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## Emotional Dimensions of Ritual Music Among the Kotas, a South Indian Tribe

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### I. Theoretical Introduction

To me, the prefix “ethno,” in Ethnomusicology, implies that we have the potential to delineate an indigenous way of thinking or representation, something fundamental about a cultural system, which can enhance our understanding of how music is related to the culture in which it is embedded. But it is also problematic: how do we identify and represent that “something,” that insight drawn from an indigenous world view or cultural system? How do we apply such an insight to music? Sometimes the potential to delineate an indigenous way of thinking appears to crystallize in fleeting moments, moments of clarity in this cultural evanescence, suggesting that our perception may be intensified by studying moments of ambiguity and change.

In this case study I consider how the Kotas, a community of about 1,500 people who live in the Nilgiri hills of south India, make emotional sense of their ritual lives. Three sites of ambiguity and change interest me: 1) moment-to-moment subjective experiences as a large scale ceremony unfolds, 2) sites of historical reconfiguration in a ceremony, and 3) points of tension between categories and “reality.”

There are three related theoretical problems. The first concerns how we understand and represent the potential for affective complexity in ritual music, what I call “emotional contour” and “emotional texture.” The second is the problem of representing musical meaning in a cultural totality that may be understood as a unified whole in some respects but not in others. This steers my discussion to change, conflict, difference and heterogeneity, as well as “unity” as a cultural *category*. The third problem pertains to cultural categories themselves, the fragile intersection of genres as they are “lived” (Shelemay 1998:148) and as they are ideally represented

in a ritual classification scheme.<sup>1</sup> How does music come to have affective significance through the agency of individuals who create, explicate, support, or transform their ritual economy?

Part of this analysis of meaning involves confronting how “ethnic genres” bear scrutiny as “analytical categories” (Ben-Amos 1976 [1969]): in particular how two fundamental, emic categories, “divinity” (*devr*) and “death” (*tāv*), are reciprocally constituted with music. Is it possible, as Blacking suggests, to use “classifications that are socially accepted” (here divinity and death) even if they “seem to have little to do with the music” to describe “*musical* phenomena for which there [is] no special vocabulary” (1981:187)?

Focusing on two major ceremonial complexes which correspond to these categories, I wish to highlight ways in which music illuminates affective modalities that lie beyond the primary associations Kotas draw between happiness/bliss (*ānandam*) and divinity, and sadness (*dukṁ*) and death. Indeed, the affective makeup of a complex ceremony consists of components that are not easily labeled or distinct. The sadness participants experience during a funeral, for example, is accompanied by ancillary feelings, transient modes of emotionality that include (in the Kota case) poignant joy, intoxicated abandon, reverence, and fortitude. Since such modes may occur in combination, change over time, or vary by person, the subjective position of the individual within this mutable spectrum is likely to be ambiguous.

Music and dance, I argue, provide conventionalized categories through which sometimes subtle emotional modalities are given concrete representation; they act as “signposts” for what I will call the emotional texture or contour of a ceremony.<sup>2</sup> By focusing on music and dance here, I hope to further the discussion of emotion and culture by moving beyond what appears to me to be a preoccupation with language, especially emotion terms (e.g. Harré 1986; Lutz 1988; Goddard 1996; see critique in Leavitt 1996:522).

My own fascination with the funerary aspect of this subject grew, in part, out of my own experience: the death of my *viṇā* teacher in India, with whom I was very close, and the reactions of her family and friends. Brahmin funerals (like hers), I learned, are very different from the funerals of many other communities of Tamilians, some of whom, for example, carry the deceased about in a chair, beat the drums, and dance. When I arrived in the Nilgiris I realized I would be working with a community that ritualized death differently from that which I had seen, and I wondered about what the “celebration” of funerals really meant. Early on I made the clumsy mistake of asking whether a particular funeral was “jolly” (I had not yet attended one). In this instance, the funeral was for a young man who, if I

recall, drank himself to death. "No," I was told, "it was tragic." Knowing that Kotas play music and dance at funerals I had made a simplistic and erroneous inference. I clearly had something to learn.

### **Emotional contour, texture, and Reddy's "emotives"**

In retrospect it seems obvious that the meanings of musical rituals such as the funeral would not be transparent, and that affective understandings of rituals, which are certainly part of their "meanings," may not be uniform. In what ways are rituals interpretively problematic? In what ways do they lack uniformity? How can we describe and analyze emotional heterogeneity? How do we account for short and long term passage of time?

I use the terms "texture" and "contour" to describe the way in which the affective character of a ceremony changes as its constituent rituals unfold. Affect must be approached from at least two levels: the individual who in some way engages with an emerging event, and the classification system assigning emotion-related terminology to "gloss" it (cf. Crapanzano 1989). So for example, while in south India the moment when a widow is formally denuded of her jewelry is considered to be one of the most poignantly sorry moments of a funeral (see dry funeral example of this ritual in Figure 9), a quiet, jealous bystander may be thinking "hah, this'll take that harridan down a few notches."<sup>3</sup>

Note the difference between this view of emotional multivalence and the view of ritual adopted by Scheff, "the distanced reenactment of situations which evoke collectively held emotional distress" (1977:489). Scheff argues that "any device which allows participants to be both participants in, and observers of, their own distress accomplishes . . . distancing" (488). Indeed, I would argue the opposite: such participation may lead to intensification or diversification of emotional experience.<sup>4</sup>

"Emotional gestures and utterances" which may occur in ritual or everyday life have the capacity to "alter the states of the speakers from whom they derive." William Reddy (1997:327) terms such utterances "emotives" (non-verbal instances are not much discussed). In my understanding, such emotives may serve as catalysts for the intensification or diversification of emotional experience, the creation of texture.<sup>5</sup>

An emotional contour is a single strand, an isolated component of a complex texture. Emotional contours might be envisioned as series of imaginary graphs, tracking the changing degrees of intensity that an individual may experience over time during a ritual. Each graph, mapping a specific contour, would refer to one mode of emotional or affective experience.<sup>6</sup> Though difficult to label, these affective modes might comprise both gross emotional categories such as happiness or sadness and subtle ones such as

exultation. In a funeral, a participant may feel the sense of loss to be especially great at some moments, and, as a result, burst into tears. At other times, sadness subsides: perhaps a sentimental cheerfulness prevails as a few friends reminisce about good times shared with the deceased. A variety of factors have the potential to intensify or subdue each shade of emotion. This creates an indeterminate mixing of affective modalities, rather than a set of discrete emotional modes with variable intensity. Together, these intricate contours as they are experienced by a variety of actors could be represented as constituting a more complex emotional "texture" of a ceremony. I will use the term "contour" when I wish to isolate for discussion a particular metaphorical "shape" of emotional intensity as a ceremony unfolds. Texture refers to the larger concatenation.

In this framework the specific content of affective understandings need not be unitary or uniform; it is taken for granted simply that culturally conditioned and personally contingent experiences of affect usually change as a ritual unfolds. Emotional texture is a way of talking about the changing configurations of affective meanings that Kotas, in this case, assign to rituals. These configurations emerge from a tension between individual feelings and experiences and the classification of "emotion" in language and ritual. Emotional texture, neither static in time or invariant across the population, is always conditioned by everyday, agreed-upon understandings of ritual meaning. In effect, at least three layers of musical meaning are engaged in dynamic interaction: 1) music as an announcement, or label, for, in this case, an emotional state; 2) music as an active constituent of the emotional texture of a ceremony as it unfolds; 3) music as directly affecting the feelings of the ritual participants (whether or not the effect can be adequately described).

This article is organized as follows: Parts II-IV contextualize the themes of this paper in regard to Kota culture, ritual, and music. In parts V-VI, I use ideas of emotional contour and texture to examine Kota ritual culture in greater detail. Part VII is a discussion of the musical utility of Reddy's "emotives." My argument is that Kota music functions something like an emotive in that it acts both as a sign of a putative emotional state and as an instigator or cause of such a state.

## **II. The Kotas: Cultural Background, Musical Life and Historical Vignettes**

My discussion here turns to the India of minority communities, some of whom are marginalized from the civilization Indian nationalists portray as essentially Hindu. Some of the most marginalized communities have been aggregated under the unfortunate English label, "tribe."<sup>7</sup> The tribal commu-

nity to be considered in this discussion, the Kota, speak a Dravidian language, “the language of the Kota people” (*kōv mānt*), and maintain a distinct set of religious practices. They also interact significantly with other ethnic groups: Hindus, Christians, and to some extent Muslims of the surrounding Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada speaking areas.<sup>8</sup>

Kota villages are electrified to some extent; a few homes are also equipped with phones. A number of persons own televisions, cassette tape players, and a few even possess automobiles. Although most of my companions and consultants in the village could not readily conceive of my life in the United States, many were well aware of events in the wider world around them. I will never forget when Bill Clinton was first elected, for it was one of my Kota consultants, S. Raman, and not a newspaper or a radio, who informed me.

Day to day musical life in the Nilgiris and in Kota villages resembles that in other parts of India in that all have access to the musical selections of All-India Radio. Radio sounds emanate from many households. A few Kotas listen to Karnatak music—especially M. S. Subbulakshmi—and have studied a bit of vocal music or mṛidangam.<sup>9</sup> Tamil film music is always a favorite. Men and women often base new songs on melodies of popular film songs or *bhajans* circulating in Hindu temples. Although a few individuals have experimented on instruments such as the bamboo flute, tabla, or harmonium, instrumental music *par excellence* among the Kotas is confined to a double-reed aerophone of conical bore called the *koḷ* (see Figure 4).<sup>10</sup> This primarily outdoor instrument is accompanied by two contrastingly pitched cylinder drums called *par*, which play interlocking patterns, and a lead frame drum, the *taṭaṭk*.

Koḷ music, though occasionally performed for ad hoc celebrations, is largely delimited to particular times during mortuary and worship ceremonies. In this sense it is not an “everyday” feature of Kota musical life. In another sense it is, however, for families commonly broadcast their home-made recordings of celebratory *koḷ* music from their home boomboxes. Kotas use the *pulāṅg*, a bamboo clarinet, for casual music making. Aspiring *koḷ* players use it to practice the *koḷ* repertoire. Very few Kotas still know how to play two other instruments, once used for informal music making, the bamboo trumpet, *bugīr*, and Jews harp, *pījl* (see Figure 7).

Kotas once performed music for other communities on a regular basis in return for goods or services. They now play at Tamil and Badaga events only occasionally; they are generally paid for these services. Within the community, playing music is a responsibility commensurate with other responsibilities, such as collecting wood and other materials, cooking food, or serving as a ritual specialist.

Unlike most other Indian communities, Kotas do not perform music for

weddings, child naming, or other life cycle ceremonies (other than the funeral), and do not generally sing while performing agricultural work. (A fragmentary repertoire of a few agricultural songs can be collected with effort, but the repertoire does not reflect actual practice.) Women sing a variety of songs for their own pleasure. These include traditional mourning songs (*āṭṭ*), god songs (*devr pāṭ*), and newly composed pieces not fitting any traditional category. Contexts for such singing are household social visits and temple festivals—Kota or Hindu. However, a number of women compose songs that only they themselves sing.

