” and that using music (and music history) in this way *actualizes* a respect for Otherness and the Earth that is necessary for combatting the Anthropocene. As Escobar (2016:17) puts it, “To think new thoughts...requires to move out of the epistemic space of

Western social theory and into the epistemic configurations associated with the multiple relational ontologies of worlds in struggle.”

Wark (2019) argues that the Anthropocene needs to be read “through the figure of immunity rather than community.”⁷ Rather than using one-world conceptions of musical meaning to understand music *in* the Anthropocene, we need strategies for immunizing our field *from* the one-world metaphysics that generated its crises, from musicology’s lack of considering race (Bohlman 1993) to the challenge of the Anthropocene and those who continue to be left out by the division between ethnomusicology and musicology. As Ochoa Gautier puts it, “The point is not to negate that the ear produces an ontology of the relation between the person and the world, but rather not to confuse that with our own notion of relationality. What this implies is the need to explore the richness of a multiplicity of variables among what different peoples consider the given and what they consider the made that come together in the acoustic” (2014:22). This requires a cosmopolitics (Stengers 2014) for music that is the opposite of the universalizing of the human that goes under the guise of cosmopolitanism and multicultural inclusion.⁸

Singular/Plural

Tim Ingold worries that denoting multiple ontologies results in a *fractiverse* in which each society, even each person, appears to be in a world separate from others. He urges us to turn away from ontology towards *ontogenesis* (“the becoming of being”), a term denoting that “every being or thing is open, subject to growth and movement, issuing forth along its own particular path within a world of nevertheless unlimited differentiation.” He believes this “allows us to reconcile singularity and multiplicity, agency and patiency, within *one* world.” (2018:167).⁹ Ingold seeks to universalize an ontogenesis he sees articulated by Inuit views of the soul, which he reads in a dichotomy with Western notions via Roy Wagner’s (1975) *The Invention of Culture* and Descola’s (2013) *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Both of these books denote two “ontological regimes,” the “Western” and “tribal” (Wagner’s terminology) or “naturalism” and “animism” (Descola’s terminology). Western naturalism denotes distinct objects over a common ground, denoting distinct individuals and cultures through a process of *articulation*. By contrast, much as a crease in a folded paper is still *in* the paper, animism sees the world as primordially undifferentiated, as *continuity*, as “populations of more or less identical individuals but with a continuum of yet-to-be differentiated relations” (Ingold 2018:164). If the soul in the Western perspective carries distinct individuality and identity, in animism “there always remains a memory of that undifferentiated potential from the interstices of which every being is drawn. This memory is the soul...a constant reminder of the viscosity of the relational field, and of the

effort that has to be put in to work against it” (ibid. 163). Ingold urges us to proceed not via “the naturalistic dyad of identity and diversity but...the animistic pairing of continuity and differentiation” (ibid. 165).

I must admit I am hesitant to simply flip the binary and define all the world’s music history, including European music history, through an “animistic pairing of continuity and differentiation.” But I suggest Ingold’s notion of *ontogenesis* and his insistence on reading global communal formations and individuals through the notion of continuity is useful for promoting a holistic music studies in which one-world metaphysics is just one kind of system—even in Europe—among others in the intersecting *pluriverse*. Even modernity, through such a light, is continuous rather than transformative; consider that traditional practices like trance mediumship, for example, may allow “claims to a shared modernity and, as a modernizing strategy, [evolve] along nationalizing, folklorizing, and missionizing practices that expand and circulate in networks of migration and in transnational media networks” (Behrand et al. 2014:7). This is different from saying such practices are changed by modernity into something totally different from what they were—rather, it is to note that people through their practices make use of modernity for their own sustainability and shape modernity in their likeness.

Glory, (Dis)Enchantment, Capital

May I suggest at this juncture that certain studies that have done the spadework to analyze the roots of our disciplinary worldview—one thinks of Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier’s (2014) *Aurality* and Philip Bohlman’s long history of discussing the occlusion of difference in historical musicology (e.g., 1992) and Johann Gottfried Herder’s (1744-1803) contributions (e.g., Herder and Bohlman 2017)—should be considered historical musicology. Though written by ethnomusicologists, they are after all about the historical emergence of our disciplinary divisions and presuppositions, not texts to be conceived of simply as ethnomusicology. The core suggestion I want to make here is that we need to dig further into the European past than, say, Romantic era views of “the work” or colonial encounter.

Amitav Ghosh notes a historical turning point when he says that “even within Christianity, it was not till the advent of Protestantism perhaps that Man began to dream of achieving his own self-deification by radically isolating himself” before God (2016:87). Herder, the inventor of the term “Volksmusik,” was indeed a Lutheran (Bohlman 2017:2). The New Musicology viewed an ontological transformation in European music as having occurred through aesthetic decisions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but there is now acknowledgement that Protestantism’s ontology of the human formulated relations

between sound and vision (what Sterne calls “the audio-visual litany” [2003:15–19]) that influenced (via a Protestant secularism) the formation of modern sound reproduction technologies. It seems obvious to me that studies of the theological, social, and material processes that generated the audiovisual litany will have to begin well before New Musicology’s starting point (i.e. before the second half of eighteenth century)—the Protestant Reformation is one place to begin. Another is capitalism’s tendency to present “a fantasy of wholeness, one that operates to obscure diversity and disunity” (Graham 1995:193; cited in Biersack and Greenberg 2006:11). Treating capitalism as an ecology, which is to say as a particular way of understanding of human/nonhuman relations, I wonder if we may explore whether the Protestant-derived audio-visual litany and its view of the self were necessary for finding a place for music and musical labor in capitalism. Recognizing this, I suggest, will be necessary for producing an alternative history of music/sound amidst but not defined by the ontological foundations of capital. As Deborah Wong insightfully notes, this will require expanding and moving beyond ‘music’: “our *raison d’être* relies on music as an ontological construct, and that construct contains the very terms for our unimportance and irrelevance” (2014:350). This is because “music is already at journey’s end of rationalist ideologies that performatively render it powerless” (ibid.). The link between capitalism and Protestantism is of course long acknowledged (e.g., Weber 1905) but the manner in which they combined to transform music and musical labor in their image is a major gap in the historical record for music studies. I suspect it was these elements, through the political liberalism written into colonial law (particularly in the British colonies)—through which culture became defined as interior and related to community, and the market as public (Birla 2009)—that first brought the Western notion of music as expression/identity to the rest of the world.

I suspect, though, that the relationship between music and the self I am linking to Protestantism built upon a *longue durée* stability in Western thought about the *function* of music that can be traced to early Christian relations between government, religion, music, and glory, that is “between power as government and effective management, and power as ceremonial and liturgical regality” (ibid.). Giorgio Agamben writes of a “special relation that ties glory to inoperativity” in both early Christianity and Judaism:

In Judaism, inoperativity as the dimension most proper to God and man is given a grandiose image in the Sabbath. Indeed, the festivity of the Jews par excellence has its theological foundation in the fact that it is not the work of creation that is considered sacred but the day on which all work ceases (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus

20:11). Thus, inoperativity is the name of what is most proper to God . . . and, at the same time, that which is awaited in eschatology. (2011:239)

The work of Ochoa Gautier and Bohlman (among others) that explores the roots of the Western musical ontology as it was enshrined in our disciplinary divisions could be fruitfully put into dialogue with scholars of medieval Europe and even the ancient Judeo-Christian world. Which is to say, I suspect “the romantic aesthetic,” which “involved both a transcendent move and a formalist one” that “served more thoroughly to separate musical meaning from seemingly worldly affairs by merging form and content and eliminating mimesis as a goal of music” (Goehr 1994) has much earlier roots than German Romanticism, and it is this fundamental Judeo-Christian bias that has made Western thinkers unable to see music as something other than mere entertainment (“inoperativity is the name of what is most proper to God”) or the bestowing of glory to help produce sovereign, personal, or communal power and identity. One problem, as we see (for example) in the writings of Rancière and Attali, is that Western writers often assume functional art (as craft, mimesis, and ritual labor—what Rancière (2004) calls the “ethical regime”) gave way to a “representational regime” that, in virtue of new specialists supposedly above the status of mere laborers, laid the groundwork for the musical commodity (“The artist was born, at the same time as his work went on sale” [Attali 1985:47]). But this transformation belies a fundamental continuity in music-as-glory in Western culture, while ignoring that in virtually every society around the world—including Western ones (!)—musicians still play the role of ritual laborers even when they are designated as artists. We might ask, as Agamben does (drawing on Schmitt’s critique of Weber) whether “theology continues to be present and active in an eminent way” within the supposed disenchantment of music in modernity (Agamben 2011:4).

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that “there is no evidence of the decline of religion in Asia,” even if “the problematic of ‘the secular’ in Asia is very important” (Dean and van der Veer (2019:1)—and surely the same could be said about many other places. What is important to understand is not simply the failure of the global disenchantment of music but the ways in which the discourse on sonic disenchantment coexists with its opposite. I am thinking here of my fieldwork in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), where public space for many is disenchanted, as people walk to work in dress shirts on ethnically diverse streets amidst skyscrapers and past Starbucks, while numerous Hindu festivals throughout the year (such as the annual Hindu festival called Thaipusam) involve devotees undergoing extreme acts of penance (hooks attached to their skin to pull chariots of deities, spears piercing their cheeks and tongue, etc.) along those streets, accompanied by drumming that

supports trance. Recognizing the historic failure of musical disenchantment despite the ubiquity of its discourse is one core component of representing our interconnected pluriverse *as* music history on a global scale: the crossing of this-worldly (human) and that-worldly (nonhuman) divides over the *longue durée*. Against the nation-state model for *longue durée* music history, against “the West vs. the Rest” as a paradigm for teaching, and against “history vs. ethnography” as a normative methodological distinction, I suggest we need more encouragement and empathy for interconnections stylized not as globalization but as maintaining “the will to be otherwise” (Povinelli 2012) in the wake of encounter. This is one challenge for music studies in the Anthropocene.

Doing so, I suggest, will bring our definition of musical/sonic labor closer to types of labor typically considered radically distinct from it: investment banking, the hard sciences, and private security firms. Music history will become (a) stories of exchange based on hedging bets that build value; (b) histories of materiality explored through physics, biology, and the geosciences that are greatly enhanced through sociology and anthropology, via attention to (sound)waves, rocks, plants, bugs, and so on, from the big bang to histories of capitalism such as the extraction of shellac from the lac beetle to be used for records (Silvers 2018); and (c) stories of human protection and persistence in the wake of crises, in which the Anthropocene—though larger and more serious than previous ones—provides the impetus to reframe music history as a tale about the maintenance of the Earth system.

Musical Disciplines: Towards Twenty-First Century Praxis

In sum, many of us are attached to our subdivisions and academic societies; let me put some imaginary critics at ease here by saying we can have our cake and eat it, too. European music studies should exist as its own recognized and celebrated field. But “historical musicology” should refer to *any* kind of music history, anywhere, and accept that a plurality of ontologies (not just of music but of the human, the social, territory, time, and so on) means a plurality of forms for what constitutes music history, geographically and structurally. It means accepting music histories outside the container model. “Ethnomusicology” should refer to the method of doing ethnography, anywhere. It makes little sense that a scholar of (say) the current state of the *Jiangnan Sizhu* genre in China should be in the same subfield as someone studying (say) the early history of samba in Brazil—especially since the latter is the direct result of colonial processes that connect Brazil historically to Europe. Consider that a student wanting to study music history anywhere outside the West will most likely have to sign up for a degree in ethnomusicology even if she wants to do archival research and a project that does not require ethnography.

Our disciplinary divisions embed an assumption that the non-West is “the people without history” (Wolf 1982), accessed primarily through ethnography. While many scholars today combine ethnography and history, it makes sense (to me, anyway) to define historical musicology and ethnomusicology via method rather than place (e.g., Rice 2010)—but we should be careful that our methods do not presume the metaphysical reality of the OWW but allow us to study its emergence and effects.

In my opinion, this does not have to be a fight. It is an expansion—though admittedly through a displacement of the Western ontology from our intellectual formal structures and eliminating the disciplinary emphasis on the West/Rest distinction. This means it is long past due for ethnomusicology to cease being the dumping ground for otherness—and again, I mean no ill will here towards European music studies (having canvassed opinion, I think most scholars working on European music, at least the younger generation, agree in many respects with what I’ve outlined here). European music studies should be its own thing—and it can be strong and continue to be an important force in music departments—so long as the definition of historical musicology expands. This is simply the smart thing to do: we are academics, we want our thinking to be based on sound arguments. In history departments, for instance, there are no “ethnohistorians” who study the rest of the world outside Europe and European histories. There are simply historians with different regional specializations, of which Europe is one. We are at a point where ethnomusicologists now study the West, quite frequently, but job openings rarely if ever call for an ethnomusicologist who studies the West. Ethnomusicologists have, I suggest, largely moved into a definition of ethnomusicology as method, while historical musicologists (at least in job calls) seem to retain a definition of their subfield as region. This is ironic, for the disciplinary divide places history on the side of historical musicologists (who tend to emphasize *era* distinctions among themselves), thus downplaying the fact that the field *within music departments* mobilizes itself largely as region.

Perhaps “theory” and “composition,” likewise, can be expanded in ways that both retain their current focus and become methods emanating from diverse anywheres rather than from a single Western musical heritage. Taken on name alone, the journal *Analytical Approaches to World Music* should refer to all music theory anywhere, including the West. My point is not to critique that journal (which I have published in), but rather that Western music theory can remain its own distinct field without positioning itself as music theory, full stop, in such a way that places everything else into its own, singular category. This could happen through more recognition of regional differences (say, music journals dedicated simply to Indian, or Javanese, or Chinese, music theory) with publications

positioned simply as “music theory” being diversified and not simply reduced to Western music theory.

Of course I know these are among our most contentious issues—perhaps the very definition of a “third rail.” I doubt that *anyone* will agree exactly with what I’ve written here. (While I write as an ethnomusicologist, I admit that my own field has its own biases and shortcomings, and also that historical musicology has already expanded in important ways in recent years.) We do not need to agree on where music studies should be headed; my aim in this essay was not to lay a clear path forward but to argue—even if you do not agree with my suggestions for disciplinary change—that whatever path we choose, we need better recognition that the intellectual presuppositions behind our disciplinary distinctions are rooted much farther back in Western metaphysics than modernity, and that this metaphysics, through certain social processes (e.g., capitalism), generated the Anthropocene. Most of us find a way to do the work we want to do *despite* the normative disciplinary identities and distinctions in music departments; they are widely perceived now as a roadblock, except for the small number of people they benefit. Moving beyond these twentieth-century biases needs to be at the core of our discussions about musical disciplines, but in a way that is respectful to all. If we are good public intellectuals, we can play some role in articulating a vision of self and world that contribute, even if a little, to sustaining the planet—at least until we terraform Mars.

Notes

¹ I would like to dedicate this essay to my graduate students, who have helped me think through many of the issues in this paper—especially Andrew Niess, whose dissertation (in progress) is devoted to thinking through sound and the Anthropocene. (I should stress that all ideas here are my own.) I would like to thank Gavin Steingo for reading a draft of this essay. I am solely to blame for any mistakes or failures of the imagination.

² I do not believe “ontology” is another word for “culture” (Venkatesan et al. 2010)—while I have dubbed our disciplinary divisions a “worldview” I mean here a definition of *what exists* and how such entities relate and are deemed worthy of study through sound/music. In Viveiros de Castro’s (1998) terms, music departments proceed through a belief in “one nature, many cultures”.

³ The start of the Anthropocene has been placed as long ago as the early Holocene (roughly 10,000 years ago) and as recently as fifty years ago (Braje 2015: 371).

⁴ Yet because “Anthropocene” appears to mark all humans as responsible for the climate crisis rather than a few companies, CEOs, and politicians responsible for major decisions causing environmental damage, several scholars—notably Haraway (2017) and Moore (2016)—argue “Capitalocene” is a better term since it “signifies capitalism as a way of organizing nature—as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world ecology” (Moore 2016: 6). It should be obvious that I suggest music studies needs to adopt the “Capitalocene” mantra, since it will allow us to situate music and sound in the material and social processes that generated the crisis.

⁵ <https://libcom.org/library/god-didnt-die-he-was-transformed-money-interview-giorgio-agamben-peppe-sav%C3%A0>

⁶ It will be important to nuance a distinction between sound and music in such a project. The link between music and identity has often transformed certain practices that may best be described as “sound” (and which link peoples *to one another* and *to nonhuman entities*) into distinct “musical” genres perceived to be related *just to a single human community*.

⁷ <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4236-elizabeth-povinelli-when-the-rocks-turn-their-backs-on-us>

⁸ “For those who support cosmopolitanism, this is the field of human political action, while for advocates of cosmopolitics the world is something to be constructed involving human and non-human actors” (Flores Silva 2017).

⁹ Lisa Lowe prefers the terms *residual* and *emergent*, referring to “the implied but less visible forms of alliance, affinity, and society among variously colonized peoples beyond the metropolitan center” (2015: 19) and suggests that “the management of life and death that we now associate with neoliberal security regimes and the state of exception in crisis and war are constituted in and through” such “colonial differences” (ibid.: 16).

