

before him, and when the girls saw it, they said, "Look how stout and strong is his ling; from today his name must be Lingo" (Elwin 1947, 241). The connection of this tribal god (*pen*) with the Hindu deity Śiva (usually represented by a *linga*, or phallic symbol), is evident, and has been noted by many folklorists.

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## SEE ALSO

Bangladesh; *Cait Parab*; *Dīvālī/Dīpāvalī*; Epic, Tribal, Central India; Elwin, Verrier, Tribal Communities, Northeast India; Tribal Music Nilgiris; Tribalism and Tribal Identity

## TRIBAL MUSIC, NILGIRIS

The Nilgiris, a hill range running along the borders of the states of Tamilnadu, Kerala, and Karnataka host some fifteen tribal populations whose musical traditions are intricately linked with traditions of dance, verbal art, and ritual. Some small populations, like the Kotas and Todas, are unique to the Nilgiris; most of the others, Irulas, Kurumbas (of which there are many sub-groupings whose historical relation to one another is questionable), and Paniyas extend elsewhere into the states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu; nevertheless, an argument can be made for the Nilgiris as a tribal musical area.

Two systems of ritual interaction among tribes and castes were evident in the Nilgiris. Although these systems, particularly on the plateau, are nearly dissolved, their historical role has been significant in shaping musical life. The best-known economic, social, and ritual system involved the Badagas (an immigrant *jāti* cluster from Karnataka), Todas, Kotas, Irulas, and Kurumbas Ālu and Pālu).

Just as on the plains, where ritual musicians (especially drummers) tended to be lower in caste than their patrons, so too in the hills did lower-ranking tribal communities (Kotas, Irulas, Kurumbas) provide music for funerals and occasional functions of the ritually

elite Todas and economically powerful Badagas. This system of interaction covered the Nilgiri plateau and involved trade with plainspeople through such Hindu communities as the Chettis (a trading caste). The Chettis would import a variety of items, the most prominent of which was cloth; after the advent of this trade, presumably, the Kota practice of weaving cloth from plant fiber became no more than a ritual remembrance. Some groups of Irulas and Kurumbas, living on the steep slopes of the Nilgiris, appeared to have participated in both plains and hill economic systems.

The Wynad, a region of Kerala lying along the foothills of the Nilgiris, hosts another hierarchically organized intertribal system. At the top of the system are the Wynad Chettis (a farming caste) and the Mullu Kurumbas (a cultivating and field-laboring tribe with a cultural history that includes hunting). These landowning communities employ Kāṭṭu Nāyakas (Jēnu Kurumbas) for field labor and Ūrālīs for crafts (much as the Kotas on the plateau). The Paṇiyas were formerly bonded laborers and are still, unfortunately, treated as ritually and socially inferior.

Both in the plateau and foothill systems, the two communities vying for the top of the hierarchy ("top" as viewed, in part, from the perspective of the economically powerful, a view reinforced, to an extent, by colonial policy), the Todas and Badagas, and Mullu Kurumbas and Wynad Chettis, claim as their own traditions of oral performance (sung or chanted poetry, ritual formulai, prayers, songs) and movement (dancing, rhythmic stepping, and clapping). Communities such as the Badagas now play a variety of popular Indian instruments such as the harmonium, but they have expressed reservations about drums. Although these communities exhibit various responses to technological modernity and popular Hinduism, nothing really prohibits anyone from picking up an instrument. However, Nilgiri people consider the artisan and laborer communities of Kotas, Irulas, Kurumbas (other than Mullu), and Paṇiyas to be the indigenous instrumental musicians.

The unity of the Nilgiris as a musical area is demonstrated most strongly in its instrumental music—its ritual association, material, and structure—rather than in its songs and other forms of oral performance. All of the instrument-playing tribes share a basic music ensemble consisting of one or more frame drums, cylindrical drums, and shawm-types. The percussion ensembles exhibit some variety; the Paniyas, for example, employ a series of small hourglass-shaped pressure drums, and the Irulas of different regions include additional drums in their ensembles and omit others. Most of the shawm types feature six holes. The structure of the instrument limits pitch intonation to some extent, but the tonal systems also have a significant cognitive element because

the reeds (made by the musicians themselves) allow for significant pitch fluctuation.