Since this discussion centers on ways in which categories of music making and ritual interact with personal understandings of emotion, I focus on a few key personae, listed below, and how their stories illuminate what Kotas consider to be their “traditional” (*māmūl*) genres. Koḷ music and dance are central to Kota ritual, and despite the lack of “everydayness,” Kotas consider them central to their culture generally.

- 1) Raman and his son, Duryodana, who became my field assistant: two of the better performers on the koḷ.
- 2) K. Puccan, in his late seventies when I arrived in the Nilgiris: at that time considered the best performer in all of the seven Kota villages (he is perhaps no longer, however, due to his advanced age).<sup>11</sup>
- 3) K. Jayachandran, a Kota banker from Porgār village (Kotagiri): learned significant repertorial items through cassette recordings of Puccan, his father-in-law. Jayachandran introduced these items of repertoire to his own village to reinvigorate its musical culture after a number of musicians died without passing on their musical knowledge.
- 4) Va. Kamatn, childhood companion of Puccan and a former ritual leader (*mundkānōn*): played a pivotal role in effecting certain kinds of ritual changes in the village. I will narrate some of the events surrounding his funeral in 1991 (see Figure 8).

### **Historical roles of Kamatn and Puccan**

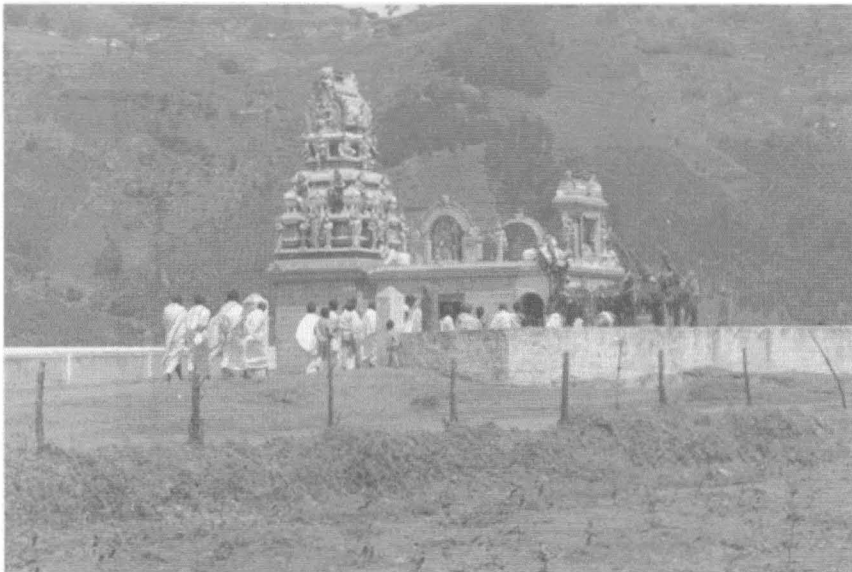
The following brief review of Kamatn’s and Puccan’s active roles in village affairs sets the stage for my discussion of how some Kota rituals have changed historically and what the emotional implications of such changes are for the affective constitution of these rituals. Puccan and Kamatn were bound together in their life histories, and, later in this narrative, we will see that Puccan was particularly moved during Kamatn’s funeral, a funeral whose specific character was affected by who Kamatn was as an individual. This review serves as a transition to a discussion of “sameness and difference,” and “unity and disunity,” relations that shed light on the cultural logic of Kota ritual complexes generally, as well as music and emotional texture specifically.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Kota reformers strove to free the community from a rigid intertribal hierarchy, a process entailing Westernization and a movement toward mainstream Hinduism.<sup>12</sup> As young men, the childhood friends Va. Kamatn and Puccan actively backed the village faction in support of a syncretic Kota-Hindu religion by personally carrying an icon of a Hindu deity from another locality to their village.<sup>13</sup> In doing so, they successfully provided a ritual point of integration with surrounding Hindu society.

Puccan was impoverished as a youth. Through various means he and Kamatn became wealthy in their senescence and this wealth, in part, lent them new measures of authority in village affairs. They also came to represent an assimilationist trend in the village. As an adult, Va. Kamatn was instrumental in raising the funds to build the new Hindu temple (Figure 1). This temple, of typical south Indian construction, differs remarkably both from the cement temples of traditional Kota gods today (Figure 2) and from the thatched temples of long ago (Figure 3).

Va. Kamatn also supported reforms in a number of other rituals, the most important of which for the present purposes was the secondary mortuary ritual, the “dry funeral.” Along with others (see Mandelbaum 1954), he believed that this long and expensive ceremony was a waste of

**Figure 1. Ranganādar temple: An example of Kota-Hindu syncretism**





**Figure 2. Aynör Temple in Kinār (Kilkotagiri). Note stone pillar remnant of earlier thatched temple (visible on another temple in Figure 3).**



time and money, and that many public aspects of the ceremony, such as drinking and buffalo sacrifice (see Figure 10), were unseemly.<sup>14</sup>

There is an important socio-economic correlate to these values: Va. Kamatn and his nephew Balan were more affluent than I was at the time—even though they were so-called “tribal” people living in a village where there was no toilet or plumbing, and in which most houses were constructed of wattle and daub. The Kotas with whom I interacted daily were understandably skeptical that an American academic could be less well-off than their village compatriot. Indeed, some of Va. Kamatn’s immediate neighbors were destitute people who lived virtually hand to mouth.

The economic inequities evident in the village are striking and underscore the preponderance of internal differences, articulated in many ways and at many times, even within the small-scale society of the Kotas. Kotas understand rituals of unification to be important, especially in the face of such differences. Morally committed to principles of egalitarianism and unity, they believe the efficacy of their gods depends on the community living up to these principles. In this sense, a tension between sameness and difference, unity and divisiveness, underlies Kota rituals generally.

**Figure 3.** A thatched Kota temple in Kotagiri; note stone pillar (Breeks 1873, p. XXII). “Priest” is probably a mundkanon.



### **Unity and division**

Unity is iterated iconically in forms such as communal dancing and singing and symbolically in performative utterances (Austin 1979). Since I have elsewhere written on the connection between unity and divinity in Kota culture (Wolf 1997a), it will suffice here to provide brief illustrations from a series of conversations with K. Jayachandran:

[when I was young] “my father said ‘I am a strict follower of my grandfather; I’m a strict follower of my daddy. Don’t ask questions like that.’ I would tell him ‘I want to know the real thing, why things happen the way they do, but you are not able to tell me.’”

Jayachandran emphasized the theme of unity in Kota society over the course of several hours of open-ended conversation, using examples to punctuate our discussions.<sup>15</sup> His youthful position as questioner of tradition put him in somewhat of an inharmonious position with respect to his father and his tradition. Jayachandran returned to the point, “but I’ve got confidence

that if you have unity, definitely our *ayñor-amñor* (father-god and mother goddess) will hundred percent be there, every village will be saturated." Saturated is an apt locution here. Indeed, during festivals for the gods, the cultural use of village space is a constitution of divine place; it takes the form of saturation, an intensity of significant activity over a defined locale.

Music, too, helps to forge this unity; and such unity, it has been argued, is mutually constitutive of divinity:

The involvement should be there. Whatever field it may be, not only music you know . . . Suppose the person is not having any interest. I have to tell them "this music has got power so you kindly join." . . . So that is the almighty, it has to be done [there has to be a] "condition" [placed upon him].<sup>16</sup> So "condition" is a must to make him alright. So this particular song [for instance] is meant for [the] almighty. Our Kota people have to do all these things or he will never come to us . . . Music . . . is a force, force in the sense, [a] "condition." Our almighty said "there should be some music, there should be some song." So everyone should [be] involved since he is our father . . . fairness will be there . . . automatically *devr* [god] will be there, everything will be peaceful (K. Jayachandran).

This conception of unity and its musical components not only assist us in our understanding of what it means for a Kota to worship, but also deepens our ability to comprehend how Kotas ritualize the process of dealing with death. Although, recently, anthropologists such as Seremetakis (1991:241note5; see also sources quoted therein) have attempted to attenuate the emphasis on the Durkheimian model of social disjuncture occasioned by death, I feel reasonably confident that this classic understanding of death in society retains some validity; Kotas hold such an idea rather explicitly.

Death itself iterates a kind of social differentiation by separating the living from (the spirit of) the dead. Social differentiation is further articulated by attention to the deceased as an individual, e.g. through kinship (those related to the deceased perform special roles), social position in the community (ritual elaboration for older and more wealthy people who have died), and the distinctiveness of individual personality (the deceased's favorite personal items may be displayed and cremated).

Many of these elements of difference are muted during god ceremonies, for worship implies a moral commitment to particular formulations of unity. These complementary notions of unity/sameness/equality and difference/disjuncture have affective parallels: in general, though the shape of emotional progression does change subtly over time, divine ceremonies are concerned with unity of feeling (ideally "bliss") and are in that sense affectively not as complex as funerals, which are inherently characterized by tensions between sadness and a variety of contrasting sentiments.

### III. The Organization of Kota Ritual

Kota rituals are organized into ceremonies of two types: those concerned primarily with worship, the “making” of divinity (*devr*), and those concerned with disposing the bodies of and honoring the dead (*tāv*).<sup>17</sup> These ceremonies constitute fundamental cultural categories of “god” and “death” that apply not only to ritual actions but also to morality, for proper ways to comport oneself as a Kota, and to music. Three principle ceremonies fall within these categories.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between divinity and death is particularly interesting in India where there exist elaborate taxonomies of divine beings and spirits and widespread theories of reincarnation.<sup>19</sup>

Kotas characterize the rituals of each as dominated by emotions we may gloss in English respectively as awesome bliss (e.g. *pērānandam*) and pitiful loss (*dukṁ*). More than this, as my introduction suggested, the actual performance of rituals occasions the representation, experience, and evocation of a variety of emotional subtleties over time.<sup>20</sup> Music, through its unique aesthetic qualities and special potentials for signification, contributes a distinct layer to the emotional texture of a complex ceremony.

#### Relationships between divinity and death

Divinity and death are intrinsically linked cultural categories in Kota society: ceremonies of death provide a regularized series of actions that make Kota society fit again to experience divinity, and, at the end of their annual ceremony for the gods, Kotas experience a sort of sadness that is structurally similar to the experience of loss at death. It will be useful to summarize these ceremonies.

