

Ethnomusicology: A Valuable Lens for Viewing Culture

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ABSTRACT: Music is an integral part of culture and human societies, which anthropologists study. What makes music so potent is its ability to contain values, reflect perspectives, and fill niches of societal needs. In this paper, I will discuss how ethnomusicology aids scholars in a deeper understanding of contexts, perspectives, and values in music and the experiences of the people who created it. I will analyze the relationships between music and technique, ritual, and religion in seven case studies. Drawing from examples from “right” singing in Estonia, the choral works of Stravinsky, Ambonwari rituals, ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil, the maqam, syncretism in Southeast Asia, and Tamil Christian religious music, I will show how ethnomusicology uncovers understanding of the cosmology, values, and socio-cultural interactions of a people and their culture.

KEYWORDS: Anthropology; Ethnomusicology; Music; Religion; Southeast Asia; Cosmology.

■ Introduction

Music is a cultural phenomenon vital to all human societies. It has a wide range of applications, able to be at once a mode of self-expression, a method of communication and description, a form of entertainment, an instrument that reinforces social structure, a means of making a living, and a core element of belief systems. By serving these roles, music supports societal needs. It thus becomes an integral part of society and its culture—culture is a person's variable and broad ideas, beliefs, and customs. Many aspects of music, including how it is defined, vary widely by culture—indeed, some societies even lack a term or word for the idea of music. However integral it is, every documented people has some form of music, however simple.¹ This evidences deep interconnections between music, people, and their society.

Anthropology studies people and their societies, cultures, and development. Ethnomusicology, rooted in anthropology and musicology, seeks to relate musical ideas, patterns, and contexts to the cultures, societies, and people behind them. From an anthropological point of view, music can be viewed as a tradition within a culture, and the anthropology of music lies in its interrelations with other aspects of the culture.²

Music is very connected to anthropology and culture, significantly the result of being part of culture itself; indeed, even the very definition of music and the parameters of what qualifies and doesn't qualify as music are social constructs that can be studied anthropologically. Because music is culturally specific, studying music anthropologically allows insight into what each culture's music carries within it: its sociocultural significance and the perspectives and values of the people who engage with it. Using anthropology to examine music and its people can help observe this information in culturally specific presentation styles or forms. Since music is so often important to the people who produce it, studying music through an understanding of culture can reveal a unique aspect of social-cultural change and the status quo.

Many ethnomusicologists have already established this relationship between music and anthropology already. Alan P. Merriam was a prominent ethnomusicologist who sought to turn ethnomusicology's focus, at the time, away from broader culture-isolated musicology and towards regarding music as part of culture, or “music culture.” In his book, *The Anthropology of Music*, Merriam created a list of cultural and social themes around which ethnomusicological work was organized and made, the first of such socio-cultural lists; his study of music was based on applying understandings of culture to understand music.³ Since then, ethnomusicologists such as Trehub,³ Touma,⁴ and Simon⁵ have continued viewing music from a mostly cultural perspective, learning more about music through studying the cultures that produced it. However, ethnomusicologists such as Engelhardt,⁶ Sherinian,⁷ and Telban⁸ have also produced works that increasingly approach the study of culture and people from the lens of music. In this paper, I argue that viewing music anthropologically—specifically, viewing culture from the anthropological analysis of music, a very innate form of human art—to strengthen understanding of culture is valuable to musicians and anthropologists by offering specific socio-cultural insights.

A culture's music and its foundational elements are often intertwined with the values of the culture itself. A certain tonal system, for example, may help constitute habitus for many of the people in a culture that uses it exclusively. As described by Bourdieu,⁹ one's habitus refers to how a person of a specific cultural and social background perceives and understands the world, notices the differences between their culture and others, and intuitively responds to social stimuli. The words used in vocal works, the way they are used, and their meanings are often culturally specific, and the techniques and execution of the music of a culture may reveal its peoples' worldviews and cosmology—cosmology being one's understanding and perspective of the world and the universe, including how it operates.¹⁰