Diatonic melodies of more than four tones, or melodies employing common Indian forms of embellishment (folk, classical, or cinema music styles), are very difficult to play on these instruments. Portions of Kota instrumental melodies may appear to a Western ear as major or minor because the central pitches produced on the instrument outline intervals that are close to semitones and whole tones (the positions of these intervals vary depending on the piece). The upper range is squeezed, however, and thus the arrangement of tones in a given piece does not seem to "add up" in Western terms. It is not the difference between Kota and European systems that is interesting here, however, but the difference between Kota instrumental music and 1) mainstream forms of Indian subcontinental music, which in theory or practice are largely based on a twelve-fold division of the octave, and 2) Kota song, whose tonal system is nearly diatonic and is thus closer in some ways to other forms of Indian folk music.

Not surprisingly, melodic influence from cinema songs and popular folk genres has significantly penetrated Kota vocal music, but instrumental music almost not at all. However, there are instrumental pieces based on some of the simpler (four notes) vocal melodies in certain Kota genres of instrumental music—thus retaining the contour of the original composition if not the precise tonal relations. Some songs are also based on instrumental pieces. Yet there are a significant number of instrumental pieces that are not associated with songs per se, and this too is rather unique in the Indian context, where vocal, and thus textual, models are the norm. When these instrumental pieces are rendered vocally, for purposes of teaching or practice, vocables (gag, gag-gil, lil lil, e, etc.) are employed. Vocables differ from tribe to tribe.

One of the peculiarities of the instrumental pitch arrangement is the lowest pitch, which usually lies somewhere between a major and minor third below the next pitch. This pitch, particularly in Kota music, serves a rhythmic function and punctuates sections between and within musical phrases. All of the pitches are subject to possible bending or ambiguity in intonation. The lowest pitch is sometimes given a great deal of weight, through pulsing air pressure on the reed, thus bending the pitch a few semitones. Instrumental music of all the tribes consists of discrete pieces (the word for instrumental piece in each language is the same as that for shawm), usually short (roughly one to twelve phrases), repeated continuously, with or without subtle variation, against one of several rhythmic *ostinati*.

The rhythmic *ostinati* are relatively homogeneous among all the tribes. The most important consist of

ten beats (divided *//...//*) eight beats (*/.../*), six beats (*/.../*), and seven beats (*/.../*). The Kotas (and probably other tribes as well) have also incorporated a rhythm they believe to be Cakkiliyar (a Telugu-speaking scheduled caste) in origin of twelve beats (main beats articulated by the right hand on a frame drum are, for example, */.../.../*); the interesting feature of these rhythms is that the former are used for indigenous Kota deities and the latter exclusively for the worship of Hindu deities—either those whose temples lie outside of Kota villages or those who have been adopted into Kota village pantheons.

Most ten-beat cycles and some eight-beat cycles accompany relatively slow melodies, some of them relatively long, and usually associated with an important ritual activity, not a dance. Other eight-beat cycles, and all those in six or seven beats are fast and tend to be associated with dance. The tessitura of Irula and Kurumba music is higher and the tempo more rapid than in Kota music. The performance of pieces associated with Kota men's dances is faster than those of the women.

All the tribes perform circle dances, usually gender-segregated in some way. Among the Kotas, a set of men's dances always precedes a set of women's dances. Women's song, dance, and play usually takes place at the end of long ritual cycles, or at the end of structural units within a complex ceremony. Some Paniya dances feature men in one circle and women in another; some Irula dances feature concentric circles of men and women. Most of the pieces in all these tribal repertoires are associated with the dance. The remaining pieces are attached to specific rituals, such as those associated with worship or death. The Kota system of melody/ritual relationships constitutes a hierarchized, highly differentiated moral and religious classification system. Other tribal music/ritual systems in the Nilgiris appear to be less complex (only four or five ritually associated melodies rather than twenty or thirty), possibly owing to economic degradation and hence severe time constraints on expressive culture. Yet the ritual/melodic systems should be viewed as part of a large regional musical culture because they articulate the same sorts of things—usually beginnings and endings, ritual perambulation between significant places, and spiritually transformational moments.