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The (Musical) Performance at Stake: An Ethnomusicological Review

Anthony Grégoire

I have always considered the observation of a musical manifestation more or less as the analysis of a musical “performance.” My recent interrogations and research about *what is, in fact, a “performance”*? have led me to formulate an observation. While looking for an answer in the *performance studies* literature, it is quite clear that music is not included as a subject of analysis but appears more as an object or a pretext to the analysis of the meaning(s) hidden *behind* the music, the best example being theater. A simple Internet search for “performance studies” only shows a few titles on music. Even *The Cambridge Introduction to Performance Theory* (2016) presents performance with keywords like “Drama and Theater” and “Literature.” Also, looking to different performance studies programs and courses syllabi from American universities like New York University, Brown, Northwestern, University of California, Davis, etc., it is quite clear that the notion of “performance” is widely associated with *communication*.¹ Though it surely is, this understanding appeals to a very particular intellectual lineage, characterized by the writings of eminent authors like philosophers John L. Austin (1962) and John R. Searl (1969), cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1982), and drama theorist Richard Schechner (1988), for whom the performance is at first a way to observe language, ritual, and everyday life interactions.

As I am a French language speaker, it is interesting to see that the words “performance” and “performativity” are in English very inclusive and do not make a great deal of sense as English words if it is not to relate to a comportment or a behavior. Similarly in French, “*performance*” often only refers to the musical “manifestation” (*la manifestation musicale*), the concert, and the execution or, in other words: the event itself (“What a spectacular performance!”). Then, the linguistic difference between those expressions can be located somewhere between the event and its realization. In this vein, ethnomusicologist Monique Desroches sees performance as “a series of modes of production and set-up in communication [actors and audience] which contributes significantly to the edification of the stylistics of a musical practice” (2008:104-105).² Desroches then proposes different parameters for the study of performance which include the co-text and the context, the interaction and the communication (for example, with listeners), and the realization modalities (ibid). Additionally, anthropologist Bob W. White (2008) also gives the public an active part in the performance, just as texts of the songs which should be considered as

many elements nested in a performancial space or a communicative ensemble named after Austin's "performativity," *performativité*. These two scholars are not the only ones to show interest in the study of musical performance, and they particularly insist on the "layers" composing the notion of performance as it is applied to music, including the "non-musical." Thus, the aim of the present article is to reiterate the importance of observing the musical performance not only as an event but specifically as a construction in a non-musical paradigm, a construction also built in a long-term and continuous process by all the members of what we could call a "performancial community." Then, it would be necessary to return to the ethnomusicological works from the 1980s and 1990s, which describe musical performance not only as a sporadic, punctual event, but also as the conjunction of rites, rituals, beliefs and religions in a given community. As an example, I will illustrate my proposition through my own observations on choral singing as practiced among the Sereer-noon, in Senegal. But first, I will briefly summarize the conception scholars have had of the musical performance.

Music and Performance Studies: A Brief Introduction

As pointed out by music scholar Guerino Mazzola, music in performance *theory*—and not performance *studies*—was at first roughly defined "as pertaining to rhetorical aesthetics" and then "characterized by a switch from rhetorical aesthetics to the aesthetics of a musical work" (2011:12). Later, music was associated with performance "being an expression of analytical insights of the *qua* meaningful text" (*ibid*). Since then, in performance theory, musical performance has nearly always been associated with the communication of an emotion,³ and that is the way it is also presented globally in the cultural performance literature in anthropology: in its association with the body, the *embodiment*.⁴ It is possible to follow the historical development of performance theory amidst linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists, culminating in the formalization of the field as *cultural performances* (McKenzie 2005) and the crystallization of a conception of the performance as the sum of "(1) social and self-reflection through the dramatization or embodiment of symbolic forms, (2) the presentation of alternative embodiments, and (3) the possibility for conservation or transformation of both individuals and society" (*ibid*). So the question remains: why is the musical performance mostly related to "emotions" and their communication (live, disc, MP3, etc.)? The point here is not that this is false or irrelevant, but rather to question the possibility of seeing "something else" behind this act of communicating emotions... let's say, something constructed for "something else" besides the performance and the act of communication themselves?

The literature on music in the field of psychology is vast. Themes relating to musical perception, the psychology of music listening (Justin 2000) and musical generative processes (Sloboda 1988) are particularly present. In his *Music Performance Research at the Millennium* (2003), scholar Alf Gabrielsson conducts an important review of the large literature on music and performance, pointing out categories like: performance planning, sight reading, improvisation, feedback in performance, motor processes in performance, measurements of performance, models of music performance, physical factors in performance, psychological and social factors, performance evaluation, and so on. According to his results, along with studies by John Rink (2002) and Bruce A. Carr, Lukas Foss and John P. Thomas (2011), “performance” is the public manifestation of the interpreter’s capabilities and their reception; that is to say, an *event*, a moment displaying music in a communication and an aesthetic relation.

Those studies point to another fact: most of the recent research on the subject has been led by psychologists and neuropsychiatrists. It has been quite a long time since ethnomusicologists have taken the question of musical performance seriously *outside* of the sole moment of the musical manifestation. Christopher Small was already making this point in 1977 in his book *Music, Society, Education*. Steven Feld was dealing with non-human sounds in 1982 in his book *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Ruth Stone’s ethnography *Let the Inside Be Sweet* (1982) is an early example of scholarship on performance in ethnomusicology and what she calls the “musical event,” as is Anthony Seeger’s classic *Why Suyá Sing* (1987). More recently, ethnomusicologists like Michelle Kisliuk (1998), Charles Keil (1998), Deborah Wong (2004), Timothy D. Taylor (2016), and Pavithra Prasad and Jeff Roy (2017) among others, have also extensively grappled with performance studies in their work. Finally, there is an important chapter entitled “Performance Theory in Ethnomusicology” in Ruth Stone’s *Theory for Ethnomusicology* (2008). Of course, preparation for a concert is important, and scholars have scrutinized the question in recent years, especially pedagogues, didacticians and physiologists, and even eutonists. But what if all that preparation was not “destined” or intended for the concert? What if the concert was only the object, the pretext and the “conveyal” of a musical purpose that is not situated *in musica*? Finally, what if musical preparation was not a “preparation” at all, but a way to induce people in borrowing and building an ideal to share with family and friends, with the community? What if that preparation was the performance itself as a way to enhance the community?

Those questions appeared on the field when it became clear to me that the performers in the choral did not conceive their performance as a concert but more as a manner to enhance

the community *without the will to participate in a musical manifestation*. Following the Sereer-noon from Koudiadiène (Senegal), the next sections will not offer and explain a new way to analyze and observe musical performance, but a way to reconsider it from “outside” of the music itself; the musical event not only as a producer of communication canals, but the product of that same communication through time, in everyday life.

French Musical Restructuration: The Origins of Choral Singing

Before going further in my purpose to review the musical performance status as a process instead of an object to enlarge or liberate it from its “musical obligated frame,” let’s take a brief look at the context of those people for whom music is not the reason for singing. Choral singing (or simply polyphony) was not known among the Sereer-noon before the arrival of the French missionaries in the region of Thiès and later, in Koudiadiène. The Mission of Thiès was founded in 1886 by the Spiritains, the French Catholic *Congrégation du Saint Esprit* (but a station had previously been built by the French colonial army in 1864) and the location rapidly became a huge center of activities, especially for missionaries for whom the Mission came to be a place of transit to other missions all around West Africa. If the colonial contact with the Sereer-noon had been a little difficult, it seems that it might have been easier on a religious level where music was the instrument *par excellence* for enculturation – or better in French, *inculturation*.⁵ Thereupon ethnomusicologist Christine T.N. Dang is categorical when she says that “on the musical level, these readings [of such an opposition through colonial archives reading] imply fundamental incompatibility between European-originated forms and authentic African expressivity, dismissing the long history of contact and exchange between these two categories” (Dang 2014:115). That is to say the encounter with missionaries, on a musical level, had been easier than the colonial contact itself among the global colonization situation because of the exchanges of musical symbols and the possibility to consider some symbolic equivalences between religious identities through music.



Figure 1: Koudiadiène is situated to approximately 12km from Thiès.

Source: <https://mapcarta.com/16835282/Map>.

Actually, the religious context of observation in this colonial territory is the key to understand the appearance of choral singing, and it further points to what makes it different from other places. Indeed, if the phenomenon observed in Koudiadiène is part of a context of Christian faith, there are more Muslims in the *Cangin* group than Catholics. Furthermore, several animist beliefs persist (Dupire 1992).⁶ In fact, while the Sereer tend mostly to adhere to Islam, the Sereer-noon are an exception and remain to this day mostly Catholic. Historian Ismaila Ciss also mentions that:

the Sereer were still convinced that being Christian was not incompatible with certain values of local culture, that syncretism was a way to strengthen their faith in a unique God, and to better protect themselves from evil spirits. It was out of the question for them to abandon certain practices. Such behavior should have led to their cultural negation. (Ciss 2000:331-32)⁷

After Senegal's independence from France on August 20th, 1960, the country's Catholic church was directed by Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum starting in 1962 (Benoist 2008). Under his governance, Catholic plain chant was replaced at the church by choral singing structured in four voices (SATB) with texts sung in vernacular dialects (Benoist 2008;

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Dang 2014). This change coincided with the Vatican II Council (1962-65) whereby the Church sought to encourage the adaptation of worship to local customs (Dang 2014). In this, we witness the creation of a new performancial space in the Catholic faith in which many traditional symbols were adapted by the Sereer-noon. As Dang explains, “multiple ethical codes and spiritual paths may coexist like polyphonic layers upon each other – like a four-part harmony in which each voice enunciates a melodic contour of divergent yet fundamentally interrelated musical veracity” (Dang 2014:122). Here, the musical syncretism is not simply the sum of the beliefs from two *parties* or the full adoption by a group of those from the other one, but rather a complex construction within which each part, animists and Catholics, can have the right to choose and keep its own symbolic association in a common path to glorify a unique God through music.

Being “Catholic”: Beliefs and Cultural Practices among the Noon

Although it is difficult to find literature on and about the Sereer-noon, it would be wrong to say that the Noons have been forgotten and are absent from the different literatures (ethnological, colonial, missionary). Rather, they only appear in those literatures by “exclusion” which creates a sort of “epistemic silence” (Touoyem 2014:2) around them, a silence that however “expresses a full knowledge – the silence of the one who is silent because he knows, and vice versa [or] a gap in the knowledge – the silence of the one who knows nothing or not enough, of the one who abstains, stoically, in the absence of established or provisional knowledge, opinion or certainty” (Eni Puccinelli Orlandi 1991, quoted by Manao 1999:18).⁸ This abundant presence in the literature does not present them any other way than by mention of this state of difference: *what the Noons are not*. If archives could only highlight some elements of the Noon’s culture as opposed to that of other groups in Senegal, this information remains fundamental in my actual doctoral project of re-construction of their cultural identity, by qualitative triangulation with data collected on the field. This research will help sorting the ethnological observations of these ideologically oriented writings in order to draw a much more complete portrait of the socio-historical and cultural situation of the Sereer-noon before and during the colonization and their evangelization. For now, to understand in a better way to what extent the complexity of this case is, we’ll develop one example of symbolic beliefs that can be heard or analyzed in their contemporary cultural practices but that predates their conversion to Catholicism. During all my visits to Koudiadiène since 2010, I lived with the Ndiolène’s family, in the village of Thiafathie, and participated with the community in daily tasks. In July and August 2015, during the *hivernage*, the rainy season and the period of agricultural work, I struggled with certain “rules” that were not explainable, or even, not explained by the

Noons themselves; in particular, the obligation to deposit three seeds per seed hole. To my question “Why not two?” I was systematically answered “But why not four?” And to my question “So, why not four?” I was told “Why not three?” And my questions inevitably led me to consider that three seeds were better “to grow.” In this regard, the importance of numbers that Catholic missionary Henri Gravrand recalls for the Sereer, numerical symbols are particularly important and present, even if they are not always aware of it (Gravrand 1987). There is the case here where people mobilize daily this type of numerical symbols without, however, objectifying their relevance since the importance of the action does not belong in the rule itself but in its expected effect. Some gestures are done a particular way since immemorable times and are considered traditionally the best way to accomplish it by the community. I followed this path and discovered that the number “3,” symbol of a better fertility for the seeds, is above all a symbol of fecundity: it is the numerical symbol of the feminine. Marie-Christine Ndiolène, a former chorister, explained to me that when a girl is sick, for instance, she is systematically given three sips of syrup, three tablets, three days of rest, and so on.⁹ Similarly, a woman giving birth to a girl will stay three days in the room where she gave birth before going out for avoiding to attract misfortune (interview of July 21th, 2015). Also, Marie-Christine continued telling me that when the Noons express their genealogy, the only pan of it they expose is the one of their mother, by their surname, while emphasizing the importance of the maternal uncle. Even a father still considers today that the brother of his wife will have a greater regard than himself on the future of his own children (interview with Joseph Ndiolène, August 1st, 2015). This reveals the importance attributed to women among Koudiadiène’s Noons, long before the arrival of Catholicism and patrilineality. In fact, it is rather today a system of matrilineal descent, but patrilocal and agnatic lineage (Dupire 1992). In the end, among the Noons, women possess such an importance in the village that they became a symbol at the core of the traditional and religious musical production. This role of the feminine will be conveyed both musically and by the rules governing the musical practice of the choir by the semantic transposition of the symbolic “3” in the Catholic liturgical music observed in Koudiadiène since “[m]usically, by transforming already classified musical structures that represent a well-known cultural identity by passing them into another cultural reality and observing the meeting points or the differences, we obtain what is called a *transmutation* – a change from one substance to another, a change of nature” (Surianu 1998:399).¹⁰

Here is the trick: in Koudiadiène, all the leaders and apprentices are men, but all the rules observed surrounding choral practice underline the feminine. If this situation is already reminiscent of the genealogical lineage mentioned above because of the importance of women in a male environment, the analogy continues musically with the choir. First, I

noticed this association between the choral and the Blessed Virgin Mary: before and after each rehearsal of the choir, they make a prayer to the Virgin Mary. When I asked the question “Why the Virgin Mary?,” I have always been told that “it is not the Virgin Mary that is prayed, it is a different Saint each time, but it is not obliged to be a Saint” (Interview with Lazare Ngagne Tene, July 14th, 2015).¹¹ In fact, the prayers for all the rehearsals I have attended were addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the exception of a few occasions when addressed to the Founding Father of the Congregation of the Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, Saint Pierre Julien Eymard, especially in view of the Parish Patronal Feast concert which took place on August 1st and 2th, 2015. This is a very strong link between the rationale for the rehearsals, that is, literally being at the height of the expectations of the community for the good performance of the choir during the Mass, and obtaining the blessing of Saint Mary, Mother of God. Added to this is the obligation to include in the repertoire an outing song in honor of the Virgin Mary, as if the faithful returning home had to leave the Church, patriarchal, with a final thought for this woman, mother of the patriarch.

**Musical example 1. Jebal la suñu ligeey, Chorale Saint-Dominic Savio
(credits : Anthony Grégoire)**

Access audio at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eC2it4c7kstCZmaRa5q1By_vQuQgDCaT/preview

**Musical example 2. Nañu onox faaning go, Chorale Saint-Dominic Savio
(credits : Anthony Grégoire)**

Access audio at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dglzuT-H4hpQi0C-fbnAkIOuGtHbtYJE/preview>

Musically, I retain a few points. The association within the repertoire of the choir of measurement in 3/8 only to “tradition”: a ternary measure reminiscent of the traditional song of the *mbilim*,¹² a song traditionally performed by women. Also, the structure of the *mbilim*, in two parts separated by a transitory part where the tempo accelerates. That one finds structuring many parts of the corpus: it is a tripartite structure also symbolizing the implication of the woman in the musical genre. In addition, only ternary measures in 3/8 are accompanied by *tam-tams*, an identity symbol already reinforcing this link with Sereer-noon’s traditions. Finally, the intonation¹³ of a song is in all cases, except those where it is the choirmaster or the celebrant who intones, ensured by the sopranos, as if the women, in homophony, had a heralding role precursor of the polyphony to follow. What needs to be understood here is that the choir itself, a gathering illustrating and reinforcing the bonds that support the importance of the community in the tradition, holds its functional value in

the communion, through prayer of God and his people. On the other hand, it is through the symbolic value attributed to the whole that the feminine is still perpetuated today, as it is women who symbolically support this fusion between animism and Catholicism: a fusion that has allowed the creation of this new cultural departure of the Sereer-noon, and from which new perspectives could have been constructed, a new fruitful life to perpetuate the important symbols of the animist Noons by the voice of the newly Catholic Noons.

In sum, the context of observation and the origins of choral singing in Koudiadiène brings to light a syncretic potpourri of Catholic and Animist symbols. These are built in the reciprocal acceptance, by both cultures, not only of the ritual conception of the cult but also of a performancial time and place – the past and the present, the faith and the cult, and the village and the church – to provide for them the sole spirit of what it means “to make music” together, a fertile milieu to strengthen the social fabric.