In the following sections, I examine seven studies of music and what they tell us about ethnomusicology's value in understanding cultures and people. I show how ethnomusicology gives us deeper insights by bridging the untranslatability of musical traditions into Western music by understanding them in their own cultural contexts. I analyze case studies on right singing in Estonia,¹¹ the choral works of Stravinsky,¹² Ambonwari rituals,¹³ ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil,¹⁴ the *maqam*,¹⁵ syncretism in Southeast Asia,¹⁶ and Tamil Christian religious music.¹⁷ I discuss how music interacts with other components of the culture in each place. In addition, this discussion is divided into an analysis of how ethnomusicology contributes to understanding cosmology, religion, and lived experiences; values, practices, and influences; and sociocultural interactions and changes. I additionally discuss the relationships between music and religion, genre, and technique. Finally, I conclude by explaining how using the anthropological analysis of music to reveal aspects of culture, in tandem with using analysis of culture to reveal aspects of music, can evidence the value of studying music anthropologically. I show how, in this increasingly statistics-oriented world, deeply personal analyses that view cultural practices, beliefs, and values in their own cultural context and on their own terms remain invaluable

■ Discussion.

I. Ethnomusicology reveals nuances and interrelations between cosmology, religion, and lived experiences:

Ethnomusicological analysis of right singing in Estonia, Stravinsky's choral music, and Ambonwari initiation ritual music are three different perspectives on ethnomusicology's value. They exemplify how ethnomusicology can uncover aspects of a group's cosmology and allow scholars to understand the experiences, beliefs, and values of a people more comprehensively.

In "Right Singing in Estonian Orthodox Christianity: A Study of Music, Theology, and Religious Ideology," Engelhardt¹⁸ shows that ethnomusicology can deepen the understanding of the nuanced interplay between music and religion and help us understand the values and ideals embedded in the cosmology of a people, as well as the reasoning behind a people's cosmology. In his field study, Engelhardt's analysis of right singing in Estonian Orthodoxy clarifies the system of thought behind right singing and how it makes Orthodoxy more valid in the eyes of Orthodox Estonians. Additionally, he elaborates that music can not only aurally express the values of a religion but also act as a ritual in and of itself, performing some of the roles of a religion and even, at times, holding together a religion by making its belief logical to its believers. He explains how the "right" style of singing in Estonia reveals the conditions of Estonian Orthodoxy's continual confrontation with Western culture and how its values of perfection allow for unity with the spiritual. Engelhardt also presents an interplay between musical genre and religion: Orthodox Estonians aim for perfection in the practice of right singing to discipline themselves and make themselves and the world around them incrementally better, acting as a musical religious ritual. Engelhardt finally explains how the right singing style in Estonia reveals the conditions of Estonian Orthodoxy's continual con-

frontation with Western culture, as well as how its values of sonic perfection allow for spiritual perfection and unity.

In Estonia, the religious and, by extension, musico-religious landscape has been turbulent, from the conversion of Baltic peasants to Christianity to the oppression and ban of their unique Orthodox practices under Soviet rule.¹⁹ The continual disputes about church authority further contributed to religious conflict, and the social landscape shifted as a result of the influx of Russian-speaking migrants from the Soviet era. Against this backdrop, Estonian Orthodoxy has renewed, and the concept of right singing has been re-embraced.

Engelhardt argues that this singing is a core element of the Estonian Orthodox faith because it elaborates the faithful's commitment to its particular morality and also establishes Orthodoxy as legitimate in the eyes of its believers. Estonians who subscribe to the Orthodox faith believe that singing is a "conduit of illumination" that "transforms individual and corporeal bodies into Orthodox bodies of Christ," as well as proves that Orthodoxy is the "orthodox" religion in a majority Protestant country.²⁰ This singing is important because it represents an intersection of right belief (orthodoxy) and right practice (orthopraxy), fulfilling a similar role to ritual. The reasoning behind this is that if the singing is right and perfect, then so is the belief, and, by extension, the musical practices of that belief, the singing; this reasoning follows a powerful circular pattern. This is incredibly important: Estonian Orthodoxy should be the "normal" and "orthodox" religion—it's in the name. However, since Estonia is a mostly Protestant country, this orthopraxy is how Orthodox Estonians can support the validity of Estonian Orthodoxy.