Kotas celebrate life and divinity in a ceremony called “god” (*devr*) lasting between three and twelve days (see Figure 5). This ceremony consists of progressively intense days of ritual cleanliness and austerity, an emphasis on activities reminiscent of a primordial era, and a physical movement towards the center of the village where the temples are located (this can be taken as one iconic performance of togetherness). At the culmination of the ceremony, the principal ritual leaders (*mundkānōn*) open the temples for the first and only time in the year (sometimes the ceremony cannot be held for many years) and all members of the village collectively pray. God is said to be “made” in this ceremony, and this “making” is accomplished in several ways. The most noticeable manifestation of divinity is fire, which is brought from the houses of the *mundkanons* and kept vigil over throughout the ceremony.<sup>21</sup> Kotas also “make” god by acting in a unified manner, in dressing, eating, dancing, and praying.

Like many so-called indigenous peoples, Kotas consider themselves to

be among the first inhabitants of the land they occupy and to have a god-given claim on it. In the early days, “before there was death,” as their stories put it, divine and human beings sang, danced, and freely communicated with one another; this period serves as a point of reference for the god ceremony:<sup>22</sup> it is a logical model for the notion of “unity” Kotas talk about verbally and perform iconically. Furthermore, the activities associated with this period, the skills that the Kota father god, *ayñōr*, taught them in this primeval age, are taken as generative of divinity and at the same time, of a larger Kota communal self. Consequently, musicianship, dancing, blacksmithing, and a variety of other crafts, all of which Kotas regard as god-given, are ritually circumscribed.

The first type of mortuary ceremony, called the “green” funeral (*pac-tāv*; see Figure 8), follows within a day or two of a death, culminating in the cremation of the corpse. The second, called a “dry” funeral (*varldāv*), follows months or years after a death (see Figures 9, 11, and 12). Its purposes and meanings are multiple—it reestablishes the conditions of purity and auspiciousness required for certain divine ceremonies, marks the end of mourning for spouses and enables them to remarry, dispatches the spirits of the deceased off to the land of the dead, and provides a context for young men and women from different villages to intermingle.<sup>23</sup> Affectively, this ceremony also bridges the transition from funeral mourning to the celebration of life and divinity.

The class of being associated with the funeral are the *ānātōrs*, literally the “beings of *that* land,” or *tatīpōr*, those who have died. Unlike the potentially harmful, lingering souls of the dead in surrounding Tamil country,<sup>24</sup> these beings are pillars of support for Kotas who are living and musically beckon Kotas who are about to die. Mr. Sivan of Menar village, a fine musician and community leader, claims himself to have heard this music of the spirits as a relative was dying. Complicating the notion of funerary musical affect, which is, in its simplest formulation, sad, this soterio-musical heraldry is viewed as something comforting, not sad, to the dying.

### **The language of emotion**

The Kota language, historically Dravidian, is like all languages liberally peppered with words from those of neighboring or influential populations. Kotas refer to archaisms in their language as *māmūl mānt* and confer upon these aspects of their language an air of authority and authenticity.<sup>25</sup> Although Kotas are able to communicate aesthetic concepts through the limited lexica of their *māmūl mant*, they ordinarily use other languages—Tamil, Hindi, or English (or Sanskrit, via Tamil)—to draw subtle distinctions. Since speakers may not be aware of a “foreign” etymological origin to such words, it need hardly be said that one must refrain from judging from vocabulary

alone the extent to which a particular concept can be understood as somehow “authentic” or “indigenous.”

Kota song texts and ritual exegeses suggest that the overriding and defining emotions of the god ceremony are those of happiness, *candōcm* (from Sanskrit) and *kuci* (from Hindi), and bliss, *ānandam* (from Sanskrit). Terms of apparently Dravidian origin in the Kota language, such as the verbal root, *kondār* (celebrate), and noun, *angārm* (pride), unlike the Sanskrit- and Hindi-derived terms above, do not denote the emotions of joy directly, but are nevertheless understood in affective terms.<sup>26</sup> As one of the more knowledgeable singers and dancers, S. Cindamani, responded to my inquiry about how singing during the god ceremony makes her feel, “devr pāt itāmē, candōcmāyṛ pāṛko” (if one renders a god song, one renders it in a pleasurable/delightful manner) and “oylāmē angārmāyṛ pācmudo” (it is said that one sings [god songs] with great pride/pomp).<sup>27</sup>

To describe the feeling of primordial unity with the divine that they experience while participating in the annual god ceremony, Kotas use the Sanskrit-derived term for bliss, *ānandam*, or superlatively, *pērānandam*. This feeling inspires *celycelyp* in women, the motivation and mood to dance. Although people are the immediate audiences for these dances, the gods are the spiritually more important epicurean observers, possessing *anglāpm* (desire, especially to listen to music) and *ācv* (desire). Music “grabs” them (devrk paco).<sup>28</sup>

As my arguments about divinity and death would suggest, music and dance of death and mourning induce a slightly wider spectrum of emotions. The Sanskrit-derived term *dukṁ* (sad) in Kota is used to classify funerals on a broad scale; there are “sad instrumental melodies” (*dukt koḷ*) and “sad songs” (*dukt pāt*) falling under this category. Regarding the latter, Cindamani described the mode of rendering *ātḷs* (songs on a sad theme, usually about someone who died) as one characterized by agitation and worry (*arkl* < Kota). Unlike god songs, they are sung sorrowfully or grievously (*tuyaramāyṛ*).<sup>29</sup> This overarching representation of sadness will serve as a point of departure for a more variegated treatment of mortuary sentiments in part VI of this article.

#### IV. Kota Music: Repertoire and Characteristics

Kota ritual repertoires are named according to their ritual contexts, *devr* (god) or *tāv* (death). Their labels also specify the activity they are meant to accompany—e.g. dancing, opening a temple, or lighting a funeral pyre. Items of repertoire are also named according to whether they are sung or performed on an instrument. The distinction between song (*pāt*) and instrumental melody (*koḷ*) is musically and ritually important: the former are diatonic or very close to diatonic, the latter are not (particularly, the up-

per register is compressed). Songs can be performed in many contexts, while instrumental melodies range from the contextually specific to the relatively free.

The major types of repertoire are summarized in the table below. It is beyond the scope of this article to detail all the permutations of repertorial context and use; a few of the complexities will emerge from the present discussion. "Other ritual movement and sound" is included as a residual category because not all discrete performance types are songs, instrumental tunes, or dances. It is unclear to me the extent to which some of these miscellaneous types of ritual movement and sound are normally performed (or permitted) outside of the specific ritual contexts where they are mandatory. Many dances and dance melodies, for example, as well as most song types, can be performed in honor of a visiting person (such as the Collector of Ooty), at a municipal "function" (such as the inauguration of the summer tourist season at the Ooty botanical garden), or at a festival of "culture," *kalāccāram*, (such as intertribal gatherings). God songs especially "[sustain] a connection with the sound world of everyday life" (Shelemay 1998:198). Ritual restrictions on other repertorial items, however, militates against their recontextualized use for everyday occasions.

The double-reed and drum music of god ceremonies consists of two indigenously recognized genres: one, called the "dance tunes" (*āṭ koḷ*) is brisk in style and, not surprisingly, accompanies dancing; the other, that of the "god tunes" (*devr koḷ*), is slower in style and accompanies rituals or is played alone. The other important genre performed during god ceremonies is that of the god songs (*devr pāt*); although any song in any style can be called a god song if it is devotional (some songs are composed to a film style or tune, for example), the god songs used on ritual occasions are always in simple meters (duple or compound duple) and sung by women while they clap their hands and dance in a circle; some of this repertoire predates living memory and some of it is recently or newly composed. At some junctures, usually the end of a structural section within a complex ceremony, a minimum of three songs must be sung; the older repertoire is frequently reserved for this special use.

The repertoire associated with mourning is of five types: 1) the saddest type of instrumental music, *dukt koḷ* ("sad tune"), 2) an instrumental genre whose sadness is somewhat attenuated, the *kēr koḷ*,<sup>30</sup> 3) a type of commemorative song, *āṭḷ* (from a root meaning to move or dance), sung outside of funerals, 4) another intermediary genre, *varldāv koḷ* ("dry funeral tune"), which is considered by some not to be a mourning genre at all, but a "god" genre, appropriate for worship, and 5) *āṭ koḷ*, funerary dancing and the melodies associated with funerary dancing. The fifth genre is virtually the same as that performed for god ceremonies, with the caveat that certain

**Table 1. Kota Genres of Performance and Contexts: The broad view. Genres in bold are discussed in detail in part VI of this article.**

	Devr	Tāv	Occasional/Ad hoc
Ritually-specific koļ (instrumental melodies)	Devr koļ (for accompanying specific rituals and for listening to as divinely imbued, aesthetically enjoyable music); not usually accompanied by dance. According to some, <b>varldāv koļs</b> belong to this category.	Tāv koļ (for accompanying specific rituals and for listening to as articulations of communally understood emotional modes of experiencing the loss of a fellow Kota person); not usually accompanied by dance. Includes <b>dukt koļs</b> , <b>kēṛ koļs</b> , and some <b>varldāv koļs</b> .	Rare use of ritual music outside of its “god” or “death” context; but see dances below.
Pāt (songs)	Devr pāt; always accompanied by women’s dance during the god ceremony; any song involving the gods and usually sung in a metric fashion is also called a god song, but may play no formal ritual role in ceremonies.	Āṭļ (songs of mourning, not sung during funerals); agļ (crying; not considered singing, but recognized as having a tune [rāgam]); neither accompanied by dance; both associated with women but not limited to them.	Both devr pāt and āṭļ may be sung in a variety of non-ritual occasions and are considered forms of entertainment both for the performers and the listeners.
<b>Āṭm</b> (dances)	Several named styles of dancing performed in a variety of places. Kotas further classify these into two major kinds according to whether they are performed in the domestic dancing area or the temple area. The latter are distinguished by more elaborate instrumental tunes.	Generally taken from the same pool of dances (i.e., dance melodies) that are performed in the domestic area during the god ceremony.	A few dance melodies, especially those performed near the temples during the god ceremonies, are prohibited from being performed anywhere else. The large majority, however, are contextually non-specific and can be performed for purposes of display, etc.
Other ritual movement and sound	Present	Present	Possible



dance melodies normally performed in the vicinity of the temple during the peak days of the god ceremony are avoided during mortuary ceremonies; the dances, however, are identical.

The relationships among these genres and their individual implications will be treated in greater detail in part VI.

### **Instrumental musical characteristics and terminology**

Kota instrumental music is characterized by a thick, double-reed timbre and an abundance of microtonal and articulatory ornaments. The intonation of particular pitches tends to be somewhat flexible, depending upon player, melody, and makeup of the instrument. Makers calculate the kol's length, bore, and hole placement by comparing them with those of an existing instrument. The artisan also checks how the holes feel in his hands. A particular player's intonation depends not only on physical features of the instrument but also on embouchure and degree of air pressure (see Figure 4). The intonation of a particular stop on the instrument may be stable in a given melody, or it may vary according to the context in which it occurs—i.e. a neighboring ornament, a stable pitch, or part of a phrase played in the uppermost range of the instrument as opposed to one played in the lower range.