***Musicking*¹⁴ in Koudiadiène: The Ensemble Instrumentation**

In regard to the description of the ensemble observed in Koudiadiène, I refer to the four-voices Western choral group composed of soprano, alto, tenor and bass (SATB). The number of singers in the choir is not fixed and varies greatly depending on the time of the year. The choristers may also join it on a voluntary basis. However, the repertoire of the ensemble remains polyphonic at all times. The rare occasions when homophony is heard are musical pieces that are precisely associated with a request for intercession in favor of the community, such as *la prière universelle*, which is sung with all the parishioners, or when a group of choristers intones the initial part of a piece, intonation which will be followed immediately by the polyphonic choir. However, according to the liturgical context, this intonation in homophony can be replaced by the choirmaster or the priest celebrating the Mass and who then act as soloists.

In terms of organology, it is necessary to specify the terminology of certain musical instruments used in the choral ensemble as the *tam-tams*, whose name is attributed by the Noons to their traditional drums.



**Figure 2a. The thiole, the tougouni and the nder
(photo by author).**



**Figure 2b. The thiole
(photo by author).**

This name refers to a family of five membranophones struck simultaneously with a hand and a stick, literally a branch that has been torn from its tree before playing on the instrument. All the drums are single-skinned and are listed as follows, from the smallest to the largest: *thiole*, *mbal*, *tal-mbat*, *tougouni*, and *nder*. These are Sereer-noon names derived from Wolof appellations since those drums are constitutive of the Wolof *sabar* drums ensemble.

The structure of these instruments is at the crossroads between the *djembe* and the *sabar*, and the same goes for the playing technique. The first one is a membranophone struck with hands and whose cup-shaped body is cut in one piece of wood on which is stretched a single skin using braided ropes. The size of this instrument varies according to the artisan-sculptor and the origin of the instrument. The second one is also a membranophone with a unique skin which is struck with a hand and a stick, but its skin is stretched with studs inserted into the sides of the drums. The skin of the Sereer-noon's tam-tams is attached to studs inserted on the sides of the drums, by leather straps. The instrument is tuned by striking it on the ground to let in or out the studs that tighten the skin when inserted, and loosen it when partially removed. Some are pierced at the base, some are not, according to the manufacturer.

If these drums are fundamentally in the repertoire and have a great importance in the performance today, it has not always been the case. It is also possible to add a *djembe*, depending on the presence of the instrument or not on the premises, without any more justification. These drums are joined by an Ibanez electric guitar and a Yamaha electronic keyboard, both connected to a tinkering amplifier whose brand seems to be unknown. A sistrum also accompanies the choir, a small idiophone whose sound is produced by shaking where several metal discs collide by sliding on a metal rod. Those instruments are the only ones that I found in the village and are not particularly prescribed by any rules except by their presence or not on the premises too.

Musiking in Koudiadiène: Saying “Music” with Words

Actually, the word “music” itself should be discussed separately here because it did not exist for the Sereer-noon prior to colonization by the French nor does it exist anymore except in the Occidental sense of the French word *musique* and the general understanding of the notion of “music” (i.e. the organization of the sounds). In the Sereer-noon's dialect (or at least amongst older people who remember living free of French domination) they say

rather *mbúmbaí* (*ambiance festive*; “festive atmosphere”) or *keñtokh* (*faire la généalogie*; “doing genealogy”) instead of “music” because of the underlying complexity of the whole thing often called “music” in making the distinction of the sound organization and the different processes involved in music making, performing, aesthetic, etc., or, conversely, to take apart motivations under the musical mobilization (dance, festivities, etc.). Thereby, these two expressions seem to be complementary rather than equivalent because the second allows people to remember the ancestors by “doing genealogy”¹⁵ in order to create the first and foster a festive environment in the community. These expressions are also important in their conception because they symbolize the links between people in a present-past relation, in which remembering the ancestors *is* the reason to do “music”: in a sense, *musiquer*, as defined by ethnomusicologist Gilbert Rouget (1980), is for them the reason to “make music alive” through relations between each member of the community (including the ancestors). The performance of that music-making, however, is not the purpose of the music event. In other words, an Occidental conception of the phenomenon would consider it like a performance but for them, it is what we could call a “causal effect.” In a complementary way, asking younger people how to say “music” in Sereer-noon reveals another dimension, particularly in the link between their “traditional”¹⁶ music called *mbilim* and their conception of what music is nowadays. The *mbilim* is at first considered like a music style, an aesthetic and a *genre*. But actually, it also refers to an event, a happening that elicits the festive atmosphere. Furthermore, *mbilim* as a musical genre must be divided into many types of chants associated with different periods of the year, age, agriculture, rituals, etc.; *mbilim* was the core of communication in the community. In fact, younger people tend to use that traditional heritage to answer my question with different expressions related to “music”: “faire le mbilim” (*ketúm mbilim*; “to do mbilim”), “danser le mbilim” (*keham mbilim*; “to dance the mbilim”), “battre [le tam-tam]” (*ketip [han]*; “drumming”, understood as “to beat the drum”), or “chanter” (*kethiek*; “singing”).

The complexity in describing what “music” can be for the Sereer-noon refers to musical and/or non-musical. It expresses heritage and clearly demonstrates the reconciliation with “performance,” but all the expressions collected refer to “faire de la musique” (*ketúm mbilim*; “to make music”) and are related to the notion of experience as described by John Dewey (1934), which is both an accomplishment and a process between people and their environment. Then performance is no longer an object or an act but a process (Small 1998). Thus, the re-consideration of the way the Sereer-noon “perform” their “musicality” demonstrates that it is quite clear that the conclusions will no longer belong only in the realm of the musical.

The (Non-)musical (Non-)performance at Stake:

Faithful and Numerous in Communion

Musiking is about musical-practicing but it is also about community-making *in* a musical context. During my interviews, everybody talked about music and mentioned how music enhances people's lives; this is the reason why my informants decided to join the choir(s)¹⁷ in their village. The musical structure in place within the Church gives everyone a chance to take over the choral practice to distinguish themselves in the collectivity as part of a musical movement which supports the Catholic faith's message. As my informant Lazare Tine said:

choirmasters will never send back someone who tries to fit into the ensemble; it would be unthinkable and would certainly provoke grumbling in the Church; instead they say: "Wherever you are, whether with your friends, under the palaver tree, or in the fields, practice singing" (interview, January 6th, 2015)¹⁸

This perseverance is complementary with the fact that several singers have admitted to being a part of the choral for 10 to 15 years or more "by vocation," or simply *to help people pray*. Moreover, Louis Ndiolène, a chorister who takes part in the ensemble, told me that "the choral, it is singing in communion... The number of singers makes the quality, really..." (interview, July 27th, 2015).¹⁹ This constant return during interviews and discussions with the choristers of the community that willingly puts themselves at the service of everyone so that it can pray well, is really at the core of why they sing. The choir has become, for them, the means to help the community cultivate its faith in the Catholic Church. The structural ensemble remains only a functional tool to this end. In this way, musical performance during the mass is not to be considered a "performance" but rather as a way to support each other in prayer. It is also coherent with the religious *raison d'être* of the choir considering the texts sung by the choristers, which is for them equal to the prayer itself. Then, following the understandings of the expressions "musicking" from Small (1998) and "musiking" from Harris *et al.* (2013), *singing* becomes both, and at the same time, the act itself but also the process and the context that permits others to act in respect with their Catholic will and toward the function of the choir.

Musical Critique, Polysemy and the Atmosphere

One thing is also clear when I reconsider all my interviews in Koudiadiène: to the question of *How did they appreciate or experience the performance of the choir?*, everybody

answered with so many factors and expressions that did not fall under the musical component as such. For all the performances of the choir I observed – around twenty in several different contexts – not once did a member of the community commented on the choir by describing the “musical” performance if not with generic expressions like “the singers sang very well.” For example, the critics of the choral concert given at the Parish Feast Day on Saturday, August 1st, 2015, were mainly focused on the “atmosphere” (*mbúmbaí*) the choir was able to induce among people, mentioning then the original choreography or traditional costumes, the great interaction between singers and spectators or, still, the lack of intelligibility of the text. However, the interview with Valéry Diène, one of my informants, gave me a brief glimpse of something I interpreted as a criticism of the music itself, but instead it turned out to be the result of a terminological polysemy. He told me about the performance that “there were false notes... The children, they were skidding... If you listened *well*... The way they sang, I’m referring to the girls... Some who were screaming, who were slipping” (interview, August 2nd, 2015).²⁰ With his observation, Valéry is telling me that when the music is too loud or the voices are not well balanced, we can’t understand the text, the “message”; the end result is that the whole performance suffers, especially *by the loss of interest of the spectators not being able to understand the meaning of the chant*. That kind of perception was also expressed the day after by Alice Ndiolène who told me that she preferred another performance because “it was clear” (“c’était clair,” referring to the sung text). Therefore, it appears that while this festive atmosphere is necessary for the performance to flow well, the most important element is the “message” conveyed by the text, precisely because of how central the communication of this message is in the act of worship itself and in “creating” the desired atmosphere.

So my observations shed light on the predominance of the text which features on the musical score. Lazare, who has a degree in music, focuses on the idea of the text “to pray well,” as does the rest of the community; but it seems to me that this parameter cannot be dissociated from the performance itself. If so, what is the necessity to have a choir singing for each ceremony? The musical manifestation taking place during the worship celebration must allow members of the community to live a communal experience built on the festive atmosphere created by the chants at the church in Koudiadiène. Those chants are borrowed and sung *with* and *throughout* the community and must lead the parishioners to a common experience. This sharing can be constantly updated in the community, just like with the Lord, this God whose conception will never have been incompatible with that one of the Catholic faith. This atmosphere tightens and “evokes” this community but also – just as they remember the words of Jesus, Mary and other Saints from another era – the ancestors who are the fathers and mothers of the community. Although one might not be able to trace

the genealogy to (and of) Church, the act of remembering this past in the context of this sharing atmosphere created by the choral ensemble among the Sereer-noon recalls the experience of “doing genealogy” (*keñtokh*).

“Ce n’est pas un concert!”,²¹ or How to Displace the Focal Point

After all, the musical structure in Koudiadiène is deeply rooted into the church’s activities and, as all other cultural practices in the village, it is regulated by what they call “le Conseil paroissial pastoral” (“Pastoral Parish Council”). Actually this Council determines the aesthetic rules and behavior to follow to ensure the “good” performance of the choir, and its decisions are highly observed and respected by each member of the community, whether that person is a member of the choral or not. The vision this instance has about the ensemble and the conception of the repertoire it promotes are mostly articulated around the voice and the text: the liturgy leads the behavior of the choir to help people pray. As said by Father Antoine Ndong, the priest in charge of the Parish, “People *must* understand; this is not a concert!” (interview, December 19th, 2014).²² This citation is enough to sum up the purpose here and to understand that the faithfuls do not constitute a proper audience (*auditoire*) and that the accent must be on the voice: not for its “beauty” but for the intelligibility of the message it conveys. Furthermore, the priest adjuncts the functional importance of the choral with the act of community-singing when he says “the choral should not vocalize because the people do not sing anymore; it becomes a concert . . . And the instruments must not dominate the voices!” (*ibid*).²³ For example, a communion chant will take its importance in its function, by sustaining the message that it conveys. With all that has been said above, the choir’s reason for being is, simultaneously, to offer a communal space and moment where the faithful can grow their faith with other members of the community, to assume the role of medium for the message to be shared and, finally, to sustain the prayers. It is a formidable example of what Kay Kaufman Shelemay calls “musical communities”: “a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves” (2011:365). But it is also a conceptualization of the choral performance as an act of negotiation and a process which is built in everyday life *with no musical means of its own*. Rather, it is a way to enhance relationships in a particular kind of “performancial community” (Grégoire 2016b) following the work of ethnomusicologist Emmanuelle Olivier who conceives collective performance as:

the elaboration of the melody . . . eminently individual, necessary condition for the manufacture of counterpoint since all the voices are structurally equivalent. Beyond

the path of each of the voices, the analysis of such a collective performance makes it possible to approach the question of the interaction between [these voices while considering] that the shaping of a song does not result from the simple addition of individual melodies. (Olivier 2004:18)²⁴

The (Non-)musical Performance in Paradigm: A Conclusion

Theory tends to associate musical performance with *cultural studies* rather than *performance studies*, but we have seen here that, to some extent, it could be different. On the contrary, my observations among the Sereer-noon of Koudiadiène demonstrate that musical performance can *also* be observed as a subject instead of always being the eternal object of communication – that is to say, the phenomenon inscribes itself also in a communication path, but not exclusively. Actually, the fact that the choral performance is part of a larger process focused on cultivating a faithful community in prayer, obligates scholars to reformulate the initial question. Instead of asking *What a “performance” is?* They should focus on what it *means* to perform and how. There is also a major point in this case which cannot be developed in detail here: the construction of the Noon’s “musical community” *through* the space called “performancial community” must be inscribed in a long-time (*longue durée*) performance building. The community in question is built not only among the multiple musical utterances, the *events*, but mostly in a day-to-day peer-building relationship. That is all the relevance of the expression “performancial community” which is constructed through time and generations in a continuous communication of faith, knowledge and passion and with a real statement of everyone’s vocation to prayer. That is the reason to keep an expression such as “performance” or “performancial” rather than using Small’s expression “musicking,” which is often understood to be more convenient when writing about the concept. Here, the “performance” is more *temporal*, and its “communication” is *punctual*.

Besides, some people in Koudiadiène like to say that “Bien chanter, c’est prier deux fois” (“Singing well is to pray twice”): the community there constructs and makes its festive atmosphere “alive” by each member’s statement of the role of the Catholic faith in his or her own life. The musical performance is thus only a tool for the good flow of the Catholic faith. People are not “performing” to express their faith; it is rather the expression of their faith that an occidental conception considers generally as a performance. For those practitioners, choral singing *is* musical but the choral performance is not: it is an act of worship that makes people grow amidst a strong community fabric which is woven through time.

Notes

¹ See for example the work of Filippo Colnago (2007), “La communication musicale comme élément d’identité culturelle chez les Lobi du Burkina Faso,” *Cahiers d’ethnomusicologie* 20: 67-85.

² “une série de modalités de production et de mise en communication [acteurs et auditoire] qui contribue de façon significative à l’édification de la stylistique d’une pratique musicale.” All translations from the author.

³ See Patrick N. Juslin, Patrik (2000), “Cue Utilization in Communication of Emotion in Music Performance: Relating Performance to Perception,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 26, n°6: 1797-813.

⁴ See the work of J. Lowell Lewis (2013), *The Anthropology of Cultural Performance*.

⁵ *Inculturation* is a Christian term used in missiology to refer to the adaptation of the Gospel in a given culture. This notion is close, but significantly different from acculturation in sociology.

⁶ For the global picture, there are generally two accepted “families” among the Sereer in Senegal: the Sereer Singandum, in the south, who can be subdivided into two or three subfamilies according to different sources, and the *Cangin* group, located around Thiès, which is subdivided within Ndut, Palor, Saafen, Noon, Lala.

⁷ “les Seereer étaient toujours convaincus qu’être chrétien n’était pas incompatible avec certaines valeurs de la culture locale, que le syncrétisme était une manière de renforcer leur foi en un Dieu Unique, et de mieux se protéger des mauvais esprits. Il n’était donc pas question, pour eux, d’abandonner certaines pratiques. Un tel comportement entraînait leur néantisation culturelle.”

⁸ Un silence qui “exprime [pourtant] un savoir plein – c’est le silence de celui qui se tait parce qu’il sait, et vice-versa [– ou] une lacune dans le savoir – le silence de celui qui ne sait rien ou pas assez, de celui qui s’abstient, stoïquement, en l’absence de connaissances, d’opinions ou de certitudes établies ou provisoires.”

⁹ Similarly, a boy will systematically be given four sips of syrup, four tablets, four days of rest, etc. since the masculine numerical symbol among the Sereer-noon is “4”.

¹⁰ “[m]usicalement, en transformant des structures musicales déjà classées qui représentent une identité culturelle bien connue pour les faire passer dans une autre réalité culturelle en observant les points de rencontre ou les différences, on obtient ce qu’on appelle une *transmutation* – un changement d’une substance à une autre, un changement de nature.”

¹¹ “ce n’est pas la Vierge Marie que l’on prie, c’est une Sainte différente à chaque fois... mais ce n’est pas obligé d’être une Sainte.”

¹² See below for what the *mbilim* is.

¹³ The intonation, in the liturgy, is the initial part of a musical work sung by a soloist or a group of choristers to announce the entrance of the choir.

¹⁴ The act of “doing music” could be described different ways; among others, “musiking” as theorized by Rachel A. Harris, Rowan Pease and Shzr Ee Tan (2013) is understood like a

negotiation (p.92) while “musicking”, for Christopher G. Small (1998), is more like a *process* (p.112). This nuance is important to keep in mind for the purpose of the present article because doing music in Kouidiadiène is actually the mediation of both these understandings of the same musical act.

¹⁵ It is important here to note the difference between “doing genealogy” and “*doing* the genealogy,” the first being used to describe the act of searching for relative parents and/or ancestors, and the second understood as giving an active part and agency to those people literally “participating” to the building of their genealogy: they are “making” genealogies (Grégoire 2016).

¹⁶ I don’t want here to (re)open the debate about what is or is not “traditional,” and for whom; I just refer then to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) and Gérard Lenclud (1987).