Engelhardt's personal experience in Estonia is an example that demonstrates how Estonian Orthodoxy relates sound and singing with religious significance and uses right singing to confront modern Western values. The choir, of which Engelhardt was a member, was introduced to a new litany to be used in a liturgy at which a parish member was to be consecrated as a deacon. Instead of harmonizing litanies based on the Russian *Obikhod*, or "common," which was standard for Russian Orthodoxy, the choir used a more Byzantine litany, sung in Greek and featuring monophony and droning. This revitalization of Estonian Orthodoxy came with a rejection of many principles associated with modernity after the Soviet era, including such ideals as individualism and consumerism. As many Estonian places of worship are greeted with a steady flow of tourists and travelers from the West, they are regularly visited by modern Western ideals that many today consider normal. Estonian Orthodoxy firmly roots itself in its own orthodoxy, views, and values, and thus, the choice of a Byzantine litany, more related to the roots of the chant (and therefore more archaic in its sound), was purposeful in its meaning and right in its sound. Two professional singers in the choir gave their opinions on the chant, remarking that the atmosphere of the mode used and other factors in the composition allowed them to relate it with themes of asceticism and unison. Like all singing from the choir, the performance of the litany was expected to be perfect to relate to the connections between orthodoxy and

orthopraxy, as well as affirm the practically cyclical logic of how right singing creates the right belief which, in turn, creates right singing.

A common theme that recurs throughout this text is how practices such as right singing continually revalidate and confirm, to those of the Estonian Orthodox faith, not only the normalcy and righteousness of their religion but also of their traditional beliefs and values, challenged by the West and by globalization. Orthodox Estonians work to incrementally change themselves and the world by edging closer to perfection through right singing. In other words, musical practice, to them, can be described as a means of religious transformation and ritual, shaping one's disciplines and moral actions. Right singing in Estonian Orthodoxy compellingly illustrates the connections of musical technique, ritual, and religion that support each other and come together to create a unique Estonian righteousness and cosmology.

Moving a little further to the east of Estonia and into Russia, Gillion²¹ discusses Eastern Orthodoxy and its manifestation in the music of late 19th to early 20th-century Russian modernist composer and conductor Igor Stravinsky. In her article, she demonstrates how analysis of music can further reveal the life experiences of the people who created it. Gillion analyzes how Igor Stravinsky's choral music and personal life formed his views on Eastern Orthodoxy and influenced his religious music. This analysis demonstrates how viewing music through the lens of anthropology reveals a process that begins with life experiences that become instilled in values and are ultimately expressed as music and other forms of art; Stravinsky's choral music displays the pathway in which the composer's lived experiences, especially with Eastern Orthodoxy, were cemented into values of asceticism and emotionlessness, which then found their way into his music, and reveals his cosmology within his religious beliefs.

A devout Orthodox Catholic, Stravinsky had strong opinions on the subject of Eastern Orthodox music. He understood the Eastern Orthodox value of asceticism, specifically rules, control, and discipline. He took an objective approach to understanding Eastern Orthodoxy and his religious music employed very little sentimentality. Despite being a modernist composer, his religious works often implemented pre-Classical harmonies and cadences, which made them feel strict and harsh in structure. This accurately reflected the Eastern Orthodox views about worship.

Stravinsky turned to religion at times when he felt troubled or felt he had done wrong as a kind of repentance (for having extramarital affairs, for example), which further gave Orthodoxy, for him, the impression of control and order.²² Stravinsky reasoned that non-sentimental religious music would "appeal directly to the spirit."²³ His *Mass* combines homophony and polyphony, using canon and other devices to create an ordered, mannered atmosphere. A middle movement of the mass, Credo, is almost entirely unornamented homophony in piano, contributing to the unemotional nature of the composition. Stravinsky's writing in his autobiography, *Chronique de ma vie*, expressed how he felt about music: that it cannot express anything, despite being evocative.²⁴ He elaborated that music can

stir up emotions that are already extant in people, though it does not contain emotion. His Orthodox views undoubtedly influence this feeling and align with his religious works, which are meant to be evocative rather than expressive.