**Figure 4.** Two kol players from Kurgōj village



A player produces the lowest pitch of the kol (something like a pedal tone) by covering all six holes. This note, vocalized by the syllable, *gag*, is set apart from the rest of the pitches by a variable interval (sometimes a type of third, other times more than an octave) that is generally larger than the intervals between other adjacent notes (frequently microtonal and seldom more than a major second). Performance of the next adjacent stop often involves a wide vibrato. To convey a sense of how intonation varies I provide below the pitch sets I (tentatively) abstracted from stable sections of two different melodies; it should be kept in mind that these fundamentals are in some cases virtual. A better representation of the sound of the instrument would take into account the complex harmonics of the instrument.

- 1) e', g' (slightly sharp), a', b' (slightly flat), c', db' (slightly flat), ebb' (slightly flat).
- 2) e, f#', g', a#', b' (slightly sharp), c#' (slightly sharp), d' (slightly flat)

A single melody played on two different instruments, especially of two different kinds, such as a kol and a pulāng, will differ in the relative intonation of the pitches. Although the contour of a melody transcends the pitches in which it may be rendered on a particular instrument, the notion of contour alone does not sufficiently represent the possible constraints. One constraint is the extent to which one may vary the tone produced on a given stop. For example, it is difficult to produce the basic tonal building blocks of Indian popular music. None of the Kota musicians I spoke with have been able to reproduce, to their own satisfaction, an Indian film-tune melody on the kol, even though they can easily sing one. The limitations of this instrument have effectively prevented the infiltration of certain kinds of non-Kota music into the Kotas' own instrumental repertoire.

The melody-specific character of intonation accords with the way musical classification appears to operate. Kotas identify pieces according to their unique melodies. They group them according to their contexts, not by generic melodic characteristics. A funeral tune is defined as such because it is played in funerary contexts; a god tune is defined as such because it is performed during the annual "god" ceremony. In this sense, the nominal system of classification is ontologically prior to the musical identity of a given piece; distinctions between melodies of "god" and melodies of "death" are not systematic: they depend mostly on differences between particular melodies, differences which exist on the same order of magnitude within a given genre.<sup>31</sup> I have discerned analytically no consistently sustainable difference in kind between melodies used for funerals and melodies used for worship of the gods.

This might seem a pedantic, musicological preoccupation—after all,

why should there be musically generalizable correlates to contextually defined categories? For Kotas, divinity and death are cognitive, ritual, and moral opposites. Anyone who has attended a Kota funeral in one village cannot attend a god ceremony in another during the same month. Similarly, funeral music should not be performed or practiced anywhere near the village except during the time of a death, and certainly not during the god ceremony. I was even told to record music of each category on entirely different cassettes. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to expect that Kotas would differentiate melodies of god and death using broadly characterizable features of content/style as well.

In fact, every Kota with whom I have discussed this issue claims to be able to feel, by listening, that a piece is a funeral tune and not a god tune—that is, without having prior knowledge of a particular melody or knowing that a funeral is in process.<sup>32</sup> In their system, musical identification is epistemically prior to classification, and is based on feeling and emotion.<sup>33</sup> This visceral basis for musical understanding forms the basis of my argument about “emotional texture” of a ceremony; namely that music does not merely cause people to experience emotions, nor does it merely fit into a simple ritual scheme of definitions, but rather that it helps to dynamically constitute the overall emotional texture of a ceremony.

## **V. Music, Dance and Texture in the God Ceremony**

Using the aforementioned characterizations of the god ceremony, Kota musical genres, and terms for emotion, it is now possible to outline the subtle changes of emotion over time implied by the idea of “texture.” To state my points briefly: god as constituted in the god ceremony inspires among Kotas a general feeling of bliss, awe, and happiness. A sequence of activities serves to alternately heighten and mute these feelings. Other sorts of sentiments are added to the mix, sometimes combined, collapsed, and hinted at through references to stories. Virtually all of these emotional contours are linked to aesthetics of music and dance and to specific times and places. Creative play adds a touch of uncertainty and individuality to this otherwise heavily structured ritual, but even play is circumscribed.

Since I have considered the instrumental repertoire of the god ceremony in detail elsewhere (1997a; 1997b), I will simply note here that individual god tunes carry with them specific associations. Among other things, they commemorate events illustrating significant relationships between Kotas and their deities, especially through stories recalling instances of timely divine intervention. Like all good stories, these god stories are characterized by narrative flow, tension and release, and changes in sentiment and feeling that unfold over time. All these aspects of a story are collapsed into

a moment, though, when a story is indexed by a melody. This creates a layering effect in the emotional structure of a ritual, consisting of different kinds of references to, representations of, and evocations of emotions. The condensed reference to a story is one such unique layer.

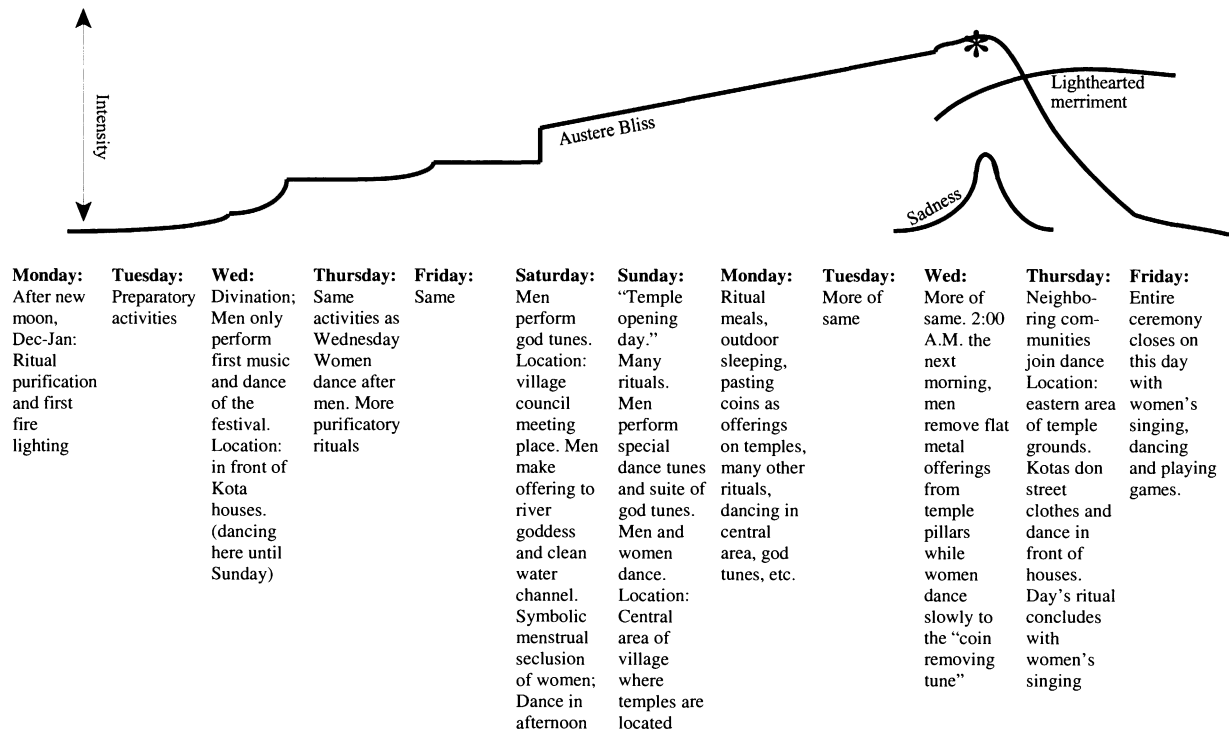
The entire god ceremony is also characterized by an abstract narrative flow, consisting musically, for example, of sequences of genres and sub-genres, and pieces within these genres, which individually, or in groups, signify stories or important ritual themes. Without discussing the internal details of this flow, some of which may be gleaned from the contour chart in Figure 5, it will be illustrative to examine how music helps to create a structural conclusion to this ceremony in explicitly emotional terms. In Kolmēl village, the god ceremony peaks and begins to conclude at about 2:00 in the morning on the eighth or tenth day. Villagers have spent several nights performing arduous rituals and dancing for the gods, abstaining from sex, intoxicants, and flavorful spices. The men have slept outdoors in nearly freezing temperatures. The conclusion begins when a few men start to remove flat metal offerings (including coins) from the temple entrances. While this is happening, the double reed players render a piece called the *paṭm ērikd koḷ*, the “coin removing tune.” Unique in the Kota repertoire, this piece combines what are in the Kota system normally three discrete genres with discrete emotional undertones, those of the god tunes, the women’s dances, and the mourning tunes. This bricolage, as Kotas have pointed out to me, combines collectively represented feelings of happiness and dolefulness in a single musical ritual, articulating both the affection they express towards their gods and the collective sadness they say they experience because they will be separated from their gods until the following year. Although all participants know that the ceremony is about to conclude, the languishing melody and deliberate steps of the women’s dance strongly effect this change of mood.

Another change takes place after the performance of this piece: the sense of seriousness and awe has come to an end; the following days are filled with dancing, playing and singing. Surrounding communities are for the first time invited to partake in the festivities and some of them dance to Kota music.

## Play

In Kota divine contexts, play is not articulated in the Bacchanalian revelry of Holī (a north Indian holiday), but some of its spirit prevails. Competitive ritual games are one kind of play associated with the god ceremony: boys race back and forth from one end of the temple area to the other using as endpoints ritually and socially important sets of stone markers. A

**Figure 5.** The building sense of ritual intensity leading up to the “peak” of the ceremony (indicated by an asterisk) is labeled “austere bliss,” although this label only captures a single aspect of a more abstract devotional emotionality. As the austerity ebbs, a contrasting, lighthearted spirit begins to take shape and is sustained until the ceremony is entirely concluded. Briefly on Wednesday night, sadness tinges the proceedings as participants bid farewell to their gods for another year. This sentiment fades as Kotas become engaged in activities of a playful nature.



playful quality can also be discerned in a sort of looseness in the performance of dance (usually among young men), and occasionally in the dynamic interplay between the musicians (male) and dancers (especially female). Play is also embedded in the texts of songs. More generally, performance of music and dance as forms of recreation are themselves forms of social enjoyment. Kota ritual play, which tends to flourish in places and times associated with divine presence, transform Kota experiences of the divine in these times and places into something uniquely ludic. Or looking at the phenomenon from the other side, intensive play in a place “saturates” it, to borrow Jayachandran’s term, with an energy somehow coextensive with if not also constitutive of divinity. The boundaries of the “play” concept as outlined here are not rigid, and the category itself as presented here is my own, but some notion of play is part of Kota cognitive culture as well.<sup>34</sup>

Here I would like to mention an essential part of divine ceremonies, and perhaps the most important of all women’s repertoire: a confusing and mischievous song poking fun at particular Kota personality types, especially those who are lazy, avaricious, and hypocritical. The first few lines are provided below:

**“Naṛajāynē,” as sung by Pa. Mathi**

*talān nīrē tirkāvōnē naṛajāynē naṛajāynē*  
*talpepe tirkāvōnē naṛajāynē naṛajāynē*  
*aynēdērē orāvōnē naṛajāynē naṛajāynē*  
*avedērē orāvōnē naṛajāynē*

The one who doesn’t clear the head channel,<sup>35</sup> naṛajāynē<sup>36</sup> is the one who doesn’t reserve curds [for the next day’s yoghurt]<sup>37</sup>

The one who does not follow his father’s god,  
 is the one who does not follow his mother’s god . . . (recorded 11 February, 1991, with some minor editing).