¹⁷ Actually there is more than one choral ensemble but six ensembles dispatched unequally among all the six villages of the Parish, grouping people in different groups by age. There is also a seventh ensemble constituted by the members of the noviciate who come from all around West Africa. For the needs of the present article, and to simplify a little, I will use “the choral” to be understood as “an ensemble” – which is not so far from the reality when considered as an ensemble of choral ensembles.

¹⁸ “les maîtres de chœur ne renverront jamais quelqu’un qui tente de faire sa place au sein de l’ensemble; ce serait impensable et susciterait certainement la grogne de l’Église; on lui dira plutôt: « N’importe où, où vous vous trouvez, que ce soit avec vos amis, sous l’arbre à palabres, ou bien dans les champs, exercez-vous à chanter.”

¹⁹ “[I]a chorale, c’est chanter en communion... Le nombre de choristes, ça fait la qualité, vraiment.

²⁰ “il y avait des fausses notes... Les enfants là, ils dérapaient... Si tu as *bien* écouté... La manière dont elles chantaient, je fais allusion aux filles... Certaines qui criaient, qui dérapaient” (italics are from Valéry’s accentuation).

²¹ “This is not a concert!”

²² “[I]es gens *doivent* comprendre; ce n’est pas un concert!” (italics are from the priest’s accentuation).

²³ “[I]a chorale ne doit pas vocaliser, parce que le peuple ne chante plus; ça devient un concert... [Et] l’instrument de musique ne doit pas dominer les voix!”

²⁴ “l’élaboration de la mélodie [...] éminemment individuelle, condition nécessaire à la fabrication du contrepoint, puisque toutes les voix sont structurellement équivalentes. Au-delà du cheminement de chacune des voix, l’analyse d’une telle performance collective permet d’aborder la question de l’interaction entre [ces voix tout en considérant] que la mise en forme d’un chant ne résulte pas de la simple addition de mélodies individuelles.”

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The Role of Tone-colour in Japanese Shakuhachi Music

Nick Bellando and Bruno Deschênes

Tone-colour has historically played a remarkably important role in Japanese music, often taking priority over precision in pitch. Though pitch / melodic flow and tone-colour both play important roles, the emphasis on the latter is often marked to an extent that warrants specific attention from musicians coming from a perspective that gives emphasis to pitch-precision. For example, a Jazz musician who is accustomed to “wrong” notes for the sake of expression may feel more at home when listening, while someone trained to hear classical European harmonies may perceive more dissonance. In both instances musicians will gain a deeper connection with the music described below by intentionally adjusting their field of expectation away from pitch-precision and melodic flow and towards a specific appreciation of tone-colour.

While more pronounced in comparison to traditional European music, the emphasis on tone-colour exists on a spectrum within Japanese music as well. Within ensemble music, pitch and melody play a prominent role; the same is true for modern Japanese music, especially towards the beginning of the Meiji era (after 1868) when traditional aesthetics began mixing and interacting with newly – introduced Western cultures. In previous eras, with genres such as solo and religious music, tone-colour was increasingly pronounced. This is especially true in the case of the shakuhachi, a traditionally solo instrument that developed within a religious meditative context.

The shakuhachi is a five-holed upright bamboo flute, originally played by the monks of the Fuke Zen Buddhist sect in Japan during the Edo era (1603-1868). Presently, the flute appears in ensemble music as well as pop and jazz. During the Edo era, the shakuhachi was limited to the classical repertoire of *honkyoku* pieces, known for their simple, austere character, that were used in a form of meditation. The melodies of these pieces are given life and personality through their tone-colours. Without their tone-colours, these pieces would grow quite bland, and lose their meditative quality. Consequently, and especially in older playing styles, tone-colour takes precedence over precision in pitch. Additionally, most of these pieces lack a “melody” as defined in European music.¹

However, this is not to say that Europe has ignored tone-colour. Oswald Spengler called Bach’s organ playing an “analysis of a strange and vast tone-world,” (Spengler 1918:62) in which Bach’s religious inclinations are also notable. Again, the unique tone-colours created by the Latin language in Gregorian chants lend unparalleled depth to ostensibly simple melodies. Generally speaking, however, the emphases of Japanese and European musical sensibilities have developed differently. In the West, melody is generally given more attention. Thus, music is viewed as the “art of time” where melodies combine pitches, dynamics, rhythms and tempi to form a temporal musical unit that exists on its own, yet independently from the instrument that is being played or the musician playing it. With the

development of harmony in Europe, melodies were also structured “vertically” to give them depth and texture. For composers and musicians, tones, pitches, rhythms, dynamics and harmony became sound “objects” to be strategically organized for the pleasure of the ear.

Historically, European musicians and philosophers were largely interested in tones that can be formalized into melodies, with tone-colour generally existing on the periphery of composition. In fact, the use of the term “timbre” dates from around the Renaissance in France.² While tone-colour still plays an important role in these pieces, pitch and melody are less negotiable. On the other hand, traditional Japanese music’s greater reliance on tone-colour often requires the presence of a specific instrument, thus lending to a greater flexibility to pitch and melody, which is most visible in the case of the shakuhachi.

The Edo-era honkyoku solo pieces for the shakuhachi have a rudimentary succession of tones, with free rhythm and phrasing interspersed with silent breaths. These pieces are shakuhachi-specific, to the extent that they are not playable on a piano or transverse flute due to their unique tone-colour techniques. It is only after Japan opened its borders to the West in the latter half of the 19th century that we begin to see a promulgation of shakuhachi music with distinct rhythms and melodies such as folk songs and ensemble pieces.

Below, the two authors elucidate the historical, religious, philosophical, cultural, and musical principles underlying the traditional Japanese viewpoint on sound and music – a viewpoint that is found as much in the playing as in the making of traditional musical instruments. Traditionally, the tone-colour of a musical sound is given priority over pitch-precision; honkyoku compositions for the shakuhachi as well as some unison ensemble pieces might even be considered “tone-colour melodies.” A concurrent shift of the attention toward tone-colour, especially for many shakuhachi players, will prove helpful in experiencing and playing these traditional works.

Tone-colour and Religion

The history crafted by shakuhachi monks places origins in the bell-ringing of a Zen priest in the Tang Dynasty (800’s C.E.) China (Kowata 1981:67–72). In this particular religious context, bells were often associated with healing or religious awakening (Zhuhong 2011:261–271). In this case, Zen priest Fuke would walk through the town’s streets, ringing his bell and chanting a poem designed to awaken hearers to their true selves. According to a myth that was popular among (and created by) Japanese shakuhachi monks, a flautist named Cho-haku, aspiring to Fuke’s “great virtue,” crafted a bamboo flute to imitate the sound of the bell. His playing was passed down through generations, eventually reaching Japan (Kowata 1981:73). As it is often the case in the Zen world, genealogy is mostly fiction, and *honkyoku* pieces actually have their roots somewhere around the 17th century in Japan rather than the 9th century in China. But this fiction serves to convey something more important: the spiritual and sonic inclinations of many shakuhachi players.

For many monks, the *honkyoku* pieces composed throughout the Edo era were used in place of sutra chanting (the Fuke Zen sect would play shakuhachi together, whereas other Zen sects had traditions of unison sutra chanting) and as a mean of meditation similar in breathing style to *zazen*, a form of silent, seated meditation employed in Zen sects. Shakuhachi meditation, like sutra chanting, incorporates an element of sound, whose role is described in the aphorism *ichi-on-jo-butsu* (enlightenment in a single tone), recalling the ringing of a bell whose “single tone” invites hearing ears into the metaphysical magic of the mundane. Relatedly, sutra chanting in Japanese Buddhist sects is performed by vocalizing Chinese sutras as is, using a simplified form of their Chinese pronunciation. Most Japanese will intone them more for their sonic effect than for their meaning. Arguably, the shift from sensing the vocal overtones created in sutra chanting to the harmonic layers of shakuhachi playing was not a drastic one. During the 2018 World Shakuhachi Festival, shakuhachi player and Buddhist nun Shuho Suto hosted a seminar detailing the link between Buddhist sutra chanting and shakuhachi *honkyoku* pieces. There, the shakuhachi’s intent was explicitly religious, rather than recreational. According to Fuke shakuhachi master Deiko Toya, the religious conception of the flute’s tone is likely derived from the *Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra* (Toya 1984:20), whose Chinese translation *Wéimójié Suǒshuō Jīng* is the following: “The Buddha expounds the dharma with a single tone [or “voice”], and all living beings, according to their kind [i.e., their capacity], attain understanding.” Toya goes on to explain how the Buddha was said to have a very low, resonant voice – a unique tone-colour with which he expressed himself. Likewise, Fuke shakuhachi players (ideally) express their mind through their unique tone-colour, drawing those who might be listening out of their worldly concerns and into a world of truth.

The single enlightened shakuhachi tone is a continuation of this tradition; the player’s entire being – their body, their mind, their breath – amalgamates into a single tone on the shakuhachi. The capacity of a single piece, then, is virtually limitless. Acoustically speaking, a single tone will be unique in tone-colour, and will be affected by variables such as air volume and pressure, the shape of the lips, mouth, and throat, heart rate, muscle tension in the upper body, chest, and abdomen (diaphragm), posture, and so on. Many of these aspects are not subject to conscious control, so that their interaction with the shakuhachi produces a tone-colouring that is indicative of the player’s unconscious state. This is the “truth” that Fuke players aim for: an “as is” expression of their mental and physical state, expressed without any artificial striving on the part of the player. Those who take this perspective will often sacrifice an expected pitch for this “honest” tone-colour, as the former often entails a specific, conscious effort on the part of the player, while the latter naturally changes depending on the player’s state of mind and body.

Thus the already present emphasis on tone-colour found in Japanese music is taken to another level in the shakuhachi. Even during the Edo era, there existed players (especially in the Kinko tradition, which over time became more and more distant from the Fuke tradition described here) whose purposes were perhaps more aesthetic than religious, teaching pieces to laypeople with a more musical intent (i.e., for entertainment). Kinko

master Aoki Reibo stated the difference concisely: “Fuke shakuhachi players pursue truth, while Kinko players pursue beauty” (Akita-ken 2017:12). Both approaches emphasize tone-colour in their playing, but the emphasis is more pronounced in the traditional Fuke school, which represents a meditative aesthetic for the sake of religious truth rather than public performance or entertainment. This difference persists today; while Kinko honkyoku players often have some degree of spiritual intent, their music is designed to be performed, and thus gives greater attention to pitch precision. Some Fuke players go as far as to consider it abject to create an intentionally beautiful sound (Wallmark 2012). Even if the resulting sound is not necessarily ugly; the emphasis is on allowing for an “uncrafted” sound, which may or may not be aesthetically pleasing.

Shakuhachi Construction and Shifting Values

Construction methods for the shakuhachi have shifted over time along with Japanese cultural values. Almost all shakuhachi made during the Edo era had a raw natural bore rather than a polished one. They used finger hole position calculation methods termed *to-wari* or *kyu-han wari* (literally “divided by ten” or “divided by 9.5”) wherein the spacing between each of the four finger holes on the front of the flute is set at 1/10 or 1/9.5 of the total length of the flute. The result is ergonomically pleasing, but the notes are not precisely in tune according to a scale or a mode. Rather, some are a bit low, others are a bit high, and due to the natural bore shape, octaves are slightly off. The assumption is that the tones will be adjusted with the breath, according to the player’s aims. Edo-era shakuhachi also feature smaller, undercut finger holes, which affects the timbre of “hitting” sounds wherein a hole is struck from above (Toya 1987:115). The resulting “pop,” recalling the striking of a bell, is much less distinct or even absent on modern instruments. Along with smaller end holes (in comparison with modern shakuhachi), this feature also makes for a sound that is quieter yet richer in tone-colour (ibid.). Again, the “imperfections” in natural bamboo bores effect unique harmonic blends, giving each flute a distinct tone-colour.

In the Meiji era (1868-1912), after Japan opened itself to Western influence, musical values began to shift in a more pronounced fashion. We see the increase of professional shakuhachi makers; during the Edo era the majority of komusō made their own flutes. As the Meiji era progressed, the majority of shakuhachi made included *ji* (a plaster-like substance) inside, allowing the bore to be built up and polished to have a precise, gradually tapered shape whose cross section at any point is a near-perfect circle. As a result, these *jiari* shakuhachi, as they are called, can be made to sound nearly identical to one another. No longer subject to the variety in natural bamboo bore diameters and textures, they can also be more precisely tuned. The *to-wari* hole calculation method was gradually abandoned in favour of staggering the holes and modifying traditional lengths, so that each shakuhachi would be more precisely in tune with Western pitches. Finger- and end-hole sizes were gradually increased, causing an increase in the instrument’s volume (necessary for public performances) while simultaneously reducing its “hollow” sound, sacrificing tone-colour in favour of volume. As the hole sizes increase, a greater volume of vibrating

air is allowed to escape, resulting in a louder sound with clearer and more uniform harmonics. Smaller holes, however, dampen certain harmonics and create more resonance inside the flute, similar to a glass jug, when blown across its relatively small opening, creates a resonant “hollow” sound. Larger openings (relative to the volume of air inside) decrease this effect. This was a necessary concession at the end of the 19th century for two reasons. First, the shakuhachi was used increasingly for solo performances rather than meditation. Second, it gained a formal position in ensemble music, such as *sankyoku* (music for three instruments), replacing the *kokyū* (the Japanese fiddle). The goal in the modern construction style is to produce a beautiful and tuned sound for the sake of entertainment, even in honkyoku playing, which means that factors like pitch-precision (especially for the faster rhythms of many solo and ensemble pieces) and volume (to be heard among other instruments in performance venues) become more important.

Tone-colour in Japanese Music

According to Japanese composer Torū Takemitsu, Japanese people have developed a sensitivity to tone-colour over centuries, thus paying more attention to the particular quality of sounds—something he sometimes calls “beautiful noise”—than to their resulting pitch (Burt 2001:238). Their attention and focus while listening is sense-oriented, rather than abstracted. As some shakuhachi teachers told to both authors during classes, Japanese melodies of the solo pieces for shakuhachi should not be conceived primarily as a succession of melodious tones, but as shifting sequences of tone-colours which are perceived as expressive forms. These pieces of course have pitches as well as melodic lines, but the tone-colours take precedence. Nick Bellando, when a beginner, was initially criticized by his teacher Barry Daido Ho-un Weiss, a Zen monk: “You’re still playing ‘music.’” Nick was, at the time, looking to play the piece as a melody – as a succession of pitches – rather than a succession of tone-colours. Traditionally, Japanese listeners would learn to pay attention to the quality of a sound, which is usually rough, thick or dense, before recognizing and categorizing it as a tone, a musical sound, a voice or a noise.³

Nick grew more aware of this during lessons with Suiko Takahashi, a Fuke shakuhachi teacher who plays as part of a spiritual practice. Suiko taught in a traditional embodied style, with teacher and student simply playing together with little or no verbal explanation concerning techniques; the student learns by watching, listening, sensing, and playing. Initially, Nick was confused by the fact that while Suiko had a good sense of pitch, he would often play using pitches that seemed to be inaccurate, often microtonally higher than the pitch expected. Even if something about these “wrong” pitches still seemed “correct.” Later, an encounter with Atsuya Okuda, an accomplished jazz musician and shakuhachi player, helped understanding. Atsuya also has a musician’s sense of pitch, yet his shakuhachi playing often includes “wrong” pitches. As Nick began inquiring about the role of tone-colour, he learned from Atsuya and other musicians that tone-colour is given priority over precision in pitch. Pitch is still important, of course, but the player need not to strain to achieve it. In the case of shakuhachi, the player first attains tone-colour that is comfortable to play, and only if desired, then adjusts the pitch, as long as this can be

achieved without introducing undue tension into the body. Again, pitches that are “off,” when played intentionally, serve to expand the range of emotional expression.

Another example of sound quality having priority is seen in a traditional chamber music ensemble called *sankyoku*, involving *koto*, *shamisen* and *shakuhachi*.⁴ The pieces in these repertoires are heterophonic: the three instruments basically play the same melody, but each instrument colours the melody with its respective particularities. During a music therapy conference in Aomori, Japan in 2019, Nick learned from one of the presenters that many such musicians, when playing in unison, will go as far as to intentionally lower their pitch slightly, allowing for what could be perceived as a degree of dissonance, so as to emphasize the timbral distinctiveness of their instrument. The particular appeal of this music is not so much in its melodic line (though there obviously is one), but rather in the tone-colour interplay between the three instruments. At key moments in a piece, the particular sound of one instrument will be given prominence – a motive or a phrase on the *shamisen*, a short rhythmic phrase on the *koto*, or one particular note on the *shakuhachi* – while the others remain in the background. At times, there are *kake-ai*, short motivic responses between two instruments. At other moments, no particular instrument will be predominant. The musical appeal of these pieces is in the tone-colour textures created between the three instruments.

This sensitivity to tone-colour is not present merely in music being played and listened to; it also plays a prominent role in the making of the instruments themselves. Most if not all Japanese musical instruments are made in such a way as to produce specific, often noise-related tone-colours. One particular instrument in this respect is the *shamisen* (the Japanese three-string lute). Some schools, or *ryū*,⁵ make these instruments with sonorities that purposefully distinguish them from other schools. The first musicians to experiment with the *shamisen* were the *biwa* (Japanese lute) players. The original *shamisen*, coming to Japan from China, employed a one-finger plectrum; the *biwa* players preferred their much larger plectrum, called a *bachī*, which they adapted to the *shamisen*. The *bachī*’s “hitting” techniques produce a pulsing noise that is especially characteristic on the *Tsugaru jamisen*, an iteration of the instrument originating in Aomori that has recently gained global popularity.