The Todas, Mullu Kurumbas, and Wynad Chettis perform forms of vocal performance that are quite unique. Toda singing style is characterized by raspy and guttural delivery of melodies that consist entirely of wide, undulatingly contoured pairs of balanced melodic phrases. There are three types of melodic song: men's songs (*po-t* and *nöw*) and women's work songs (*ti-m*). A relatively homogeneous melodic style is now shared by men and women, and much has changed in recent years in

the practice of music and dance, in the memory of old songs, and in the ability to compose new songs based on traditional formulae.

The primary distinction in oral performance style (disregarding textual content and ritual context) is between what Emeneau terms dance songs (*koṇ*) and melodic types; but the description of the *koṇ* as a dance song is slightly confusing in the present-day context because dances also accompany the performance of melodic songs. The *koṇ* is rendered less in a melody than in a formulaic shout with a distinct rhythmic character, of which there are two or three varieties. All the tribes in the Nilgiris, and even the Badagas, perform a similar kind of ritual chanting (syllable "ho ko" or "ho ho"), sometimes accompanied by a circle dance similar to that of the Todas. All these Nilgiri varieties of chanting (called *edykd* or "jumping" in Kota) appear similar in style, but, with few exceptions, only the Toda *koṇ* actually possesses textual content; thus, one might argue that the style originated in Toda performance and was adopted only in external form by others. The *koṇ* texts often recount the ritual procedure with which the performance is associated. Emeneau noted that in some cases a single text could be rendered as a *po-ṭ* using one particular melody, a *nōw* using another, and a *koṇ* by rendering it in the characteristic shouting style. Nowadays, the *po-ṭ* is considered the older, heavier, and rarer form of composition.

Mullu Kurumbas and Wynad Chettis also perform a distinct circle-dance and chanting form the Mullu Kurumbas call *vaṭṭakaḷi* (circle-art). This dance-chant is performed exclusively by men who step in a circle around a sacred lamp, at first slowly, and gradually increasing in speed until finally unable to hold together in a circle. These two communities also perform several types of stick dance around the lamp.

Paṇiyas appear to be unique to the area in that they once practiced an indigenous form of drama in their own language. (Recent efforts have been made to revive this dramatic form). The songs associated with drama are called *nāḍagapāṭu* and *kuratipāṭu*. Kotas of the now nearly defunct village of Kurgo-j in the modern town of Gudalur used to perform Tamil drama.

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SEE ALSO

Tribal Communities, Southern India

## TRIBALISM AND TRIBAL IDENTITY: THE BHĪLS OF WESTERN CENTRAL INDIA

Contemporary Bhīls are a diverse ethnic group of several million people in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. They engage in many different occupations in both urban and rural settings, although they are primarily agricultural workers and laborers. Many social and economic activities in Bhīl communities are based on kinship and lineage connections; marriages are generally arranged between Bhīl *jāti* members, as determined through male lineages, in other villages. Life cycle rituals and religious festivals are enacted within these local clusters of related villages and lineages. Contemporary Bhīls generally self-identify as Hindus, and incorporate Hindu rituals, myths, and deities into localized religious practices. Gavarī, a forty-day religious performance cycle of Bhīls and Bhīl Minas in Rajasthan's Udaipur district, illustrates this blending of local Bhīl beliefs and rituals with Hindu deities and epic stories.

The designation "Bhīl" is controversial and laden with myths and stereotypes of tribal identity in India. The widely held assumption that contemporary people designated as Bhīls are the descendants of ancient indigenous South Asians is based largely on references in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* to short, dark skinned, forest dwellers. The English language translations of these Sanskrit texts influenced colonial discourse that subsequently linked these mythic forest dwellers to contemporary Bhīls. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tribals were generally