The text to this song is fragmented and confusing—even to Kota participants themselves. Its lines poke fun at villagers, accusing them of laziness: the mother of a female named Niji lounges about, neglecting to fetch water for the household; a man ignores his responsibility to clean the channel or prepare curds. Another line describes selfishness: the boy who says “give me” and “I want”; the man who grabs the choicest parts of the food. Some lines state the opposite of what is the case: men wearing saris and women wearing men’s shawls (*varārs*); the cremation area being large rather than small. In general, the text of the song is held together by the theme of reversal.

Taken out of context, the song “*Naṛajāynē*” might be viewed as a humorous song and nothing more. But since this is considered a god song without explicitly propitiating god, we may be led to ask what makes this a god song. One answer, perhaps trivial, is that it is performed by women in god-song contexts and is stylistically suited to be so performed: the musical phrases are short (see Figure 6), therefore easily repeated and easily matched to the dance.

There is more: not only is “*Naṛajāynē*” a god song, it is also one of the handful of Kota language god songs Kotas consider to be old and traditional (*māmūl*); and within this handful, it is the song mentioned in the texts of other songs as metonymic for god songs in general.

Duryodana explained that people become very sad when the musicians begin performing the coin removing tune because the end of the god ceremony is drawing near (indicated by an asterisk in Figure 5). It is to counteract this sadness, he suggested, that women sing “*Naṛajāynē*.” At this moment of ritual transformation—a moment also of emotional multivalence or ambiguity—the “saturation” of time and place with divinity has reached a climax and must be reversed. The use of the coin removing tune and the intensification of play before (racing) and after (song of reversal) this climactic moment supports a contour of emotional intensity that allows us to speak of a “peak” in categorical terms.<sup>38</sup>

Certainly the emotional engagement of individual actors with this event is more complex, and indeed one might envision competing contours of intensity for playfulness, sorrow, blissfulness, dull exhaustion, and a host of other affectively-related states over time, particularly at this later stage of the ceremony. The god ceremony (*devr*) as a whole is characterized by an ideology of psychic unity. This would, theoretically, flatten this texture to a single trajectory when all the villagers achieve their highest moments of communion with *ayñōr* (I think the term communion is theologically appropriate here). That this emotional texture is complexified at the moment when such communion begins to deteriorate (as it must) seems not only possible but necessary.

When a person dies, however, the formally constituted unity associated with divinity and with the moral side of everyday life is challenged; the village is rendered unfit for worship. What does music contribute to the emotional contour of funerals?

## VI. Performance and Texture in Mortuary Ceremonies


In my estimation, about five people die in each Kota village every year. In such intimate surroundings, children become accustomed to viewing corpses virtually from the moment they are old enough to use their eyes. This process of socialization to death is also musical, for Kota experiences of death are mediated through sound. The dying person is believed not only

## Fig 6: Kota God Song (devr pāt): "Naṛajāynē"

Based on rendition of Pa. Mathi, details from dance and variants supplied from additional audio and video recordings 1990-92.

**♩=126**


Refrain part A  
(Group response)



na ṛa jā . ynē

L

Refrain part B  
(leader and leader's group)



na ṛa jā . ynē

R

### Simplified form (a free variation)



### Other Variations and Inserts



The refrain is sung at a convenient pitch; older women sometimes sing the refrain a fourth below the others. (see Wolf collection V11, at approx. 26:00)



Occasional exclamation (pitch varies). Sometimes signals change to new song


la la la la la hū!

### Verse Form

Leader/leader's group:  
First half of verse line.


Group response  
(refrain part A)

Leader/leader's group:  
Second half of verse line.




ta lan nī rē

R



na ṛa jā . ynē

L




tir kā vō nē

R



**"Naṛajāynē" continued: Between verses**

Group response (Refrain part A)	Leader's group (Refrain part B)	Group response (Refrain part A)
*	*	*
		
na ṛa jā . ynē	na ṛa jā . ynē	na ṛa jā . ynē
L	R	L

**Key**

\* = Hand clap (usually right over left, approximately 90 degree angle)

L = Left foot placed behind and to the right of the right foot, left toe pointing toward right heel, approx. 90 degree angle; body upright although not rigidly erect; angle of foot in relation to tangent of circle remains constant

R = Right foot advanced to the right, in direction of movement around circle. Right and left feet in approx. 90 degree angle with one another. Heels about one foot-length apart. Body bent at waist at moment of clap and step. Angle of foot remains constant in relation to tangent of dance circle.

to be beckoned musically by the spirits of the dead, but also to play musical instruments on the journey—men the bamboo trumpet, the bugir, and women the bamboo jews harp, the pījl (Figure 7), both of which were usually cremated with the corpse in the days when Kotas commonly used these instruments (this incidentally explains the scarcity of old specimens of these instruments today).

Sound also communicates the event of a death in a village, a drum beat followed by the paired blowing of brass horns and a sequence of particular funeral melodies. Villagers can often surmise who has died because they know who has been ill, as did I when I heard the cascade of horns at 4:00 a.m. announcing Va. Kamatn's death.

I had learned that Va. Kamatn was diagnosed with cancer in 1991, and by the time I had settled in the village he was already bedridden. I had wished to carry on an interview I had started in which he had explicated

**Figure 7.** *Pijl*



the subtleties of Kota rituals and their transformations over the course of his lifetime. I was hesitant to disturb him. His family, though, expressed interest in a videotaped record of his exegesis; so, as he became progressively weaker, his relatives and I documented what he had left to offer.

Puccan reported to me that in his period of declining health, Kamatn implored him to play fragrantly at his funeral, “*gaml gaml koḷ etkōṛo*.” The reduplicative term “*gaml gaml*” is a synesthetic onomatopoeia for the appetizing smell of food. Why did Kamatn want Puccan to play fragrantly? The simple answer is that music helps mourners savor their sadness, and this eases the transition of the soul from the worldly to the other realm. But the semantics of aesthetic terminology in the Kota language reveal additional details.

### **Aesthetic terms: A more detailed look**

Kota concepts of musical aesthetics are well within the range found in many parts of the sub-continent. As Kamatn suggested with his dying request, musical quality can be apprehended through olfactory metaphors. Other linguistic contexts illustrate additional Kota musical values. Rajan, an articulate, bearded gentleman living in the south-western village of Mēnār,

used the Tamil word *cuvai*, or taste, lamenting the decline of most present-day musicianship while extolling the performances of Puccan and Duryodana's father Raman, which could still induce people to cry at funerals. This notion of tasteful performance is more than a matter of mere aesthetic preference, for Rajan felt that the affective power of Kota funeral music is one of the distinctively tribal features of his culture. By this, I think he meant that by virtue of belonging to what he believed to be an ancient cultural group, the Kotas possess a certain puissance that emerges in musical performance, as well as in other cultural domains.

Duryodana took this opportunity to ask Rajan if there were a Kota word for the concept of aesthetic appreciation. Thinking it to be Kota, Rajan offered another Tamil term, *kulippu*, saying that to experience something aesthetically is to have *kulippu* in the heart, a sort of spiritual cleansing. Again, superlative music in his view has a primordial quality, a down-to-earth naturalness that is intimately linked to the ways in which Kotas view themselves as a people.

Kotas understand funerals to be emotionally complex affairs both at the personal and the classificatory level and they understand music to be an important constituent in the creation of emotional possibility. Still, there is a baseline quality of sadness associated with funerals and it is from this baseline that it is useful to proceed. When a musician performs evocatively at a funeral, music transcends its role as a mere accompaniment and becomes active, the pitiful beauty of the melody helping mourners to externalize their grief—like an emotive, both announcing grief (*dukkm*) as a collective emotion and serving to stimulate further the individual experience of such emotion. Even if grief is eventually to be transcended in the mortuary complex, as Desjarlais noted, it “first needs to be evoked” (1991:412).

In 1998, Jayachandran discoursed expansively on music's intrinsic power to move. “Even a stable man,” he said, “must cry,” “not even Napoleon” could withstand the dolorous swaying power of Kota funeral music. As the octogenarian Pa. Mathi rhetorically phrased it, “What's one to do if a melody of sadness doesn't come to the stomach? What's one to do if a sad tune doesn't come to the heart?”<sup>39</sup>

It was noted earlier that Kota funeral tunes and god tunes are classified in opposition to one another according to their contexts, but that Kotas understand the differences to be not “nominal” but “real,” rooted naturally and essentially in the sound of the music itself—so centered in sound that our French hero would be subject to its affective sway. The naturalization of musical differences underscores the problematic relationship between the categories of death and divinity in Kota culture. In some ways the categories are absolute opposites, in other ways they blur into one

another at the edges. Although it is not surprising that Kotas gloss the entire funeral context as one characterized emotionally by dukm, sadness, the sequence of events in funerals, and the musical elements of these events, outline an emotional spectrum that extends beyond this gloss, one that in simplest terms transforms sadness to happiness.

To encapsulate how music does this, we may examine a single ritual in which musical pieces serve as signs of both grief and mirth. In this way one can envision how the musical-ritual structure cuts a path through the ambiguity of mourning, creating a time and a place for the experience of each emotional mode.

As the dry funeral commences, a ritual reestablishes in the village the presence of the spirits of the people who have died since the last time the dry funeral was performed. The deaths memorialized sometimes number twenty, thirty, or more. In part through music, the souls of the dead are substantiated in the form of millet (*vatm*), a grain that plays an important role in most Kota ceremonies (see Wolf 1997b). Kotas pour millet on the ground in front of the house of each person whose death is being commemorated. While other ritualists pour the millet, musicians perform one of the most doleful tunes of the entire Kota repertoire. This lachrymose melody, combined with other aspects of the ritual, stimulates copious weeping among female mourners. All Kotas present pay their respects to the deceased by touching a bit of this necromorphic millet to their foreheads. Completing this ritual at one house is a form of closure. Representing and iterating this closure, the musicians accompany the procession from one house to the next with a piece regarded as joyous, ordinarily used to accompany dancing. At each house, the musicians continue to conduct this affective movement from sadness to happiness, adumbrating repeatedly and in microcosmic form (i.e. for each person who has died) the emotional progression of the entire funeral complex, from heart-rending mourning to joyous celebration.