As for the *biwa*, one thing that is common to all models is the *sawari*, a sonic effect produced by the contact of an open string with the surface of a fret or the joint of the neck and the peg-box. The effect exists largely due to the instrument’s large frets. The *sawari* is regulated by carving the tops of the frets and the surface of the upper bridge, and is produced when the strings “rattle” over the frets. On some models, the *sawari* can also be regulated by inserting a strip of bamboo between the strings and the frets. The player can also hit the soundboard with the plectrum to produce a percussive sound, either on its own or in concert with one or more string being plucked. Additionally, the player can produce different tone-colours by “rubbing” the *bachī* on the strings, creating a murky and

mysterious effect, by bouncing the bachi over the strings, producing arpeggios or tremolos, or by inserting the bachi between the strings to rattle them (de Ferranti 2000:79-87).⁶

Tone-colour Techniques on the Shakuhachi

The prominent position given to tone-colour is found in many playing techniques of the shakuhachi. Here we also include techniques that are also common to more recent schools of honkyoku, such as the Yokoyama school, which inherited many Fuke shakuhachi techniques as well as developing new ones. Among the diverse tone-colours that can be produced, the most characteristic are as follows (in no particular order):⁷

- *Muraiki*: Meaning “erratic breath,” this technique refers to a forceful and sudden breath. It is used in three different ways: *sorane*, which is softer; *muraiki*, forceful but not intense; and *kazaiki*, most forceful. It is used differently depending on the school, the style or the player. It is a breathy sound, capturing the sound of wind, and takes place at the beginning or at the end of a tone or a phrase. Its usage has been largely developed in the 20th century (it is not used in traditional honkyoku pieces).
- *Korokoro*: a type of fast trill that is produced by balancing the forefinger and ring finger of the lower hand over the two lowest holes.⁸ The forefinger starts from an open position and then closes the second hole from the bottom, while the ring finger remains on the first hole. The ring finger is then raised to open and close the first hole, while the forefinger stays on its hole; the process repeats so to produce a fast trill, generating a kind of fluttering sound that is unique to the shakuhachi.⁹ While the two bottom holes are alternately opened and closed, the uppermost (back/fifth) hole is either left open, or the uppermost two holes (fourth and fifth) are both partially shaded. Though the technique will often naturally lead into a more distinctive pitch, the effect itself is composed of several rapidly-changing pitches that are heard as tone-colour rather than a melodic pattern.
- *Nayashi*: Indicates a downward and then upward movement of the head while producing a sound. This technique is usually executed in three ways, though more exist. When it appears before a tone, it is called a *kamuri*. Here, the sound of the tone starts about a half-tone lower and then moves up to pitch with a slight glissando. When it occurs during a sustained sound, the tone starts in its normal position, followed by a downward head movement, lowering it about half a tone, and then a return upward. When by itself at the beginning of a phrase, without a note, the last note of the previous phrase is played with a *kamuri*. When written several times in succession, it takes the form of a wide vibrato. The “nodding” movement of the head begins slowly and gradually accelerates. In some schools, a *muraiki* can be applied during the lowered part.

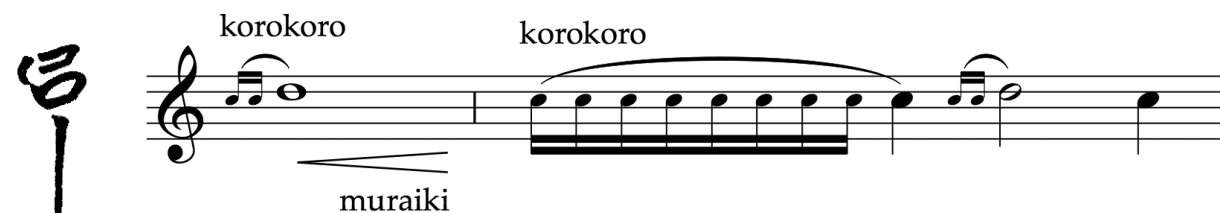


Figure 1. Example of korokoro and muraiki. The first korokoro alternates the fingers on holes 1 and 2 to go directly to the fingering *ro* (D in the case of a standard modern shakuhachi) which ends with a strong muraiki that is not indicated on the score. The second one is longer, followed by a sustained note and another short korokoro, and finally ending on two sustained notes. The duration of the korokoro and these notes is up to the musician. Although this transcription gives the same note, the tone-colour changes with the alternating of the fingers while producing a sort of bubbling trill. (The two first phrases of the piece *Koden sugomori*, Yokoyama school of shakuhachi. Used with permission.)

Access audio example at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kDnunRnctmXUht159aYJXbmzt0jrj3uN/preview>

Figure 2. Two examples of nayashi. a) A phrase from the piece *Sagari-ha* (Yokoyama school, used with permission). There is a nayashi right after the third tone and then further on as the tone extends. b) two phrases from the piece *Banshiki* (Jin Nyōdo School, used with permission.). The nayashi that begins the second phrase starts about half a tone lower then slides upward to pitch.

Access audio example at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OpFsglUdx1A5oVmCWRLJhzkMDltr-RD5/preview>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OAVoXaNjmLiAVdzKyGfsdvLyDK2A4 /preview>

- *Tamane* (flutter-tonguing): Similar to the flutter-tonguing used in transverse flutes, the tongue is used to create an effect similar to the trilled “r” that occurs in many Latin languages. There is also a variant called *tabane* that employs a guttural trill in the back of the throat, similar to the effect of the guttural \aleph in Hebrew or the “r” in French. Because this guttural sound does not exist in the Japanese language, many players find this effect difficult.
- *Yuri* (vibrato): Shakuhachi players utilize five main types of vibrato. 1) *Yoko-yuri*: moving the head from side to side; 2) *Tate-yuri*: moving the head up and down, modulating pitch with a range between a half- or full tone; 3) *Mawashi-yuri*: rotating the head. The pitch can also vary up to a full tone; 4) *Tsuki-yuri*: pressing the flute quickly back and forth against the lips; and 5) *Hira-yuri*, sliding the lips laterally back and forth over one another while blowing. *Hira-yuri* and *Yoko-yuri* modulate the tone-colour of a sound, not its pitch. These vibratos are not always played evenly; the player may alter the speed while playing them.
- *Atari* (attack): This can refer to two different techniques: one using the breath and one using a finger. The former is produced with a forceful breath that could include a *muraiki*. With the latter, a finger strikes a hole causing the sound to “pop.” There is a variation where the hole begins in a closed position, then is rapidly opened and closed.
- Some tones can be produced with different fingerings, each one having a different tone-colour. The characters used in shakuhachi notation refer to fingerings, not tones.¹⁰ In some pieces, we find motives of two or three of the same tones with different fingerings, creating a pattern of tone-colours. For example, D in the second octave (on the regular 1.8 shakuhachi) is usually indicated with two different characters. The first one, *ro*, is produced by closing the 5 holes, while the second one, *i* (pronounced “ee”) is produced by closing the first hole only. Some schools have additional fingerings to produce other distinctive tone-colours.



Figure 3. Example of a phrase with three different fingerings for a single note: D. The first D is produced by closing holes 1, 2 and 3, the second by closing hole 1, and the last by closing all the holes; each fingering produces its own tone-colour. The two curved lines (which produce A and Bb in both cases) are done with a nodding movement of the head on the fingering of the Bb. (This phrase is from shakuhachi master Okuda Atsuya’s *Zensabo* version of *Tamuke* [*Offering*]. Used with permission.)

Access audio example at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13fZnGbfNhhUY0zgdASk-fKsOajt9rj64/preview>

- When playing solo pieces, there is no need to be precisely in tune. Because the shakuhachi has only 5 holes, a good number of tones are produced using partial openings or by altering the angle and force of the breath, making it very difficult to play perfectly in tune according to the even tempered scale.¹¹ There is no set formula for the amplitude of the holes' openings; they vary from one tone to another as well as from flute to flute, be they of equal or different lengths.¹² A particularity of these tones is that some of them are much softer than those of equal pitch produced without partial openings or alterations to the breath. This difference in intensity has become part of the shakuhachi's aesthetic and characteristic tone-colour.
- A final point worth mentioning is that the phrases of a piece are separated by an obligatory breath, creating purposeful silences within a melodic line. The duration of these pauses varies between musicians, schools, and even from one performance to another by the same individual, and are thus relative to the mental state of the player at the time of the performance. Though no sounds are produced, they are an integral part of the aesthetic character of honkyoku repertoires. These silences are not merely absences of sound; they are a form of tone-colour, a quietness anticipating the tones to come. It is up to the player to make these silences aesthetic.¹³

The name shakuhachi means one *shaku* eight *sun* (*hachi* being the number eight),¹⁴ or more specifically 1.8 shaku, which is the standard length of the flute. It is possible to make flutes from one all the way to four shaku, though those three shaku and longer are physically difficult to play for most on account of the substantial distance between finger holes. All the tone-colour techniques we describe here can be executed on most lengths, some being difficult on longer flutes. The particularity of using flutes of different lengths is that each length tends to have its own timbre, shorter ones being brighter and the longer ones more sombre and softer in character. Timbres are influenced by the thickness of the bamboo, the size and shape of the bore, and the method of construction, i.e., traditional or modern. During the Edo era the komusō monks of the Fuke sect played primarily 1.8 shakuhachi. Today, by using shakuhachi of different lengths, a musician can choose a flute that best expresses what he or she envisions aesthetically and musically for a particular piece, a choice that is based primarily on tone-colour. Any two players may choose different lengths or types of shakuhachi to play the same piece. Again, some musicians might play on more than one flute of the same length, using them at different times for their distinct tone-colours. Even the way a musician trains his lips to produce a sound on the shakuhachi has an influence on the tone-colour of his flutes; the same flute may yield different tone-colours for different musicians.

Tone or Tone-colour?

Hearing as well as listening are social and cultural variables subject to prevailing historical ideologies. Sounds can become knowledge that defines players' relation to a source, as well as to other people within their shared environment. As much a signifier as a message,

any sound must have a communally shared meaning for everyone to recognize it and act upon it appropriately. If hearing a sound means to pay attention to it in a particular way, then the act of listening necessarily relates to predefined sounds that are intentionally used in and for social and cultural situations, codes of beliefs and ideologies. In this context, the heard sound is a type of icon, i.e., a codified representation of what it refers to, not for what it is, but for how a people will relate to it and each other concerning it (Erlmann 2004:3–9).

In European music, the musical sound is a culturally defined tone with a pitch from which melodies can be forged.¹⁵ Although a sound is initially a perceptual datum and sensation, the tone is a codified determinant that allows the listener to define a sound as musical, to the point that it can be considered as an “object” distinct from the ears and mind that perceive it – that is, from a vision-like viewpoint (Erlmann 2010:9–27). Our recognition of any sound, whether a noise or a musical tone, is more a pre-perception than a perception as such. Our pre-perception – our (often unconscious) categories and definitions of what a sound should be – determines whether we hear a sound as being harmonious, dissonant, musical, noise, etc. The European encounter with Japan in the 16th century was mixed, with neither culture very much liking the music of the other (Danford 2014:236). Joseph Chamberlain later went as far as to doubt whether Japanese music could even be called as such, deriding it as a collection of “squeaks and squeals.” (ibid.) This initial dissonance, however, was not present in all, likely changing first in those with a more flexible, or broader, pre-perception concerning music. We do not hear a sound for what it is, but for how it is culturally predefined. This pre-perception predetermines what and how we perceive any tone or melody, and furnishes the criteria for what we perceive as being musical, to the extent that we only “hear” what corroborates the said criteria.

In Japanese culture, people have traditionally appeared to pay attention to the quality of a sound prior to categorizing it as music or noise. The origin of this mode of thinking is not related to music or to acoustics, but to the manner in which Japanese people culturally relate to the sounds of nature and of their social environment. For example, it is common when walking through a Japanese garden to hear the run-off of an artificial stream or waterfall. In a garden, we can hear the sound of a *sōzu*, a fountain made of a rock from which we hear the clapping of a tube of bamboo fixed so as to pivot when filled with water. When walking in the streets of a town or a village, it is common to hear the tinkling of the *fūrin*, a small bell, to which a piece of paper is attached. The wind stirs it, causing it to ring. Again, the *suikinkutsu* greets temple visitors with calming, resonant dropping sounds as the water used to wash their hands in this shallow basin drips down into a large, hollow urn hidden beneath. The purpose of these devices lies not in the specific pitches they create, but in the impression they leave in people’s minds.

These sounds are not appreciated as sounds in and of themselves; they are tone-colours, subtly enriching their environment. Their quality infuses the movements of everyday

social, cultural and even spiritual life with symbol and metaphor. In the examples above, it is the sensory quality rather than the objective source of a sound that makes it distinct. We do not mean to suggest that Japanese people hear sounds in a way that is fundamentally different from others; only that in many instances, Japan's traditional sonic environment has marked tone-colour as a particularly meaningful constituent of sound. This markedness often seeps into traditional music as well.

The shakuhachi was originally an instrument for meditation, not for performance. Shakuhachi music developed in an environment where tone-colours blended with and enriched the environments in which they were heard. When a shakuhachi player today plays a piece for shakuhachi in which a tone appears three times in a phrase using three different fingerings, he knows that he is playing the same tone with the same pitch, while the musical character of the phrase is in the melodious flow of the three tone-colours, not in the fact that it is the same tone.

Though during the Edo era most komusō monks were playing a single length of shakuhachi,¹⁶ today's players take advantage of the fact that it can be made in different lengths. When playing a piece on flutes of various lengths, the pitches of the melodies will differ, while the intervallic form of each phrase and the piece remain the same. The aim in using flutes of different lengths is not to transpose a melody, but to choose a shakuhachi whose tone-colour will best express what the musician envisions. They might choose a flute with a softer or brighter tone, or a rougher or a purer sound. Though the majority of shakuhachi players today play the modern version (the *jiari*), which is brighter and more in tune with the tempered scale, there is a growing interest in the *Fuke shakuhachi*, the traditional version, which is still enjoyed by a minority of players. A major difference between these two types of shakuhachi is that the quality of all the *jiari* are similar in overall timbre, yet having some variance in tone-colour, while with the *Fuke shakuhachi* the differences in both timbre and tone-colour between flutes are quite pronounced, and they are less likely to be in tune with the tempered scale, though some makers are now making modernized iterations of such flutes that are more in tune, following demand from today's musicians. Moreover, there are no strict rules demanding that a player play a piece on a flute of a particular length, although there are few pieces that are played on specific lengths in some schools.¹⁷

In the Kinpu-ryū school from Northern Japan, as well as in some *Fuke* schools (from southwestern Japan), the same piece will also exist in a transposed form wherein the same melody (usually with one or two minor adaptations for techniques that can't be played the same way on a different position on the flute) can be played employing a different mode. This enables two players with different lengths of shakuhachi to play in unison. As the same piece is played on two shakuhachi simultaneously, there are no harmonies – it is a unison performance. There are, however, what may be considered “tone-colour harmonies,” wherein the same notes are played simultaneously but with different tone-

colours, and at times, by necessity, in different octaves on account of the limits imposed by the flutes' differing scales. Instead of creating polyphonic harmonies, they "harmonize" layers of tone-colours over a single pitch. These alternate modes can also be played solo, enabling a player to take advantage of different tone-colour combinations on a single flute (Uchiyama 1972:13–16). The "modes" are simply transpositions of a single scale to different starting points on the flute. Because of the transposition and the physical limitations of the flute, however, pieces composed in different modes tend to have a unique intervallic interplay, taking on a gradiently brighter or darker feel, which is expressed in the names of some modes (*akebono*, meaning daybreak, or *yugure*, meaning twilight). Tokita notes that the terms "mode" and "scale" are often used interchangeably in Japanese music (Tokita 1996:1–3).

Another aspect that is indirectly connected to tone-colour, but which nevertheless plays a role in the way a sound is produced by a musician, has to do with the way musical instruments are traditionally taught and learned. American ethnomusicologist Jay Keister, who studied shamisen and *nagauta* (*kabuki* theatre "long songs"), gives us a good example. One of the first comments that his teacher gave him when he started his studies was not to worry about the pitch or the quality of the sound, but to produce it with the proper form, or *kata* (Keister 2004:42). A musician does not learn to simply produce a sound; he must first learn the proper *kata*, or more specifically, the proper way to move his arm, to hold the instrument, to hold his body, to hit the string, etc. The proper sound will come as the student learns his or her craft. In the Japanese way of thinking, doing something with the proper form is more important than obtaining the "right" result. In the end, the result will come if the form is right. Though Keister does not discuss tone-colour, we can infer that the learning of a musical instrument is not about mastering a technique as such, nor is it about producing the proper sounds, tones, or tone-colours. It is about how the musician embodies her artistry by incorporating the *kata* into her own person in order to produce the best sounds possible. Artists from all Japanese arts give a crucial importance to forms in producing their arts, which involve the entire body and mind as one unit. A technical knowledge is of course involved, but it is based on embodied learning rather than prior theoretical understanding, since it is the body that plays the instrument.¹⁸

In a similar vein, Kurahashi Yōdo II, a Japanese shakuhachi master from Kyōto with whom Bruno Deschênes studied, suggested during a master class¹⁹ that he believes that during the Edo era, when students were learning the honkyoku pieces, they were not learning melodies, motives or phrases by rote, since an official notation appeared only around 1870, but were learning fingering patterns and sequences. In other words, they were learning with their hands and fingers, the result of which produced these melodies, tones and tone-colours. Reigetsu Uchiyama also emphasizes the importance of learning honkyoku from a teacher rather than just trying to learn from a score. Mimicking your teacher's fingering is of special importance, as this (rather than simply mimicking the tones) is what gives the pieces their unique tone-colour character. For example, the same pitch can be played either

with the bottom two holes open, or with the bottom hole and the third hole shaded. The former creates a loud tone with rich harmonics, where the latter is softer and rounded off. Embodied learning, then, can directly affect tone-colour (Uchiyama 1972:40).