In contrast to discussing a cosmology characteristic of many Eastern Orthodox Russians, Gillion focuses on a single individual, Stravinsky, and his cosmology and influences and how they are revealed through his treatment of his religious works. Orthodoxy impacted Stravinsky throughout his life, and his dedication to a proper or "right" outlook on the sound of religious music, devoid of sentimentalism and sensation, parallels the commitment of Orthodox Estonians in their choosing and practicing right singing and right sounds. Although her sample size is one person, Gillion's exploration of Stravinsky and his motives shows clearly that life experiences can influence values that then find their way into music. More empirical research with a larger sample size would better display how religion, life experiences, and values impact music on a larger scale. However, reaching the nuance and detail that Gillion's study currently achieves would be difficult. This is a clear example of how an anthropological study of music, in tandem with other lenses of study, enables us to work backward from music to understand the lives and cultures of the people who make it. Through analyzing various aspects of culture, such as music with musicology, we gain deeper insight into their beliefs, values, and experiences, such as how, with context, analysis of Stravinsky's choral works provided a more thorough understanding of his cosmology.

In Papua New Guinea, the music of the Ambonwari people's initiation rituals reveal their overarching cosmology, and analysis of it shows how techniques, such as figurative language, make major contributions to spiritual beliefs and ritual practices. Just as for the Orthodox Estonians, aspects of music are central to maintaining and validating their spiritual belief. Telban²⁵ analyzes the importance of figurative language in the ritual music of the Ambonwari and how the Ambonwari people's cosmology gives it its power. Telban's exploration of figurative language in Ambonwari initiation rituals offers insight into their cosmology and displays ethnomusicology's power in understanding nuances in culture and beliefs.

In these Ambonwari initiation rituals, figurative language is viewed as literally possessing physically transformative power and thus able to initiate a novice into a grown man.²⁶ Ambonwari rituals involve song-dances, particularly during the initiation of boys into manhood, such as *manbon siria*, *sung-gut siria*, and *wanyakir mariawk* ("singing and dancing of the crocodile", "singing and dancing of the flute", and "talk of the knife"). These songs heavily employ figurative language, or what the Ambonwari refer to as "climbing talk," that significantly influences how the Ambonwari people view the songs' transformative power. The Ambonwari understand climbing talk, or *wapaysur mariawk*, as physically traveling all throughout a person. The goal of these rituals and employing figurative language such as metaphor is to break the barriers between two things or people. Thus, these two qualities of figurative language give Ambonwari songs a physically transformative power; a metaphor that likens the novices to grown men, for

example, would be viewed as being able to transform novices into grown men physically. Telban's analysis of the importance of figurative language to the Ambonwari not only reveals a fundamentally different belief system that puts the effects of words on a physical level, but also reveals the role that music and ritual play in maintaining gender roles: much of the culture revolves around special objects that are hidden in the men's house from women and children, and the initiation ritual reveals these objects to young men.

Suggut siria is performed in the men's house by eight flute players.²⁷ Each flute has its own name and represents one of the eight clans of the Ambonwari. The song includes many instances of figurative language: One striking example is stanza five, where a container metaphor compares water and fish in a fish trap to the men's house and the boys in it for their initiation. The description of rising waters due to heavy rain is a metaphorical reference to the growth of the boys into men. *Wanyakir mariawak* is sung in between repetitions of *suggut siria* and includes nine talks, one from each clan and a ninth that links them all together. Both songs tell stories about actual events recorded in Ambonwari history, both recent and from the distant past. These songs have almost faded out of use due to the arrival of Christianity, and because the Ambonwari people are reluctant to use them. To them, these songs, including the climbing talk they contain, are linked to the spirits and world of their past. A series of relatively recent misfortunes led many to abandon these ritual practices. They now have new Catholic songs with climbing talk that they repeat in order to make this new world tangible to them.

Analyzing the powerful use of figurative language in these initiation song-dances can reveal the cultural and social values that they are meant to sustain. This is especially true considering the unique view on figurative language that the Ambonwari people have. Like Orthodox Estonians, the Ambonwari believe that through the correct execution and use of music that is central to their belief, physical and spiritual change can occur. When understood this way, the initiation of boys into men for the Ambonwari is reminiscent of the divine connection and revalidation of Orthodox orthodoxy in right singing for Orthodox Estonians. Analyzing this ritual music has revealed how figurative language and its relationship with the physical and spiritual world lie at the heart of Ambonwari culture. The key factor in creating the effects of the ritual music lies in the compositional technique used: the climbing talk. It is the figurative language that gives the Ambonwari rituals their power. It allows these rituals to connect to something beyond the corporeal world, causing the change they are meant to induce and sustaining the relationships they are intended to maintain. It is the song-dance "genre," or style of musical structure, that allows for the Ambonwari to combine both figurative language and right practice with ritual.