The dense contrast between emotional modes of mournfulness and celebration forms a base for the emotional texture of this first ritual. That is, the alternating affective definitions of these genres give shape to, but do not entirely define individual experience. Individual responses might depend, for example, upon relationships of family and friends to the deceased (cf. Kracke 1988), moods, political tensions in the village (cf. Venbrux 1993), degrees of commitment to traditional values and understanding of musical and ritual signs.

### **Affect, genre, music and mourning**

It is now possible to disentangle some of the musical components of mourning, both in ritual and everyday life. Earlier I described the five dis-

tinct musical genres that Kotas identify by name and use during funerals (or, in the case of *āt̥l̥s*, sing outside of the funeral but refer to the dead):

- 1) *dukt koł*, the saddest type of instrumental music
- 2) *kēṛ koł*, an instrumental genre whose sadness is somewhat attenuated
- 3) *āt̥l̥*, a type of commemorative song sung outside the funeral context, but whose melodies may be performed as *kēṛ kołs*
- 4) *varldāv koł*, an intermediary genre, like that of *kēṛ koł* (some of these *kołs* are seen to be appropriate for worship, and not mourning tunes at all)
- 5) *āt̥ koł*, funerary dancing and its associated melodies.

### *Dukt koł*

Kotas use a special term for their most melancholy type of funeral music, *dukt koł*, meaning literally, “sad instrumental tune.” Individual pieces in the “sad tune” repertoire are characterized by different degrees of context specificity: some are not bound to any particular time or place during the funeral; others add subtle meaning to rituals they accompany; and still others are ritual performances unto themselves. Some are performed at

**Figure 8. Women wail over corpse as it lies in state in front of house. Before this photo was taken, a special melody accompanied the removal of the corpse from the house. Various melodies are performed while the corpse lies in state. Afterward, another special melody will accompany transportation of the corpse from the domestic area to the cremation ground. The melodies and the successive activities with respect to the corpse create affectively differentiated moments in the funeral process.**



**Figure 9. Jewelry removal is an emotionally powerful ritual of mourning throughout much of south India. Kotas perform it once during the green funeral, accompanied by a special melody, and once during the dry funeral. This photograph depicts Duryodana's paternal aunt observing it for her late husband during a dry funeral in Kurgōj village, 1997.**



poignant moments: the “corpse taking out” tune is performed when the corpse is first brought out of the house; any number of tunes might be performed when the corpse rests in front of the house and friends and family gather around wailing (see Figure 8); a special tune is performed when the widow is denuded of jewelry (see Figure 9), other tunes may be played in addition to this; and the “fire lighting tune” is rendered at the moment the funeral pyre is set ablaze.<sup>40</sup>

Specific melodies are used to accompany these activities and are so named, carrying with them the potential to awaken memories of previous occasions. The character of each unique ritual moment is subtly imprinted upon these special tunes, and so the qualitative character of an individual’s emotional response is likely to vary with the ritual flow.<sup>41</sup> These examples alert us that there is affective differentiation within a particular genre, the *dukt koḷs*. Now we proceed to consider inter-genre differences.

### *Kēr koḷ*

In the Kota classification system, *kēr koḷs* are slightly less doleful than *dukt koḷs*. This may be a function of one of the former contexts for these melodies: a ritual in which virile young men competed to capture and subdue a sacrificial buffalo. Figure 10 illustrates the same ritual as it now continues to be practiced by another tribe, the Todas. Since Kotas no longer

**Figure 10. Todas struggling with a sacrificial buffalo in a 1991 funeral.**



perform music for Toda funerals, the Toda ritual is accompanied musically by a local Tamil clarinet and drum band.<sup>42</sup> The Kotas continue to perform the melody and dance associated with buffalo sacrifice, but do not perform the wrestling (Figure 11).

The lighter emotional tenor associated with this agonistic ritual and its music is characteristic of a loose emotional category that, as several Kotas have explained to me, applies not only to music, but to an element of Kota mourning ceremonies generally. In this intermediate emotional space, funeral participants fondly reminisce about the deceased, and, with a sense of duty, optimism, and energy go about the business of dispatching their many incumbent duties. Music and dance commonly occupy this interstice between grief and mirth, an interesting juncture of emotional ambiguity in rituals of mourning in many cultures.

### *Āṭṭ*

Outside the funeral context, Kotas sing songs belonging to genre number three, *āṭṭ*, which accompany paramusical storytelling traditions about people, funerals, or spirits of the dead.<sup>43</sup> The melodies of these songs are

**Figure 11. Kotas no longer publicly wrestle with sacrificial buffaloes for their funerals. But they continue to perform the buffalo sacrifice melody and dance associated with this ritual, as in this illustration at a dry funeral in Kurgōj village, Nov. 1997.**





also rendered instrumentally during funerals. Instrumental renditions of these āṭṭs belong in the slightly less mournful kēṛ koḷ genre, not the poignant dukt koḷ genre. When Kotas hear such an instrumental tune, they have the opportunity to recall the specific subject of the original song's narrative. As these melodies unfold, tone by tone, they present a sequence of simple indices corresponding to the words of the associated song; there is a durational quality to the signification. The semiotics of the dukt koḷ melodies accompanying rituals are slightly different: each tune acts as a single undifferentiated index of a ritual moment, such as corpse-removal from the house or pyre-lighting.<sup>44</sup>

### *Varldāv koḷ*

Varldāv koḷs are similar in spirit to the kēṛ koḷs. Musicians perform them during the dry funeral in a special place called the "dry funeral ground" (varldāv nār). Kotas hold conflicting views on whether or not varldāv koḷs are also dukt koḷs—that is, whether they are primarily grief-inducing funeral melodies. Some believe they are "god tunes" because by the time the concluding segments of the dry funeral are completed, the debilitating effects of death have effectively been eradicated and a degree of divinity is said to permeate the dry funeral ground. Divine possession may even occur.

It is not surprising that in the dry funeral I witnessed in Kurgōj village (1997) the tune used to instigate possession was indeed classified as a god tune by the performers of this ritual, despite its spatial and temporal association with mortuary ceremonies. In general, however, there are those who think of all varldāv koḷs as kinds of funeral tunes because they fall within ceremonies that belong to the category of death, just as god songs may be considered as such not by textual but by contextual definition. Since the musical classification system is entirely embodied in ritual, it provides a significant point of reference for the ways in which people understand their music.

### *Āṭ koḷ*

As Metcalf and Huntington have noted in their thoughtful comparative study *Celebrations of Death*, dance is frequently "a vehicle for the expression of a considerable range of emotions" (1991:56). In the Kota context, dancing generally connotes joyous celebration and respect for an important personage or deity. In the dry funeral, Kotas consistently offer the opinion that dancing iterates the return of the village to an appropriate condition for the celebration of the major ceremonies of worship; it is celebratory, representing the victory of life over death, and betokening honor and respect for the souls of the dead.

The mood of dancers during the dry funeral, and especially at the end of it, is generally blithe (Figure 12). This is why the alternation of a dance tune with a *dukt kol* at the beginning of the dry funeral serves as such an effective contrast.

Unlike the way they regard dry funeral dancing, Kotas vary in their interpretations of dance at the green funeral, the initial cremation of the corpse shortly after death. I held something of a panel discussion of this topic in 1997 when I returned to Kolmēl for follow up research. Duryodana, Duryodana's uncle Lakshmanan, the incumbent headman Krishnan, and the late Va. Kamatn's nephew Balan were all present in the small shed I was using as my office and sleeping quarters. I encouraged each one of them to speak about what he considered to be the significance of funerary dancing.

Balan was among those who felt funeral dancing is "happy," representing a convivial adieu (in a literal soteriological sense), and recalling for the last time the way the deceased lived, danced, and participated in the community. For some it was a "god's dance," contributing to a ritual complex which "entrusts" (*opc-*) the deceased to god. Lakshmanan represented the view that dancers do not experience merriment, but rather a grave sense of respect for the deceased. Others located the dances closer to the "grief" end of an affective continuum. These variable responses illustrate that the

**Figure 12. Kota women dancing at dry funeral in the domestic dancing area.**



complexity of mortuary sentiments is embedded not only in the genres themselves, but in the process of understanding these genres in particular places and times.

I was particularly curious about the meaning of funerary dancing because, despite my consultants' insistence of its ubiquity, it is sometimes absent. The village of Porgār, which gave up practicing the dry funeral in 1947 at the time of Indian independence, also discontinued the practice of funerary dancing (this was formerly the community of Kotagiri; see nineteenth-century photo of temple in Figure 3). Many of the effervescent, celebratory aspects of the funeral, which were contained especially in the dry funeral, were no longer felt to be appropriate; dancing was probably removed from the green funeral for similar reasons.

Keeping in mind this history of the community and Va. Kamatn's role in reforming Kolmēl village, I asked my group of panelists "why didn't anyone dance at Va. Kamatn's funeral?" I thought perhaps that dancing was omitted at the request of the deceased. The answer I received surprised me, but not too much. "They did dance . . . oh, they must have forgotten . . . it is absolutely necessary that one dance . . . yes in every village." Ritual elements are sometimes mistakenly left out. Given the indeterminacies of such a fieldwork setting (see Wolf 1997a), however, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the absence of dancing at Kamatn's funeral was connected with his reformist ideals. Indeed, I know that he arranged for a modified Hindu mortuary ritual to be performed in place of the dry funeral (Wolf 2000b).

It is in these points of ambiguity that change in practice or change in interpretation take place; music and dance are not the only elements at stake, but they are elements of a sufficiently abstract sort that they carry with them significant sentimental resonances.

## **VII. Discussion: Emotives and Emotional Texture**

How might this analysis of ritual and musical affect engage with one of the lively debates on the nature of emotions in culture? The anthropologist William Reddy, concerning himself mainly with emotion terms, has recently introduced the concept of "emotives;" in his view, emotional utterances or acts, i.e. emotives, are unique in their "capacity to alter what they 'refer' to or what they 'represent'." Applying his concept to emotional terms for mourning, to state "I feel sad" would have the potential to subtly alter the utterer's subjective state, perhaps pushing the mourner over the boundary separating composure and tearful breakdown. Reddy uses this two-way property of emotives, their capacity both to refer to and affect their emotional object, to criticize the arguments of strict constructionists, who argue that emotions are entirely constructed through discourse, rather than

show how such discourse may be used to affect and change one's emotional experiences.<sup>45</sup> As a turn toward conclusion, I shall point out a few possible trajectories of convergence between music and "emotives."