Barry Daido Ho-un Weiss told Nick that more than “hearing music,” he “feels vibrations” in the flute while he is playing.²⁰ As with other teachers, Nick noticed that some of the pitches Weiss played were not what he expected them to be musically, yet they still somehow sounded “right.” Even with a pitch that is slightly off from what would be expected, a skilled player emotive intent will come through in the tone-colour of the sound. To an open listener, pitches that are played slightly off from a tempered musical scale in this way will gain an air of mystery. It is important to note here that there is still skill involved; mere “off-key” playing by an unskilled player will sound “wrong.” It takes a good degree of skill and experience to be able to express oneself in this way, using tone-colours and microtones confidently.

Conclusion

Listeners naturally recognize what they hear played on musical instruments or sung by voices as music. They understand that the musician acquired the skills necessary to properly perform the music on her instrument and that she plays a melody. The focus of the music’s aesthetic and the causes of any resulting auditory pleasure, however, are not purely in the melody; they exist equally in the quality of the tone-colours that give “flavour” to the music. As Tokumaru indicates, connoisseurs of nagauta and shamisen learn to distinguish the sawari effect of various schools. What the shakuhachi player is looking for in selecting a distinctive flute for a particular piece is a tone-colour that will best embody what he wants to express. In traditional Japanese music (especially premodern shakuhachi music), tone is neither the only nor the most prominent feature of a melody; tone-colour appears to be on equal footing, and sometimes even more important, as with the shakuhachi’s honkyoku repertoires. In these pieces, melodies are divided into short phrases by obligatory breathing marks. These phrases do not necessarily follow “logically” or musically from one to the next. Tones or pitches in these broken and atypical melodic lines are not “asserted,” but rather serve to carry their respective tone-colours; a tone will often vary in pitch in order to enhance tone-colour, rather than sacrificing tone-colour to maintain a “perfect” pitch. The focus is more on the expression of the player’s mind, and the impressions that these sounds leave in listeners’ minds and ears, than on a rule of conformity to a particular pitch or set of pitches. Although the honkyoku melodies of shakuhachi pieces are based on modes, they often serve only as a general melodic framework, whose boundaries are frequently broken. They do not constrain the entire piece. As we mentioned earlier, because of the way the shakuhachi is made, it is nearly impossible to play perfectly in tune (especially according to the tempered scale). The half-tones will never be precisely identical between iterations in a single piece or between pieces.

We would even go as far as to suggest that, being “inferred” by a tone-colour, a tone is a resonance, or more specifically a metaphor that is captured by both the musician’s and the listener’s sensitivity to sound. To the pre-modern Japanese ear, timbre and sound were not sound objects that could be abstracted; they were first and foremost perceptual or sense data. The Japanese term *hibiki* illustrates this well—it refers to the quality or feeling of something heard, or the emotion evoked by it. Musicians and practitioners of Zen-influenced arts learn to be attentive to the body’s feeling in hearing a sound, rather than being led by the wanderings of the mind. In this line of thought, music is not an art of time or of melodious tones, but an “art of the present,” sensing and participating in one’s environment in the form of a single, shifting, nuanced tone.

When music lovers first hear shakuhachi honkyoku pieces, with their atonality and lack of regular rhythm or conventional melody, they often don’t quite know what to make of them, especially if they are expecting something more conventionally musical. This also goes for the musician. A modern player may be tempted at first (as were Nick and Bruno) to try to make musical sense of the pieces in terms of pitch and rhythm, but this would betray the pieces’ original intent, and would rob them of their unique appeal. Rather, we suggest that the pieces be understood as “tone-colour melodies,” and both played and heard from the perspective of embodiment rather than mental analysis. As with Zen meditation, the player senses his or her body, breath, and state of mind, and lets them find expression in a particular quality of tone, at their own pace, as his or her body recites the patterns it has learned, rather than trying to mentally force the piece into a preconceived succession of precise tones. The resulting sounds, especially in terms of tone-colour and rhythm, are discovered as they come into being, rather than conforming precisely to a specific mental image. Likewise, the listener does well to avoid trying to hear a logical or linear succession of tones and rhythms; he should take a passive rather than an analytical posture, letting the quality of each sound he produces affect him first of all physically – letting the sound, as part of his environment, with all of its harmonic and tonal nuances, wash over and impact his ears and body, leaving impressions on his mind. When these pieces are played and heard as tone-colour melodies, the emphasis shifts from specific tones to the nuances that, for many, lend the music a uniquely “spiritual” or meditative quality.

Notes

¹ A minority of pieces do include more tangible melodies and rhythms.

² In English music dictionaries, “timbre” and “tone-colour” are synonyms. In this article, timbre refers to the distinctive sound quality of a musical instrument, while tone-colour refers to quality of a sound produced by any instrument.

³ According to musicologist Yoshihiko Tokumaru, the attraction of Japanese musicians to Western instruments at the end of the 19th century was about tone-colours that were unknown to them (Tomukaru 1991:91-2). Similarly, Henry Burnett suggests that the importance of tone-colour in traditional Japanese music is such that a musicological analysis of a piece based on pitch does not have much meaning for traditional Japanese musicians (Burnett 1989:80).

⁴ At its origin, the three instruments were the koto, the shamisen and the kokyu, a fiddle made similarly to the shamisen. It was replaced by the shakuhachi around the middle of the 19th century.

⁵ Ryū is usually translated as school. Especially in modern times, these schools function more as guilds, each one having its own style of playing that distinguishes it from other ryū.

⁶ The strings are counted from the bottom up.

⁷ Though standard, the production of these techniques and their usage can vary from one school to another, from one musician to another, and sometimes from one shakuhachi to another or from one length of shakuhachi to another.

⁸ The shakuhachi has five holes: four in front, one in back. The holes are counted from the bottom up.

⁹ Simply alternating these two fingers will not produce the desired effect. Between opening and closing the two finger holes, there is a third position wherein both holes are closed, producing a fluttering effect including at least three differing tones.

¹⁰ Although a standard notation developed sometime around the middle of the 19th century, different schools have adapted them to their various needs and styles. Some notations are quite elaborate and precise, while others are minimal.

¹¹ A number of contemporary musicians, both Japanese and non-Japanese, put a great deal of effort towards being in tune with Western instruments.

¹² Because no two pieces of bamboo are exactly the same in shape and thickness, the shakuhachi maker cannot necessarily make two flutes of the same length having exactly the same timbre.

¹³ There exists an aesthetic principle in regard to silence in Japanese music, called *ma*. We do not discuss it here due to space constraints. Cf. Aya Sekoguchi (2016); Bruno Deschênes (2017).

¹⁴ *Shaku* is a unit of measurement originally from China. *Sun* is the decimal division of the shaku.

¹⁵ To put the Japanese viewpoint in context, we use European music as a basis for comparison. Our aim is to seek variants, not differences.

¹⁶ Some of these monks were hermits living on mountainsides, using flutes of different lengths.

¹⁷ For example, the piece *hachigaeshi* is usually played on a 1.8 shakuhachi. In the repertoire of the Kinpu-ryū school from the prefecture of Aomori, in Northern Japan, a piece with the same title is usually played on a slightly longer 2.0 flute, though this is not a strict rule.

¹⁸ See in this regard the article that Bruno co-authored with Japanese ethnomusicologist Yuko Eguchi (2018).

¹⁹ At his home in Kyōto on November 2nd, 2015.

²⁰ At his home in Tokyo, September, 2008.

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The Forging of Musical Festivity in Baloch Muscat: From Arabian Sea Empire to Gulf Transurbanism to the Pan-Tropical Imaginary

George Murer



Figure 1. Muscat

Muscat is known internationally as a low-key, unassuming city with a faint aura of Indian Ocean mystique. Far less ostentatious or fast-paced than other Gulf capitals, Muscat's landscape is dominated by pools of blinding white villas densely collected amid the crags and shadows of a barren, rocky coastline. Owing to the legacy of the late Sultan Qaboos, Oman is one of the most peaceable and staunchly diplomatic nations in the world. Omanis often express pride in their ruler, their culture, and the respectful, harmonious nature of Omani society. But also unique to Oman is its history as an empire in the Western Indian Ocean region whose holdings once extended from Zanzibar to the Gwadar peninsula, a history bound up with centuries of the Indian Ocean slave trade. One result of

this transregional history today is an explicit acknowledgment of the diversity of Oman's citizenry, with Arabs, WaSwahili (or *Zanjibaris*), and Baloch the largest of the groups gathered together under a unified—but explicitly pluralistic—national identity.

Muscat bears the commonly overlooked distinction of being a major capital of Baloch culture, and home to the largest concentration of Baloch in the world outside of Balochistan and Karachi. In this article, drawing on my doctoral fieldwork conducted in Muscat and throughout the Gulf from 2014 to 2017, I contend that the contemporary popular music produced and consumed by Muscat's Baloch community refracts into multiple strains inscribed with specific geocultural orientations. No single current of cultural performance can comprehensively encapsulate this diverse community. It is necessary to understand Oman's Baloch communities variably as a long-entrenched part of the cultural landscape of this stretch of the coastal Arabian Peninsula; as possessing a cultural heritage closely linked to the various regions inside and adjacent to Balochistan; as descended from Baloch who represented a highly mobile presence in the greater Western Indian Ocean region; and as operating in close contact—through transnational circuits—with Baloch communities in Karachi, Stockholm, and elsewhere in the Gulf.

Baloch Communities in Oman

Oman and the Gulf coast of the Arabian Peninsula are among the core spaces inhabited by Baloch as a globally distributed collectivity. The proximity of the region to Balochistan, in particular the coastal Makran region, across the narrow Gulf of Oman (or Gulf of Makran) tempts one to think of these peninsular territories as annexes to Balochistan—they certainly function as such given the intensity of Baloch cultural and political activity sustained in these locales.

Centuries of migration from Makran—the portion of Balochistan that straddles the Iran-Pakistan border along the Arabian Sea coast—have created layers of Baloch community distinguishable in part through the extent to which Baloch language remains in use and familial ties to Balochistan are maintained. Recently naturalized and first-generation Omani Baloch citizens tend to be acutely attuned to the ongoing political crisis in Balochistan, constantly consuming news broadcasts in Baloch, Urdu, and English. Baloch have never accepted Iranian or Pakistani rule, as the territory in which they are concentrated is largely treated as a sparsely populated strategic buffer between geopolitical zones and a point of access to the Indian Ocean with little thought as to their local needs for economic development or political autonomy.



Figure 2. Map of Gulf of Oman (or Gulf of Makran)

The armed insurgency has peaked and receded over the years but since 2006 has flared again to a high level of intensity, while the Pakistani military and intelligence services, often with the aid of unspecifiable non-state actors, have been waging a violent campaign against Baloch activists and civilians with the apparent intent of breaking the spirit of this insurgency. One severe point of contention is ongoing Chinese investment in developing the coastal Makrani city of Gwadar into a major industrial port for the onward shipping of natural resources transported across Balochistan through a major pipeline project. The local view of this frenzy of investment and development is that it has completely bypassed Baloch as logical beneficiaries of the resulting revenue and employment opportunities. Ironically, where Baloch are excluded from paths to prosperity on their own turf, they have been consistently enticed by various windows of opportunity to relocate to the facing shores of the Arabian Peninsula.

One basis for significant waves of Baloch migration has been recruitment to Oman's armed services, which at times have been predominantly Baloch in their constitution (Peterson 2007:79). To this day, Baloch are well represented in the military, royal guard, and police force. Baloch are also well represented in the arts, the IT sector, education, and all manner of skilled technical labor and commercial enterprise. Muscat boasts a vast community of Baloch intellectuals actively engaged in literary forums that form part of a transnational network that extends to the other Gulf states and to Balochistan, Karachi, and Scandinavia.

Muscat's Baloch population is concentrated in multiple pockets dispersed throughout the city. Some Muscat Baloch communities are marked by an intensely transnational orientation binding Muscat to Makran and Karachi in heavily trafficked circuits. The more transnational Omani Baloch habitually sponsor fellow Baloch as resident guest workers—as servants, drivers, cooks, maids, nannies, musicians—for short term residencies. This pattern reifies an environment that is culturally, socially, and linguistically Baloch.¹

Other communities are more confined in their outlook to their local Omani surroundings. Their consciousness of Balochistan is faint even as they hold on to Baloch language, custom, and identity. I will refer to the latter as *Mashkatī* Baloch,² as their spoken Baloch and social comportment have evolved into a localized variety, distinct from the culture of Makran. Recent arrivals are mainly from the eastern (Pakistani) side and speak Baloch with a noticeable Urdu inflection, while the much longer-established communities have come predominantly from the western (Iranian) side and have absorbed much from the local Arabic spoken in Muscat.

Delineations between and within the categories Arab, Swahili, and Baloch in Omani society are complex. A Swahili/Zanjibari identity, for instance, may equally bespeak slave ancestry or a lineage of repatriated Omani Arabs who had relocated to East Africa for generations, absorbing Swahili language and culture in the process even while retaining an Arab identity (al-Rasheed 2013:101). As Majid al-Harthy (2012:102) has found, Omanis in general have resisted confronting, openly and collectively, the history of Indian Ocean slavery and the role of Omanis in it.

Among Omani Baloch, places of origin in Balochistan vary widely, as do the points of entry and nodes integration into Omani society. It is the norm for Omani Baloch to marry Baloch—frequently non-Omani citizens—and for Omani Arabs to marry other Omani Arabs. However, there are many exceptions, such as one Omani Baloch I met who had married a Palestinian from Gaza. The intricacies are virtually endless, but I wish here to

emphasize the social and cultural perspectives of Baloch communities. The worldview of these communities is frequently enlarged as though simultaneously sited in Muscat and in nearby Balochistan. For instance, the ideologies of the Baloch Students' Organization and other facets of Baloch struggle against state oppression are frequently espoused in everyday conversation by Muscat-based Baloch, including Omani citizens. These stances explicitly call for social egalitarianism (Dashti 2017:145) and directly challenge the same tendencies toward race-, class-, tribe-, and religion-based *ta'assub* (chauvinism) that tacitly foster social boundaries in Oman.³ Baloch communities also operate against a vivid backdrop of transoceanic Omani empire in which they recognize continuous encounters between East Africans, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Europeans, and virtually everybody else.

The Intersection Between Makrani Baloch and East African Cultural Performance and Identity in Muscat

Muscat's past is enshrined in memories of an Omani empire that once extended to Zanzibar, Mombasa, and Kilwa in East Africa and Gwadar in Makran (now part of Pakistan). This was a period of wealth and military prestige but also the peak of the Oman-dominated Indian Ocean slave trade, which was smaller in scale but of longer duration than the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and no less brutal. Baloch traders and commanders were heavily involved in the Oman-dominated slave trade that bound the Arabian Peninsula to East Africa and mainland west and south Asia. For a period, Zanzibar functioned as the Omani capital.

The international abolition of slavery coincided with the height of the Indian Ocean trade in dates and pearls in the early twentieth century. Suddenly, in the Gulf region, East Africa was replaced by Balochistan as a source of labor (Hopper 2015:203–4), as the British navy aggressively patrolled the waters of the Arabian Sea, intercepting dhows bearing slaves from East Africa. Famine in Makran and adjacent coastal regions of South Iran (also largely Baloch populated) forced segments of these populations into slavery (ibid). The prior flows of migration (comprising farmers as well as slaves) from East Africa to Makran and the adjacent portion of southern Iran (Izady 2002:61) meant that many drawn into this early twentieth-century wave of slavery were themselves of at least partial East African heritage even if they arrived in Oman and elsewhere along the Gulf coast of the Arabian Peninsula as linguistically and culturally Baloch.

As Oman's power receded, the Sultanate entered a period of isolation marked by an insular, conservative society through much of the twentieth century until, in the midst of a series

of secessionist uprisings, the late Sultan unseated his father and took over, initiating a period of rapid modernization. From the 1930's until the accession of Sultan Qaboos, severe restraints had been placed on musical and ritual practices that did not conform to the moral vision of the Ibadi doctrine embraced by the ruler and much of the Omani population (Christensen and Castelo-Branco 2009:32–35; Sebiane 2014:58 and 58, n.17).