II. Understanding differences and similarities in values and practices through ethnomusicology:

In differing ways, the case studies of ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil and the *maqam* reveal values—values of social cohesion and unity in ritual wailing and values of gatherings and sociability in the *maqam*. These case studies also show

how geopolitical developments affect the trajectory of musical traditions—the effects of imperialism on ritual wailing and the effects of the Ottoman Empire's breakdown on the *maqam*.

Shifting hemispheres to South America, Urban's²⁸ discussion of Amerindian societies in Brazil and ritual wailing in three groups in Amerindian Brazil demonstrates that understanding practices through ethnomusicology can offer insight into a people's values and the differences between cultural practices. He reveals a key similarity: each group finds solace in social cohesion and unity, found in their polyphonic and/or group wailing, in times of grieving. Thus, his study displays how ethnomusicology can reveal key behaviors or values of a group through connections between ritual and music. First, he notes the difference between ritual wailing and non-ritual wailing (or crying). While both relate to sorrow and contain similar characteristic sound features, non-ritual wailing is a spontaneous expression of sorrow. In contrast, ritual wailing is a custom that maintains social order and signals a desire for social acceptance. The expression of want for social unity and cohesion is as integral to ritual wailing as the expression of sorrow.²⁹ Urban discusses three well-documented examples of cultures with ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil: the Shokleng of Southern Brazil, the Shavante of Central Brazil, and the Bororo of West Central Brazil. Ritual wailing is culturally specific in its form and function for each culture. However, the three examples have much in common. For example, Urban describes how a musical line exists in all three, with characteristic intonation, contour, and rhythmic structure. Each also utilizes various forms of crying, and, additionally, omits the presence of an addressee, instead rendering the wailing as a "monologic device" meant to be overheard by the public.³⁰ This wailing is used to express feelings of sorrow, separation, or longing and is often prompted by death or reminders of a death (such as a photograph of a deceased person).

Lines—starting with an inhale and ending with an exhale—vary in length between cultures. The Shavante have the shortest average line length of 6.6 seconds whereas the Bororo have the most extended average line length of 15.9.³¹ In the data sample that Urban collected, the standard deviation in line length is approximately 1.175 seconds for the Bororo and 1.706 seconds for the Shavante. Evidently, the line length is quite standardized. As ritual wailing is an expressive vehicle, this regularity between and within cultures evidences compliance with social norms. However, irregular line lengths are also present, juxtaposing feelings of individualism or unique aspects of emotion to the standardization within the culturally specific line lengths. In all three cultures, parallelism is used to garner attention and make apparent the expressive content of the wailing. Additionally, the ritual wailing of the Warao people, another indigenous group in Amerindian Brazil, contains polyphony, and this polyphony is used to achieve the same effect as the standardization of line lengths: social power through cohesion and unity.³²

A clear difference between the wailing of these three cultures reveals social norms around regulation versus individualization. On one side of the spectrum is the Shavante, whose wailing is rather traditionally musical, involving no use of language and

an intonation contour that can be notated on staves. There is a regularity in each phrase and in the overarching structure of the wailing, but the composition of each word is up to the individual. Motifs contribute to this structure by providing some regularity. The Shokleng's use of spoken words in a recitative-like style of wailing is markedly different. However, the vocabulary used is not from the normal lexicon but a unique ritual vocabulary used almost exclusively to formulate descriptive and expressive sentences. In form and standardization, the Shokleng are more individualized. Compared to the wailing of the Shokleng and Bororo, the Shavante's style of ritual wailing is relatively more structured and standardized.

While Urban does not directly discuss the implications of these differences in style between the Shavante, the Shokleng, and the Bororo, the relationships between each style of wailing and each culture he studies lend themselves to consideration. Despite not being explicit, it is possible to see how one can delineate the connections between personal/cultural experience, values, and expression of values through music, as with Gillion's discussion of Stravinsky. For all three of the cultures, the need for socialization and comfort within a group is expressed through the polyphony and parallel structure found in ritual wailing. While similarities in the expression of values in music can be identified between the three groups, thorough differences between them and how their values are expressed in their music are relatively inaccessible. This deterioration of indigenous culture is a result of the disruption of their past culture from colonial and post-colonial events.³³ Thus, not only can ethnomusicology reveal the deeply engrained values of a culture, but it can also display the impacts of historical features, such as imperialism, on groups. Urban's work would be more impactful if he further considered other aspects of the customs and lives of the three groups he studied such as if and how their wailing reflected, for example, the rigidity of their social hierarchy.