Although music cannot denote emotion categories in quite the same way language can, the explicit statement of the individual "I am sad," resonates in some ways with the implicit statement of the Kota community, "we are in mourning," when musicians begin to perform dukt kols at a Kota funeral. I have suggested that Kotas express ambivalence if not disagreement as to how some rituals, including musical rituals, are to be emotionally interpreted; the emotional concatenation of funerals for instance sweeps within its orbit a grave sense of loss, a remembrance of better days, and a sort of melancholy joy. According to Reddy, in such situations of ambivalence, "cultural or conventional action patterns often come into play both in producing such situations and in helping actors navigate them. It is especially because community conventions recommend the use of emotives to manage intense ambivalence that communities may be said to have emotional styles or tones" (1997:332-33)

Like verbal emotives, music and dance in Kota ritual settings provide means for actors to navigate emotionally through the complexity of a ceremony, without, however, fixing the character of these emotions, or naming them linguistically, exactly at any one point or for any one actor. The conventions for feeling are laid out very clearly, at the gross level, in the Kota ritual classification system: god ceremonies are blissful, funerals are mournful. This aspect of the classification system tells us very little, however: something must help transform actors' experiences of the everyday as they insert themselves into a new ritual frame, and as that ritual unfolds sequentially, with texture and contour. For Kotas, music helps navigate those experiences.<sup>46</sup>

The musical genres I have discussed in part VI provide signposts for Kotas to engage emotionally with the various stages of mourning. At an intellectual level, all Kotas know that particular kinds of music are associated with particular occasions. More detailed musical knowledge, such as recognition of or ability to perform particular pieces, is unevenly distributed throughout the community. At a visceral level, Kotas respond to the unfolding of musical events in the course of a ceremony; these musical events have changing emotional overtones. I have developed the idea of "emotional texture" to describe the pattern of changing emotional configurations Kotas attribute to their rituals.

As a final illustration of how music constitutes this emotional texture, it will be useful to consider a particularly conscious use of musical semiotics: a musical practice is manipulated in order to conform to changing understandings of ritual emotion.

The end of the dry funeral returns the community to a state of auspiciousness, happiness, and new capacity for worship in the village. The reader will remember that Kotas proffer differing interpretations as to whether the dry funeral tunes are mourning tunes or god tunes. In the village of Kurgōj, a sad tune once used to send the spirits of the dead off to the land of the dead has been removed from the context it once occupied—late at night on the last night of the dry funeral. As I was collecting a ritual exegesis from one of the principal kol players I asked him if he was going to play that melody during the ceremony. The musician explained that Kurgōj musicians abandoned this context for the tune in his father's time, saying that the condition of sadness already had passed in the final stages of the ceremony. Since the piece in question was considered to be extremely heart-rending, it was removed because the community no longer wanted to reintroduce an element of dolefulness at this stage. The piece has not been entirely eliminated from the repertoire—I recorded it during a green funeral—but simply moved from one ritual place to another. That is to say, the Kotas of this particular village have used music to reconfigure the emotional texture of their dry funeral.

#### **Afterward: Reflections on the “ethno” of “ethnomusicology”**

In the introduction I pointed out the difficulty of isolating for discussion “an indigenous way of thinking or representation, something fundamental about a cultural system,” which would enhance our understanding of how music is related to the culture in which it is embedded. Certainly one of the problems in finding such a formulation arises from the problem of cultural “wholeness”—an enduring problem in anthropology and one that has been thrown into stark relief in the context of post-modernism.<sup>47</sup>

The issue of representing the “indigenous” thus is and will remain a problem, so long as one wishes to salvage some notion of culture (as I do). I have attempted in this paper to catch something on the move, something that partakes of something deeply “Kota”—if affective attachment could be considered such a measure—and yet which is mutable in details; something which may be described in terms of logical patterns (unity and difference) and yet which remains in dynamic flux; something that is embedded in systems of classification and yet gains meaning through the negotiation over placement in that system. I am not simply writing about long term, historical change, but the kinds of dynamism that take place every time a ritual is performed: musical choices over what piece to play, affective variety in the meanings of ritual actions as they unfold in a sequence, and subjective differences among the actors who perform and interpret the rituals (especially during funerals, where each funeral presents a unique configuration

of relationships—kinships, friendships, etc.—between the living and the dead).

Although I am compelled by my ethnographic experience to regard Kota culture as consisting of a single unit, one may argue that some social/political/historical units are more culturally “whole” than others. In this instance, a case can be made for cultural consistency based in part on the small size of the community, a conscious articulation of shared practices and values (and the fact that these can be verified), and the lack of strong internal stratifications or subdivisions (gender and age notwithstanding). In particular the shared notion that divinity is created through actions iterating community bonds itself provides a model for the notion of a Kota cultural whole.

That said, the culture is not static, and neither is “sentiment” a bland, conditioned set of feelings mechanically controlled by a cyclic pattern of repeated ritual structures. Yet this does not mean music, ritual, and emotion freely vary either: there are crucial moments built into the structure of rituals in which ambivalent or multivalent affective modalities come into play (even though, on another level of action, that which is “built” can be “rebuilt”). In these moments, perhaps, by examining what happens in particular instances, as the result of particular circumstances or decisions, one may glimpse, if only temporarily, the crystallization of musical meaning and its cultural place.

## Notes

1. See further discussion of humanistic versus social scientific uses of “genre” in Wolf (1997b:278–82). Rosmarin, critiquing the process by which literary genres are constituted, argues for the “explanatory power of genre” (1985:25). Micznik (1994) suggests musicological uses of Rosmarin’s ideas. Folklore studies of genre focus on text and occasionally material culture (see Harris 1995); they seldom address music.

2. Affect, emotion, feeling, and sentiment are more or less synonymous for the purposes of this discussion; specific usage contexts communicate their range of possible meanings. Assigning technical definitions to common-parlance terms can be problematic. Compare, for instance, Feld’s (1982) “deeply felt sentiments” (not contrasted with feelings or emotions) which can be embodied in sound expressions with Abu-Lughod’s “sentiments,” which, in contrast to “emotion” or “affect,” “signal the literary or conventional nature of . . . responses [to poetic statements]” (1986:34); or Levy, who treats emotion as a subcategory of feeling (1984:218), with Lutz, who criticizes the “emphasis on emotion as physical feeling” (1988:67).

3. “Social masks” often subdue the expression of culturally inappropriate individual emotions. Lindholm argues that emotions in such cases become “tactical resource[s], employed by social actors in their efforts to gain power and respect” (1988:227).

4. In the ritual context of the Sufi *samāʿ*, for instance, “performers [musically] highlight, amplify, and reiterate text units in accordance with individual listeners’ needs of the moment. The state of ecstasy, singled out specifically, requires the multiple repetition of the salient phrase which inspired that state and sustains it” (Qureshi 1990:483). Qureshi outlines the multiple affective potentials for the Urdu poetic form *ghazal*, depending on its performance

(sometimes musical) context; a number of the tables (see pages 484, 489, 492) suggest a one-to-one correspondence between musical apparatus and emotional effects.

5. Crapanzano writes of a similar phenomenon in arguing that utterances such as "I love you," or, "I am angry at you," "bring about through their very utterance a change in the context of that utterance (that is, they are not simply descriptive of it), and this change has to be acknowledged (even if through denial) by all those who participate in the encounter in which the utterance was made" (1989:81). Reddy takes this a step further in suggesting that the utterer is also affected by the utterance. In a similar vein, Mazo notes that the tearful experience of lamentation is "contagious" (1994:208). It is not clear whether special performance procedures which "prove the pain" (209) actually affect the emotional state of the professional lamenter.

6. Sugarman's ethnography of Prespa Albanian singing provides rich examples: "At each point in the [wedding] event, women express and generate very specific affects as they sing," although in this case they are "ones assumed to be shared by all who are present." Still, the bride's and groom's parties experience different sentiments; and a young woman's style of melodic rendition may allow certain of these sentiments to be emphasized at particular times (1997:269; also see Tolbert 1994:185).

7. As K. S. Singh has written, "the portrayal of a tribal as a Noble Savage [by British administrators-turned-ethnographers and anthropologists] . . . led to the build up of a myth that has . . . inspired all [Indian] tribal movements" (1985:1). The Hindi term *ādivāsī* (original inhabitant) and the Tamil, *paḷankuṭi makkaḷ* (people of ancient race or descent), essentially gloss the English term and contain many of the same associations; the official census term is "Scheduled Tribe."

8. I conducted fieldwork among the Kotas from 1990-92, living for a substantial portion of that period in one of their seven villages, Kolmēl (population approximately 250). More recently I returned to south Asia for fieldwork in other regions and intermittently returned to the Nilgiris for further fieldwork, following up on questions arising from my dissertation, and sharing articles I had in the meantime published.

9. The *viṇā* I kept for practice in Kolmēl village sometimes inspired Kota friends and visitors to discuss with me their musical interests and tastes.

10. The name of this instrument is cognate with the Tamil and Malayalam *kuḷal* and derives from a term referring to tube-shaped things generally (DEDR 1818; Deva 1987:103). The Tamil term refers to an ancient flute and the Malayalam to a double-reed instrument still in use.

11. This is not the place to consider in detail the criteria for musical excellence; briefly, he maintained comparatively expansive knowledge of repertoire items in their full form (lesser musicians might only remember half a melody and play that repeatedly) and could render them with elaborate melodic decorations without losing track of the underlying metrical framework. He also maintained knowledge of the extramusical stories and ritual associations of archaic pieces. All these forms of knowledge and ability are valued in Kota musical culture. Puccan is also discussed in Wolf (1997a and b).

12. The Nilgiri tribal system is a famous one in the anthropological literature. The Todas were largely regarded as occupying the top rung of the ritual hierarchy; Badagas were economically dominant.

13. One of Mandelbaum's classic essays "Social trends and personal pressures" (1941), details the events leading up to this series of changes in worship. Puccan and Kamatn were young at the time, and being junior, were not prime instigators. Mandelbaum's primary informant, Sulli, was, however. It is from Sulli's own unpublished diary (Sulli n.d.) that I initially learned of Puccan's and Kamatn's involvement; this was independently confirmed.

14. Cannon (1989) suggests that mortuary observances cross-culturally and across history are characterized by a cyclical oscillation between competitive display/ostentation and restraint that depend on "social tensions and status comparisons among individuals"; these are seen as broadly human rather than culturally specific.

15. Unity in this context was an English word of Jayachandran's own choosing; it did not reflect my suggestion of a topic, nor did it result from his response to my article (1997a), which he had not yet read. In the Kota language the concept of unity is conveyed in a variety of terms and expressions which need not be listed here. Many are based on the root *o-* (one; see DEDR 990 a and especially d, in which this branch of related etyma refer to types of unity) and include *odmanm* (one heart/mind); others have to do with togetherness, being joined (*cer-* DEDR 2814). I adopted an open ended interview style, much like that employed by Freed and Freed in *Ghosts* (1993); as the conversation began to touch upon particular issues about which I had begun to write and think, I asked Jayachandran to elaborate. Here, for instance, I asked him what was the relevance of musical performance to his idea of "unity."