Today, Oman is resplendent with much-touted regional “arts” (*funūn*) that at times might be mistaken for music and dance. How the aforementioned restrictions were applied prior to 1970 would have varied. Oman's wide terrain of musical and ritual performance extends from manly dances such as the *razhah* to expressions of piety such as *mālīd* and the recitation of the *barzanjī* to practices coded as categorically non-Arab in origin (whether Swahili, Baloch, or Ajam—Persian) to casual, modern—and morally fraught—types of popular entertainment (see Shawqi 1994:152–3, 109–10; 115; 134; 29–30; 183). Among the practices that were targeted by these restrictions was a ritual-festive dance called *lēwa* that was an emblem of Bantu African origin (Sebiane 2014:58). This dance, today, is understood throughout much of the Gulf as an expression of African heritage, but in Oman, UAE, and Karachi, its primary associations are dual: simultaneously Makrani Baloch and broadly African.

Lēwa is danced in a circle with repetitive figures played on a conical double reed aerophone (Ar. *mizmār*, Sw. *zumari*, Pers./Bal. *sūrnāī*) and rhythm patterns played on a combination of footed and double-headed skin drums and metallic idiophones, all of which have multiple names depending in part on whether Swahili, Baloch, or Arabic terminology is used. The melodic intonation does not recall other Persian, Arab, or Baloch dance melodies of the Gulf region. The layering of the drum and idiophone parts likewise has a distinctively polyrhythmic character, while the repetition of groupings of three beats recalls plenty of other dances of the region. The dance itself involves a group of dancers, sometimes all-male, but in Baloch settings often mixed, who process in a circle, pivoting their bodies to face inwards and outwards. At Baloch weddings in Muscat, the *dohol* and *timbūk* (Ar. *rahmānī* and *kāsir*, Sw. *vumi* and *chapuo*)—a pairing of respective larger and smaller varieties of double-headed skin drum played standing variably with hands and sticks—are a focal point of the dance. The musicians occupy a space in front of the circle formation and the dancers pause and direct their energies expressively towards the double-headed drums for a spell each time they pass closest to them. In *lēwa* performances that are not explicitly Baloch, the presence of an upright footed drum (*sheh faraj*, *būm*, *mugurmān*)—iconographically evocative of East African culture—is essential.

There has been much hypothesizing about the origins of the *lēwa* idiom (Sebiane 2007, 2014, 2017; Hopper 2015; Olsen 2002), the extent to which its African origins can be specified, and above all the extent to which its practitioners ought to be ascribed an African, slave-descendent identity. There is a core affinity between *lēwa* as a complex of ceremonial-festive idioms combining a circle dance with repetitive motifs and rhythm patterns played on the double reed shawm and a variety of drums and idiophones and a variety of similar genres found in the Zanzibar and Lamu archipelagos but in the view of researchers culturally tied to nearby inland regions of East Africa, in particular “the Mijikenda musical and ritual practices of the Mrima region” (Sebiane 2017). Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari (1903:159-60) mentions a dance/ceremony called *pepo wa lewa* among numerous dances that require an *mpiga zumari* (double-reed flute player) while the *msewe* dance still performed in Pemba bears a striking similarity—both musically and choreographically—to *lēwa* performances I have observed in person and via documentation (see Video 1).

Video 1. Ngoma ya Msewe

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1F-kS1Mv_6XM43QWCor5LclcWXtmBWWZc/preview

This latter domain of dance is most easily understood as practices of mainland interior cultures transplanted to the Swahili zone, while the prominence of the *zumār* (a term of Arabic etymology and an instrument organologically nearly identical to the Persian *sūrṇāi* and Egyptian *mizmār*; see figure 3) certainly recalls sustained contact with Arab, Iranian, or Baloch musical spheres. Being of a notably large stature in comparison with the Persian *sūrṇāi* or the Egyptian *mizmār*, perhaps the *zumari* (also called *sūrṇāi* or *mizmār* in the Gulf) should be considered alongside the usage of the even larger conical double reed shawm known as *karanay*⁴ at Baloch wedding festivities in cities to the west of Jask in coastal Hormozgan, southern Iran. The texts sung combine Arabic and Swahili (and likely other Bantu languages) and are not necessarily well understood by those singing them (or those writing about the genre). My interpretation of the implicit narrative underlying this complex of idioms is that the East African dances were practices that evolved in response to the Swahili environment as experienced by people from the interior.



Figure 3. Mizmār played during a *lēwa* performance by Firqat Almas at a celebration of maritime heritage in Kuwait City, 2014

Lēwa—as practiced in Yemen, Southern Iraq, Southern Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Makran, and Karachi (to be clear on the full scope of its distribution)—further extends this same succession of encounters between communities of East African Bantu background and other cultural groups through onward journeys to settings specific to the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, Southern Iran, and Balochistan. The consistency among certain core characteristics (melodic themes, rhythm patterns, texts, sequences, terminology, dance) attests to the degree of sustained connectivity between these coastal regions. As Majid al-Harthi (2010:226) and Maho Sebiane (2014:63) spell out clearly, names of spirits that consistently figure into spirit possession ceremonies practiced in the Arabian Sea/Persian Gulf region (of which *lēwa* in certain instances is one variety) explicitly point to interior regions of East Africa and their populations.

In the early twentieth century, slaves in Oman found a portal to freedom through the influence and presence of the British and French, who—despite centuries as the most egregious proponents and enforcers of chattel slavery on a global scale—were obliged to observe the International Slave Trade Convention. This was a proclamation that assured freedom to whoever sought “refuge under the flags of the Signatory Powers, whether ashore or afloat” (Cox 1925:196). According to Percy Cox, former slaves were often found engaged in music-making in the form of different kinds of fanfare played on occasions

commemorating the British sovereign (ibid.). Are we to infer from Cox's account that the British had proved worthy of musical adulation as a force of antislavery? Or should we consider the use of tributes to the powerful British empire to frame festive practices that bore deeper meanings and functions and historical narratives as a means of insulating these practices from administrative forces that would otherwise suppress and denounce them?

The ceremonies known as *zār*, in which men and women who have been identified as inhabited by a spirit are treated through ritual means, generally incorporating drumming, chanting, dance, and at times instruments such as a baritone lyre (*tanbūra*, *tanbīra*), have often been met with scorn and have occasionally been outlawed.⁵ We know from Kaptijn and Spaulding (1994:10–19) that practitioners of ceremonies with a clear African association,⁶ such as *zār*,⁷ have had to strategize carefully from multiple angles in peninsular settings to be allowed to uphold these ceremonies that have long been viewed as being incommensurate with both Muslim piety and colonial European civilizing projects aimed in particular at Africans.

As Lindsey Doulton, discussing manifestations of gratitude shown the British navy and the Crown (Queen Victoria) by freed African slaves settled in the Seychelles, observes, “antislavery, however, no longer constituted merely an opposition to slavery; it was about ending slavery and planting what British officials called civilization in its place” (2013:102–3). Many of the available sources Doulton cites that reinforce the sense of gratitude expressed by freed slaves are autobiographical accounts by former slaves who had converted to Christianity, suggesting that it is mainly among slave-descended Muslim citizens of Arabian Sea/Persian Gulf nations that practices like *lēwa* and *zār* continue to be practiced.

The incorporation of venerated Muslim figures—Abdelqadir Jilani, Ahmed Rifa'i, Ahmed al-Bedawi, Aydarus, Farid ud-Din Ganjishakar, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Hazrat Bilal, and the Prophet and his descendants—into ritual frameworks related to *zār* might on some level represent concessions to Islam as a confessional orientation imposed from above. But of more immediate consequence to the present moment, we should consider practices such as *zār* and *lēwa* as (a) being constantly evolved in response to shifts in circumstance and environment, (b) being inherently open to incorporating the powerful ideas about spiritual force represented by Abdelqadir Jilani, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, and other *mashāyekh*⁸ of regional stature, and (c) possessing such value as expressive—ultimately unifying—spaces

for communities that any strategic tailoring to the idiosyncrasies and constraints of a given environment would itself have been enacted in a spirit of reverence.

The extent to which Baloch retain a very clear sense of cultural distinction while also displaying enthusiasm for participating in the embodied worldviews of their neighbors and others with whom they have sustained contact is striking. *Lēwa* and *dammāl*—a vigorous devotional drumming and dance complex most acutely associated with the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalander in Sindh—are prime examples of ostensibly exogenous spheres of ceremonial performance that have become defining currents within segments of Makrani and *Mashkatī* Baloch society. In Karachi, and among Baloch transplanted from Karachi to Muscat, the idioms of *dammāl* and *lēwa* often converge in festive contexts.

Baloch Musicians in Oman at the Threshold of Modernization

Because of the jumble of different practices and their cultural frames of reference and efforts from various quarters to suppress them, boundaries have become blurred between possession ritual, communal festivity, and Muslim observance. Baloch, culturally, have never had a reason to deny the musicality of their music (for which the generic Baloch term is *sāz*). I am unable at present to comment on the extent to which motions to discourage or suppress musical practices under Sultan Qaboo's father (Sa'id bin Taimur) impacted the wedding dances of Baloch in Batinah called *daqqa Balūshiyya* in Arabic and *tamāsha* in Baloch, which are still widely performed.

One Baloch informant in Muscat reported to me that his household looked mainly to *zār* and *lēwa* as their spheres of engagement as performers prior to the 1970s. In the early 1970s, he himself went to Karachi and bought a *benjū*⁹ from the famous Makrani Baloch *benjū* maker and musician Joma Surizehi and became a wedding musician in Muscat. During this period, new strains of *Mashkatī* Baloch popular music were freely improvised, looking to all directions for inspiration. Musical wedding entertainment among Baloch, then concentrated in the historic port town center—Old Muscat, Matrah, Jibroo, and Sidab—combined popular Arab genres, contemporary urban Baloch trends, *lēwa*, vigorous *dammāl*-style drumming, and comedy and dance routines.

Musical Sojourns from Makran

Omani Baloch whose fathers were recruited during the conflicts from 1952 to 1975 and subsequently granted citizenship represent a relatively affluent segment of Muscat's Baloch population and have maintained social, cultural, and ideological ties with their homeland. This contingent represents a vital portion of the patron class who actively support Makrani

Baloch singers and musicians, who are typically poor, low caste, hereditary musicians, in some cases affixed as clients to a specific tribal lineage.

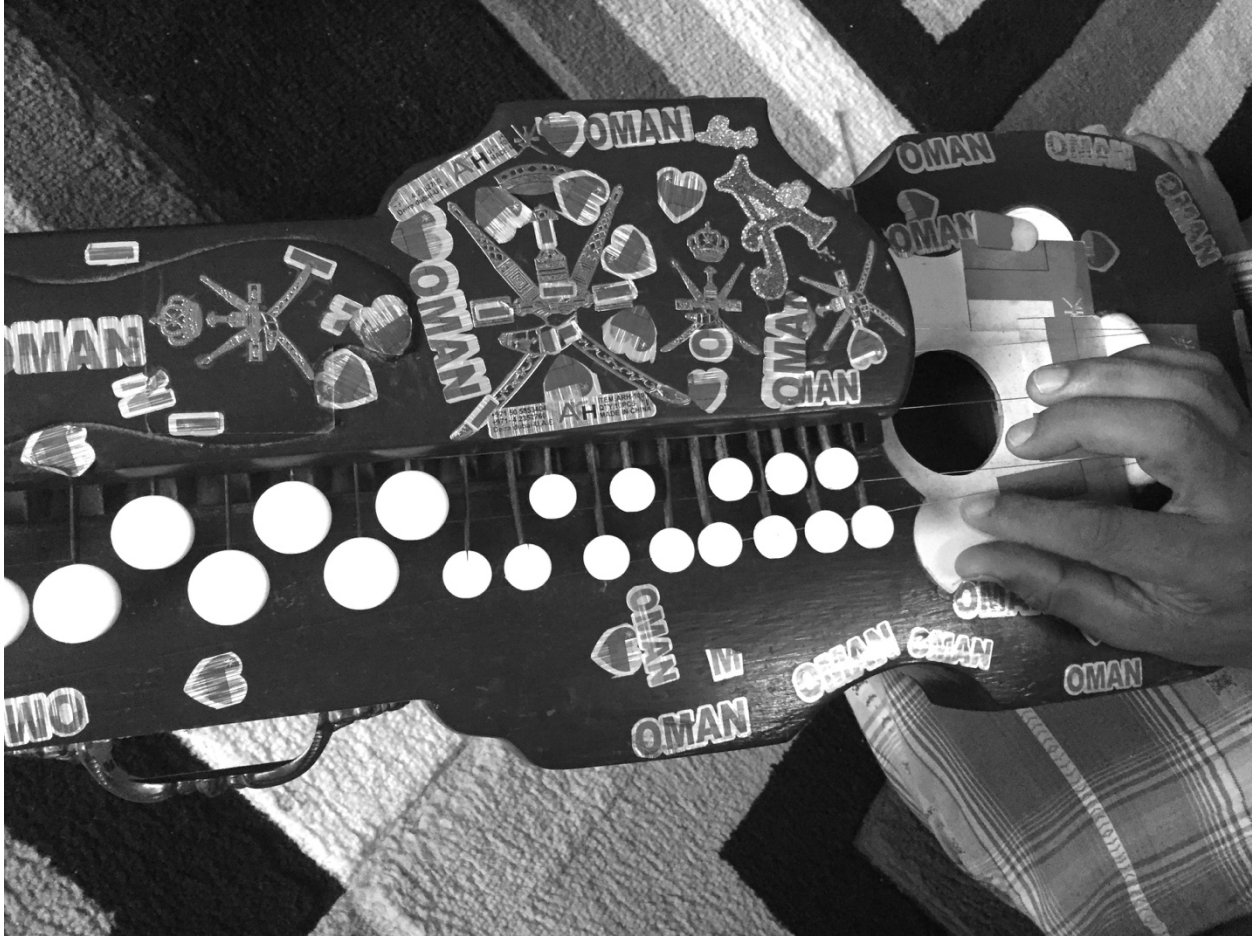


Figure 4. Benjū belonging to a retired soldier—a Dhofar war veteran—and Omani Baloch citizen

In Makran, most professional instrumentalists and singers belong to a group known as *lodi* or *domb*, terms which connote hereditary artisans of non-Baloch origin who have assimilated to Baloch culture and language (Badalkhan 2000:781). They sing the poems composed by their wealthy patrons, perform famous epic poems at occasions of import, entertain both men and women (usually separately) at weddings, and provide music for spirit possession rituals, to list some of their primary vocational activities.

Today, wedding entertainment provided by such musicians represents a modern, urban current of music informed by Baloch politics and social concerns and by music and poetry styles associated with the Urdu *ghazal* as well as other strains of widely circulated South Asian popular music.

Wedding in Muscat featuring contemporary musicians from Makran

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/16OSEEWufFvGSaM6vbc6lK3hvVTHA2pER/preview>

The process of patronage extends beyond supporting performers by sponsoring their visas, covering travel, housing them, and hiring them for performances. Baloch of means play a significant role in launching the careers of popular singers through creating a buzz around those they favor and paying for their studio recordings, which always wind up circulating so freely that the return for the investment of covering their production costs comes in fame for the artist rather than revenue from sales. To have such recordings widely listened to naturally means that the lyrical content—invariably the words of a contemporary Baloch poet, often the patron—also receives significant exposure.

Sponsoring and supporting musicians is also a gesture of magnanimity towards ones community, creating otherwise nonexistent spaces for cultural performances to be enacted and experienced. There are different ways that audience members engage with musical performances, and varying degrees to which this engagement becomes externalized. A prominent subset of young men in Muscat is intensely drawn to expressive dancing (Bal./Urdu *natch*) at live musical performances. The majority of attendees exercise a certain amount of socially ingrained reserve and will not allow themselves to spontaneously erupt into prolonged fits of dancing. Those who have forsaken this code of reserve need very little prompting to get into the swing.

Dancing at wedding in Wadi Hattat, Muscat

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Uuf0qUIegRI9d07GVGzRtDcJG2NSKw9K/preview>

The Lyari Connection

Lyari is a large, old town¹⁰ district of Karachi with a reputation as a place of poverty, overcrowding, criminal activity, and social tensions. Lyari is also renowned for its cultural life, especially in the domains of music and sports (Paracha 2018:72). Lyari has long been a center of urban migration for Makrani Baloch—many from the Iranian side of the border, and this has helped build up Karachi from a small coastal fishing town to Pakistan's largest city (Slimbach 1996:139). A significant population of Lyari also identifies—or is identified—as possessing African heritage, giving rise to the use of terms such as Shidi, Afro-Baloch, and Afro-Sindhi, and locally imbuing the term Makrani with racial and class connotations (Paracha 70-71).¹¹ Lyari has its own Baloch and Urdu accents, its own pop and hip hop scenes, and boasts numerous football and boxing stars alongside notorious gangs and gangsters (ibid 72).

Khodabaksh Mewal is a long-time resident of Matrah who was part of the coterie of wedding performers who served as the vanguard of modern Baloch music that emerged in Muscat in the 1970s and 80s. He has retained close ties to Lyari through family connections and frequent visits. Today, he leads an ensemble featuring his own grown sons. Their sound might seem dated alongside other Muscat Baloch wedding bands, but it continues to be informed by new streams of music produced in Lyari, where a tinny, monophonic, slightly harsh keyboard timbre is integral to a prevalent musical aesthetic. A centerpiece of wedding performances is a festive *lēwa* dance that aligns both with Baloch *lēwa* as reimaged in Lyari recording studios and with the specters of old Muscat, where *lēwa* was a ritual expression of the transoceanic perambulations of human and spirit cultures.