16. Kotas often translate the word *patym* (<Skt. [through Tamil] *pathya*, 'belonging to the way') as "condition," the idea being that one must subject oneself to certain conditions according to cultural, religious or societal rules. God puts a "condition" on humans; Kota men put "conditions" on Kota women, etc. The Tamil term refers more specifically to the dietary restrictions to which a pregnant woman must adhere.

17. "Ceremony" here refers to a complex of subsidiary actions, what I call rituals. Kotas use the Sanskrit-derived term, *cātrm*, to refer to rituals.

18. A plethora of less elaborate ceremonies and rituals also fall under these macro categories; other minor rituals pertaining to life cycle and agriculture are not described in terms of a higher level indigenous rubric. Most of my writing on Kota culture has focused on the ceremonies of god and death and not on these subsidiary rituals. There are two reasons for this: one is that these are the most culturally elaborated ritual complexes, and arguably therefore the most important, and the other is that these ceremonies are the homes for the most significant music of the culture.

19. Many kinds of supernatural beings and cosmic entities exist, some of which cannot easily be described as gods; Kotas, like many Hindus, now speak of the soul of the deceased merging with *brahman*, a vaguely divine essence of the universe (not entirely consistent with any one scriptural use of the term). In south Indian folk Hinduism, those who have died violently are more likely to become malevolent spirits or ferocious goddesses than benign father figures.

20. That is to say, there is in some sense a correspondence between the primary classification scheme in Kota society and emotions, a correspondence originally posited by Durkheim and Mauss (1963 [1903]) and recently revisited by Ten-Houten (1993).

21. Those familiar with Vedic rituals will note the parallel here; I do not wish to argue for a Sanskritic origin to any of these practices, but merely to register here the depth of a south Asian pattern for ritual action.

22. This is functionally similar to the primordial "day of *alast*" in Sufism (Schimmel 1975:24). Herzog notes the broader connection between the origin of music and such an idea of the past (1938).

23. This secondary mortuary ritual, described in detail by David Mandelbaum (1954), conforms in many respects to those described in the classic analyses of Durkheim's student, Robert Hertz (1960).

24. The category of the "powerful disgruntled dead" (Knipe 1989:149) is of subcontinental significance, appearing often in the literature on death and folk Hinduism.

25. Ironically, *māmūl*, "tradition," is derived from Arabic (via Tamil).

26. E. Valentine Daniel found parallel differences between terms of Sanskrit versus Tamil origin (1984) and English versus Tamil origin (1996); stated simply, the Sanskrit and English terms were defined more scientifically than the more contextual Tamil terms. Suggestive as these differences are, I am hesitant to push these correlations too far.

27. Asking such questions directly certainly introduces a note of artificiality to the proceedings. I should mention that this individual is as close as one might imagine possible under these circumstances to being my own family member, someone with whom I have spent countless informal hours and exchanged personal confidences. The context of our everyday



social interactions mitigates, I believe, the methodological awkwardness of asking such questions about "feelings" and language use directly. As noted above, terms for happiness etc. appear in song texts as well, but this constitutes a very different sort of representation of emotion.

28. These latter four terms are also Dravidian in origin.

29. From the Tamil, *tuyaram*.

30. The literal translation, "evil/pollution tune," is not particularly illuminating.

31. Localized similarities exist among some melodies in each category. In at least one case a similarity between melodies signals the analogous presence of a ritual type in both god and funerary ceremonies; this would all suggest that these genres are polythetic categories. Some of the intricacies of these categories are pursued in Wolf (1997b).

32. This is methodologically problematic because it calls for speculation. In some instances, consultants abstractly claimed that they could identify a new melody as one or the other; but there are few contexts in which this could be tested. The small, soft-sounding, single-reed, idioglottal *pulāṅ* can be played in the village for practice; outside of a ritual occasion almost any tune can be played on this instrument; in such a situation, listeners would be in a position to identify a piece by its melody. When I first arrived in the Nilgiris, I played cassette reproductions of music that David Mandelbaum had recording on wax cylinders in the 1930s. Puccan and others present identified some of the pieces as god tunes or funeral tunes "from some other village"; they were able to discern from the melody the ritual character of the tune. Puccan did not know how to play some of the tunes himself, and such tunes were not in his lifetime part of Kolmēl repertoire (he was a young man when Mandelbaum visited, and performed on some of those cylinder recordings). I am concerned here more with the Kota insistence that qualities of "god" and "death" are intrinsic features of the music itself than I am with ascertaining that Kotas have an actual musical basis for drawing absolute distinctions between the genres.

Musicians such as Jayachandran and Duryodana also attempted to describe the difference musically. Although their descriptions fit certain items of repertoire in each category, I was able to point out others that did not. It was at this point in such analytical discussions that musicians as well resorted to terms such as "feeling."

33. This view runs against the familiar argument in which music is seen to conform to the "dynamics of emotion" (Davies 1994:218; see also related discussion of iconicity in Tolbert 1987) without having specific affective content, a view associated with Eduard Hanslick, which might explain why the same music might be used to support two different emotions in different contexts. The debate about the specificity of emotions inspired through music is not confined to the recent history of European art music. Indeed, Ronald Egan's study of music and emotions in Middle Period China cites "Music has no sorrow or joy," a seminal essay of the third-century scholar, Xi Kang,

When guests fill a banquet hall and, after wine is consumed, the qin is played, it makes some people happy with enjoyment, while it makes other people weep with sorrow. It is not that the music conveys grief to some while delivering joy to others. The music is the same but both happiness and sorrow result. Is this not a case of "blowing differently through ten thousand things"? (Egan 1997:16).

Xi Kang's view was that music releases emotions already present in the listener's heart (Egan 1997:25), but this was by no means the only view of music in his time. My Kota consultants viewed the role of music to be more active. This would suggest not only that music meaning is culturally specific, but also that theories of emotion and music are culturally and historically constructed.

34. Other elements of play in Kota culture are discussed in Wolf (1997b:191-93). See also Emeneau's article "Ritual games of the Kotas" (1937-1938).

35. The "head channel" is where the springs meet, feeding the village water channel. A man who fails to clean the head channel is shirking his duty.

36. The term *naṛajāṇṇē* is obscure; though I cannot find the reference, I recall an interpretation of the term as representing the sound of anklets jingling as women dance.

37. The reference to curds here should perhaps not be taken literally. A similar phrase appears in a description of formulaic utterances associated with the god ceremony in Kolmél (Emeneau 1944–46, IV:289), and refers, along with the previous line's reference to *tal nīr*, to cleaning the water channel.

38. The theme of reversal in this song would seem therefore to conform to Needham's idea that "reversing the signs" of the categories (i.e. making a "heavy" moment "light") intensifies the "symbolic classification" (Needham 1979:41)—i.e. in this case, "reversal" creates a stronger articulation of this ritually peak moment.

39. See Ferro-Luzzi on Indian tendencies to locate emotions in both heart and belly (1995:190), and Strathern (1993) on interpreting such somaticizations not merely as metaphorical but as part of ethnotheories of the body. Levy notes the absence of "emotion" as a general category in the Tahitian language; but, there is a belief that "anger, desire, fear, and so on" are located in the "intestines" (1984:221).

40. There are additional context-dependent melodies in the funeral and these are discussed in detail in Wolf (1997b). Also discussed are questions of consistency in performance in a particular village, and how such functionality operates from village to village.

41. This type of musical signification has been considered by several writers, using a variety of interpretive or theoretical strategies. Turino's recent article on the utility of Peircian semiotic theory for music points out the dearth of theoretical work on indexicality (1999:234). These Kota melodies are musical indexes both of the context at hand and of previous contexts, examples of Turino's "semantic snowballing" (235); they are decent signs in their capacity to carry truth value (240–41) about the event of a death, but they are rhematic with respect to the possibility of suggesting other deaths, other people, other places.

42. Sometimes *Irulas* are hired as musicians as well. In terms of Merriam's three part model, one might say that Toda musical culture has remained somewhat stable as regards concept and behavior (that is, of Todas as musical consumers, not performers), but has changed with respect to sound. Of course, one part of the model feeds back into another, because Tamil band music is not regarded to be as powerfully affective as Kota music, and this effects a sort of funerary musical contemplation and physiological response. Nevertheless, a certain idea remains that there must be some kind of music at a funeral, and this idea allows for some degree of substitution of musical object.

43. For some discussion of the affective variability within these songs, and of their registry of the ambivalence over relationships among the gods and the spirits of the dead, see Wolf 2000b.

44. One could argue that even in the case of a song melody, the entire song is called to mind once enough of the melody is revealed to be recognizable. Still, the note by note signification of words or syllables remains a contemplative possibility as a listener hums along in his or her head. Likewise, even without a verbal referent, a listener follows a recognizable ritual melody as it unfolds in time; the difference is simply in the complexity of the object: in one case a string of words with melody, in the other, a melody alone.

45. In a later formulation (Reddy 1999:268), Reddy describes three features of a type of emotive he terms "first-person present-tense emotion claims," of which "I feel sad" would be an example: 1) Descriptive appearance (describes the utterer's inner state), 2) Relational intent (for example, "I feel sad about the way you handled that situation"), and 3) Self-exploring and self-altering effects. The descriptive appearance of Kota music is evident in its indexicality. Kota music also appears to possess the power affectively to stimulate the community producing it. The relational intent of Kota music is less clear, however, in light of the argument that musically conveyed emotions cannot take intentional objects (Davies 1994:192). Although Kota funeral music points up the relationality between the mourner and the deceased, nothing inherently relational exists in the cultural definitions of Kota musical pieces, nor, more obviously, in their form.

46. This conclusion resonates in some ways with Desjarlais's thesis that Yolmo villagers use songs "to learn how . . . one feels, how and when one expresses emotions, and the constraints on (and political force of) such expressions" (1991:389). Songs are "transformative" of sadness to "celebration" (392). Just as the structure of Kota musical genres and their sequence suggest a path from mourning to celebration, so too does the "poetic form" of a Yolmo antiphonal 'song of sadness' "offer an aesthetic model which outlines how such a transformation [alleviating grief] might occur." (414). Though his study makes reference to music, language is still the focus; he suggests that "the relationship between language and experience must be a central focus of study if we are to better understand how cultural discourses on suffering relate to subjective experiences of distress" (390). Although language cannot be entirely removed from the equation, one might like to direct inquiry at other kinds of "glosses" for emotion (Crapanzano 1989), examining the relationship between music and experience, for example, as I have attempted to do here.

47. Abu-Lughod's "Writing against culture" (1991) is one of many articles critiquing the culture concept. One may argue that the critic must him or herself "construct" a unified culture concept in order to critique it; indeed, Abu-Lughod suggests that focusing on the unpredictability of ritual (as in the present article) would serve to destabilize the notion of culture, a notion based on the "language of generalization." In this case, arguing against culture, against the value of wholeness to the people who identify themselves as "Kota," would perpetrate a sort of intellectual violence in the name of anthropological theory.

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