Here is an open air *lēwa* performance in Lyari (Video 2), where costume and body paint worn by dancers, after the fashion encouraged by the Indian government among Sidi performing troupes in India (Meier 2004:90), overtly caricaturize African heritage in the spectacle:

Video 2. Open air *lēwa* in Lyari

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nypC1wfpB2C89dKXPRmckIZ3iKak4dGY/preview>

A pop rendition of *lēwa* that is equally popular in Karachi and Muscat and often musically reproduced at weddings continues to uphold this same strain of exoticist pangeantry:

Video 3. Baloch pop *lēwa* video

Access at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KdGVYXVgUCq_LTxxpVpNhPAdPGc47XAm/preview

Aspects of Khodabaksh Mewal's band's repertoire that directly point to Karachi include the feminized male dancers known as *jenīnū* and the distinctive keyboard sounds that are subtly abrasive and reverb-laden in some cases and in others clearly serve as a stand-in for the sound of an amplified *benjū*. It is important to bear in mind that it was in Karachi that the *benjū* was first absorbed into Baloch musical spheres.

Khodabaksh Mewal's band perform *lēwa* at wedding in Jibroo, Muscat

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-pZfYKZZcpIcjZ4OIGuYsLMeEX7Lx0cn/preview>

Khodabaksh Mewal's band perform at a wedding in Muscat

Access at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JEJtvgd9xJyeX5bwebXcR5alEh_RyR3v/preview

A Local *Mashkatī* Cosmopolitanism

Baloch acquaintances have often asserted to me that, despite a deep loyalty to Baloch culture and values, one unique quality that Baloch collectively possess is an extraordinary adaptability. Indeed, it is hard to think of another group in Muscat that is as at ease in their interactions with all the other fairly rigidly delineated contingents—South Asian guest laborers, the highly paid British and American white-collar ex-pat workforce, Omani Arabs and Zanjibaris—as Omani Baloch. Baloch are well represented in spheres of music-making as diverse as the Oud Hobbyists' Association, the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, and the top 40 cover bands that play New Year's Eve parties and similar engagements at Muscat's luxury hotels.

If these contexts can easily be understood as catering to largely non-Baloch audiences, within Baloch circles one finds an embrace of certain globally circulating popular culture flows. This spirit is embodied above all in the legendary and now long disbanded group Los Balochos, who drew on the hits of the Gypsy Kings and various Latin America- and Iberia-themed aesthetic conventions, and who continue to inspire young Baloch musicians long after their dispersal.¹² I encountered one group of Los Balochos disciples who consisted of multiple acoustic guitars, tambourines, singers and clappers, and a virtuoso *cajòn* player who also played drums in a big wedding band. While songs emulating the Gypsy Kings formed the backbone of their repertoire, at an informal, convivial gathering I attended with them, they also veered into a rendition of Pakistani folk singer¹³ Reshma's famous arrangement of the Qalandari chant *Dama Dam Mast Qalandar* and a succession of Baloch revolutionary songs.

Baloch band informally covering the Gypsy Kings

Access at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hEwk0T6zDMO-sRAUDpo7otwRa_vf-ZAe/preview

By far the most vibrant strain of *Mashkatī* Baloch musical culture is the proliferation of youth-driven wedding bands. These are large ensembles combining electric and electronic instruments (guitar, bass, keyboards) with large percussion sections that reveal the scope of currents intersecting in the unique fusion these bands have come to represent—*dholak*, *tabla*, rock drum kit, cow bells, roto toms, congas, double headed drums, and frame drums (*tārāt*).

The phenomenon of large, eclectic ensembles-for-hire combining local and global musical orientations is extremely commonplace virtually across the globe, whether we think of a modern Tachelhit band performing for migrant *Ishelhīn* in Casablanca or a state of the art

orkes gambus in Jakarta. Nevertheless, a number of factors vividly differentiate the *Mashkatī* Baloch wedding band.

Songs are long and episodic, usually about 20 minutes long and largely revolve around responsorial chants and relentless drum-based grooves. Within these streams of live performance, a wide range of genres and stylistic vernaculars collide, recalling and at times reproducing contemporary Gulf Arab bands such as Miami Band, Iranian pop staples, Bollywood hits, Pink Floyd covers, and Makrani- and Lyari-style Baloch songs.

There is a lively scene surrounding these large, youth-driven, Baloch wedding bands in Muscat, with perhaps a dozen or so reigning at any given moment. Some of the most popular include al-Muna, Nawras, Ayla, and Mayasim. Singers such as Ali Alash and Nadim Shanan work with these bands but cultivate their own names through social media self-promotion and studio recordings. Within densely percussive extended dance sequences that are central to this repertoire, vocalists often lead chants and exhort the musicians and attendees to new heights of excitement (see Video 4).

Video 4. Nawras band with male youth audience

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wCbWYEGWeSUymCiQ06hq0xfo2Rwt2MJm/preview>

At the rare formal occasions that intersect with the greater Omani public sphere, such as a performance given by the Muna band at the inauguration of a new shopping mall in Muscat in 2019, it is almost jarring to see these groups adorned in pristine Omani national dress, although virtually all performers of music and related arts showcased at national festivals wear the characteristic white gown and turban on those occasions. The uniform for bands and male attendees at a open air wedding parties is street fashion, more along the lines of factory shredded denim, athletic gear, and tight-fitting, pastel-colored, t-shirts and pants. Apart from the group dynamic that drives these large ensembles, singers cultivate idiosyncratic, often highly emotive personas, chiefly foregrounded in the introductions to the extended dance-oriented sequences and in interludes between them.

Nadim Shanan and Nawras band at a wedding in Muscat

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/145PYIZrxCRqqZtSjVx3c296Y0NcdQIvJ/preview>

The singer featured in the above excerpt is Nadim Shanan, performing with the Nawras band. His late father, known simply as Shanan, was a very well known *Mashkatī* Baloch

singer who projected a comic aura in his recordings and performances, especially through the use of wordplay and nonsequitous utterances. Some of his songs offer a unique portrait of street life in Baloch neighborhoods such as Khoudh, describing in one case characters whose guts have been eroded by habitual abuse of a common household cleaning product.¹⁴ It is worth noting that Khoudh is the site of extensive social housing chiefly constructed for Baloch who had to be relocated to various outlying parts of Muscat when the walled Baloch quarter of Jibroo—one of the most densely populated sections of old Muscat—was carved up and partially razed to open up a centralized space for government buildings (Bream and Selle 2008:17).

The transition to a modern, post maritime Gulf cosmopolitanism is whimsically present in one of Shanan's studio-recorded songs, which bears the refrain *se bai dihem ya se bai dihem*, invoking a greeting in Thai. To a sing-song melody he sets the following lyrics:

Fī Arabi yagulu, “Kēf halak?”

Fī Baloch yagulu “Chī tōr ē?”

Hindī yagūlū, “kaisa hai?”

Fī Inglizī, “Hi how are you?”

Fī Swahīlī, “Jambo jet.”

Fī Thailandī, “Ka pom ka.”

Fī Somālī, “Kandā kap”

Wa al-bāqī, “eeyeeyeeeyee”

[In Arabic they say, “*Kēf halak?*”

In Baloch they say “*Chī tōr ē?*”

In Hindi they say, “*kaisa hai?*”

In English, “*Hi how are you?*”

In Swahili, “*Jambo jet.*”

In Thai, “*Ka pom ka.*”

In Somali, “*Kandā kap*”

and the rest say, “*eeyeeyeeeyee*”]

Each of these is more or less a legitimate greeting in the specified language with certain exceptions. In Swahili, he adds “jet” to the common greeting *jambo* thereby approximating “jumbo jet” —indeed these greetings are of the general register of things flight attendants say to welcome passengers on board and to assure them that there is a cultural link between the in-flight environment and the airline's national association (if not the actual

destination). And by substituting for any actual Somali greeting a Baloch phrase meaning, “go fall in a hole,” he suggests for comedic effect a lack of knowledge of Somali (despite the fact that Shanan at the time I met him included Somali among the languages he worked with as a professional court translator, having retired from his career as a police officer). The other component of the song's text is a familiar song children sing on a night midway through Ramadan as they go collecting sweets, a tradition known locally in Muscat and Batinah as *qaranqašo*. The song, in Arabic, varies from country to country and he sings a local version:

*Qaranqašo yo nās, 'atīnī shwāya l'halwa,
Dūs, dūs, fī'l-mendūs, Hārah hārah fistik hārah*

“*qaranqašo*”¹⁵ people, would you give me some sweets...
toss them into the box, neighborhood to neighborhood, pistachio-neighborhood!¹⁶

The song was devised around this children's rhyme, according to Shanan, who explains that someone had recognized him at a hotel in Delhi and knocked on his door holding a box of sweets, prompting Shanan to recall that Ramadan tradition in the context of an encounter between two Muscat Baloch strangers in India.

Audio example 1

Access at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gtr6enyT8W_O6PXqrkA67f3MX3MdlQtN/preview

Another well-known singer whose stature extends to earlier periods is Hosein Sapar, who led a popular Baloch wedding band in the 1980s and then withdrew, impelled by religiosity to give up music completely. Renowned for the syrupy, almost over-the-top sweetness of his voice, he has recently re-emerged, not as a professional singer but as a guest performer at weddings and on recordings. Here he sings an impromptu ditty from his seat to the side of a wedding hall, while a keyboard player on stage accompanies him. After he finished he proclaimed, “*salonka wasta*” (“for the groom”).

Hosein Sapar at a wedding in Muscat

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rAvEvws-iemE6GEKiA8rU0Z0sWDvE4Fs/preview>

The sound of the current wave of Baloch bands is meant to appeal directly to two specific social spheres whose separation is often guaranteed by a moral conservatism that pervades old Muscat Baloch communities—women in intimate seclusion and young men in eager

aggregation. While these bands play at a range of wedding-related festivities, the rationale behind creating such an elaborate tapestry of dance music is really the desire of women to dance together at segregated female segments of wedding celebrations, such as henna parties (Baloch, *henna bandān*). In this audio example, recorded at a women's henna party in the Wadi Hattat section of Muscat, where video recording was out of the question, an upbeat, generically tropical dance tune, bearing no melodic relationship to any strain of Baloch folk music, is intertwined with contemporary interpretations of *lēwa* motifs that are asserted in passing before the song reverts to its upbeat pop textures:

Audio example 2

Access at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WdZOLWuW67oqQQGwnVJSpqPbpWqlotkr/preview>

In intimate community settings, even in public environments such as an open-air gathering on a residential street, this segregation is more spatially expressed than fully realized. In such cases—and at mixed or all-male celebrations—young men, the second camp alluded to above, crowd in to listen to the band, whose style and sonic aesthetic is a focal point for their own sense of cultural belonging as young Baloch men who identify with specific neighborhoods in Muscat, especially Jibroo, Khoudh, Maabila, and Wadi Hattat. The overlap in material, setting, and social context between these bands and Khodabaksh Mewal's group is considerable. Only, Khodabaksh Mewal's group is closely linked in repertoire and aesthetic both to Lyari and Old Muscat while these bands cultivate a brand new, unmistakably Muscat Baloch sound that holds a magnetic draw for young men and teenagers in search of environments for sociality and personal expression. Here al-Muna band sustains a repetitive chant and groove, building to a characteristic dynamic swell:

Mona Band at a wedding in Muscat

Access at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/10w1FnpJ_FCEGLF7TvUbfR9-iGuqSZD8v/preview

Circles of music-making among Baloch in Muscat in 2014-2019 do not invite obvious parallels to other urban contexts, despite patterns common to many other milieus—the cultivation of “hybrid” genres, familiar strains of an acoustic sonic patrimony reimaged through electrified, often electronically enhanced arrangements, and above all, the intersection of “traditional” idioms with more commercial, globally disseminated styles of popular music. Big wedding bands of Baloch Muscat stand in proximity to circles of poets and intellectuals overtly concerned with the fate of a society amid obstructions in access to self-expression and self-knowledge, but ideological interchange between the literary and popular music wings of this artistic environment is rarely overt.

Muscat seeks to brand itself as a tourist destination and to reward its resident white-collar expatriate workforce with creature comforts and intimations of an Indian Ocean tropical paradise. Waterfront five-star hotels, yacht-filled marinas, and palm trees evoke a luxurious foreground to picturesque vistas dominated by dramatic mountain ridges, a rolling, blinding white cityscape, and the sea itself. The musical answer to these ideations is an indistinct pan-tropical *mélange* recalling in turns a Disneyfied soca, Bollywood ballads, Tehrangeles sentimentality, reggae, rock, and Afro-Latin jazz. This repurposing of the innocuous pop-culture flows coursing through the viaducts of an air-conditioned mall culture also reflects back to the movement from Balochistan to a wider world of Oman and East Africa and the acquisition of a deterritorialized worldliness, an oddly valuable commodity in Muscat and the Gulf more broadly as far as social capital is concerned.

Conclusion

Muscat's Baloch population, with its many-chambered historical and geographic consciousness, is simply too varied to find representation in a unified current of contemporary music practice, even within neatly circumscribed contexts such as wedding celebrations. Interminglings between Baloch communities settled in Muscat's historic neighborhoods and expanding urban sprawl contribute to complex patternings. There is Lyari in Jibroo and Makran in Maabila. Khoudh has been narrated by Shanan, its backstreet *mītags*¹⁷ sonically embroidered with *lēwa* and *dammāl*, sounds that—like *bukhūr*¹⁸ at a fairground—sometimes billow forth dramatically, a sudden presence but never unexpected.

Notes

¹ It is not uncommon for Omani Baloch households to employ servants who are not Baloch, but come rather from Ethiopia or Indonesia for instance.

² Muscat is rendered as *Mashkat* in Baloch.

³ I cannot include gender in this formulation without extensive qualification.

⁴ The *karanāi* often consists of a *sūrnāi* with a large extension enlarging it and deepening its sound.

⁵ There is an enormous body of anthropological and ethnographic literature concerned with *zār* ceremonies as cultivated across a vast geography centered around the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf regions. As a selective set of readings, one finds descriptions of *zār* in community contexts in northern Sudan, see Boddy (1994); in Southern Iran see Gharasou (2008); in Yemen see Battain (1995); in Dubai see Khalifa (2006); in Cairo see Dreiskens (2008); and within transnational Somali communities see Tiilikainen (2101). For a historical perspective focused on the Horn of Africa, see Natvig (1987).

⁶ The use of “African” as a catchall is difficult to avoid when speaking of practices that weave together elements that can be understood as being of cultural origins—Somali, Amhara, Oromo,

Nyasa, Yao...—as diverse and difficult to specify as the communities of practitioners, which ultimately expanded to include peninsular Arabs, Baloch, and Persians.

⁷ Among Baloch in Makran and Oman, *zār* is less likely to be practiced than rituals such as *guātī*, *dammāl*, and *mālid* that combine aspects of *zār* with Baloch, Sindhi, and Arab ceremonial and instrumental/vocal performance.

⁸ Venerated masters in the context of Sufism.

⁹ A strummed zither fretted using keys that resemble typewriter keys.

¹⁰ Old within the historical time frame of Karachi, which isn't a very old city at all.

¹¹ A Karachi-born acquaintance of neither African nor Baloch heritage once told me that, growing up, his family finances took a downward turn and suddenly he was no longer welcomed into his customary circle of kids who'd play football with in the afternoons and thus he turned to a lower class location and cohort to play, becoming "Makrani" in the process.

¹² For discussion of a parallel iteration of the global appeal of this musical flavoring, see Aksoy (2018:154).

¹³ Reshma is widely considered a Pakistani folk singer in Pakistan, but she migrated to Sindh with her family—who represent a hereditary musicians' caste—from Rajasthan and cultivated her singing practice through engagement with devotional idioms at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalander in Sehwan, Sindh (Abbas 2002: 25-30).

¹⁴ Inhaling fumes from glue and various chemical agents is a globally widespread form of substance use, but is not generally openly acknowledged in Oman, UAE, or the other peninsular Gulf states, while in the other countries surrounding the Gulf—Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan—the presence of street drugs and patterns of addiction, crime, and social malaise are much more conspicuous.

¹⁵ *Qaranqashu* is an onomatopoeia approximating the sound of seashells being clapped together by the children noisily making their rounds. [ash-Shidi 2008 222]

¹⁶ In the absence of direct input from Shanan, who has recently passed away, I have discussed this last line, which is slightly ambiguous, with another *Mashkatī* Baloch musician who confidently heard it as "*hara hara fistik hara*" as indicated. What I hear is "*hara hara fi as-Sahara*," which would be a play on *hara* meaning "neighborhood" and *har* (feminine form: *harah*) meaning "hot," and then "in the Sahara" which would have very little logical import but would be entirely consistent with Shanan's characteristic free associative word play.

¹⁷ A communally cohesive Baloch residential space such as a village or neighborhood, not unlike the Indonesian *kampung*.

¹⁸ Incense widely used in Oman, especially in ritual settings. Known in Baloch as *suchkī*.

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