Touma's³⁴ study on the *maqam*, which is a musical practice that contains a system of melodic modes similar to Western art music, reveals the values, including respect for gatherings and sociability, in the groups that use it. In North Africa, the Near East, and Central Asia—all places that Arabs and their culture had predominantly influenced—the *maqam* is used for both improvisation and composition and is unique to the musical spheres of the area (notably, the Turkish, Persian, and Arabian spheres). The *maqam* is diverse, with differences throughout the vast spheres that it is used in, and its distinctive styles are typically centered around urban units rather than nations. This technique contradicts typical European stylistic features and genres in one striking way: instead of creating temporal restrictions and giving tonal freedom (as, for example, the waltz does in European music, with a rhythm that can have varying pitches), the *maqam* has much looser rhythmic boundaries and is typically heterophonic, where each musician plays the same melodic line in sync, though each also uses different embellishments on the same melodic line. The musical technique of *maqam* is distinguished by its use of tone levels to produce intervals and its avoidance of the repetition of phrases. Due to the *maqam*'s unconventional non-reliance on rhythmic re-

straints and a tactus (or rhythmic unit), many musicologists previously failed to understand or explain the technique's structure.³⁵ They offered rhythmic descriptions of the form (which is, in reality, free within loose rhythmic constraints). Additionally, describing the form was difficult for native musicians given that while they could clearly differentiate examples of melody (fixed rhythmic-temporal and free tonal-spatial organization) and melodic line (free rhythmic-temporal and fixed tonal-spatial organization), these differences were so innate and embedded in their habitus that they did not have terms for them. Additionally, their practices were primarily orally passed down and thus were not standardized or easily explained. In this study, Touma delves into the *maqam* to draw broad conclusions about groups and people who use it: the modal system of the Arabic *maqam* lends itself to flexibility and improvisation, as well as connections between performers and audiences, which is reflective of the highly social and group-oriented societies that performed it.

The differing modal systems and emphasis on tonal-spatial organization rather than rhythmic-temporal organization can reveal the perspectives of those who use them. For example, the tonal system of Western music objectifies time and pitch, along with formulating a mathematically constant and equal temperament. The shift in Western music from an "ad hoc" approach to a rationalized and more complex system reflects the values that arose from the Enlightenment. Indeed, equal temperament grew to be widely adopted within the same century. The Western tonal system, as well as Western music in general, values rationality, consistency, and repeatability, all of which are characteristic of the scientific method, a vital component of Western cosmology. By contrast, the free system of the *maqam* was passed on orally at social gatherings, representing a culture that values sociability; meanwhile, Western families at the time were nuclear, with small family units, and Western culture was focused on the individual. However, the drive for reform, modernization, and westernization in many countries that arose from the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War II also resulted in the standardization and setting to notation of the *maqam* in many regions, such as Türkiye, disrupting social practices reflecting political and social change.³⁶

Likewise, varying temperament systems have been proposed for *maqam*-based music, including systems with 24 or 25 pitches, as opposed to 12 for Western music. The current equal temperament includes 24 pitches, each 50 cents apart. However, this temperament was only for facilitating the notation of Middle Eastern music using standard Western notation, as the *maqam* utilizes a wide range and number of pitches that do not accord with the equal temperament scale, and the usage of equal temperament reduces the complexity of the pitches found in the *maqam*. Melodic phrases are formed from small "building blocks" of around four pitches, each "block" called *jins*. This gives *maqam*-using music flexibility in tone but allows for it to be structured through the use of melodic sub-units. This variability within the microstructure makes the *maqam* ideal for improvisation and reflects Arabic music as a whole. When performing, practitioners of *maqam*-based music are constantly feeding off each other's ideas and energy, as well

as that of their audience. This explains the sometimes lack of a conductor in Arabic orchestras and the improvisatory and adaptive nature of many performances, where the written music serves only as a template.³⁷ The audience also plays a role in the performance, and Arabic orchestras often respond to sections met with praise from the audience by jumping back to it during the performance. This connection between the performer and the audience, even in “formal” music, is evident in everyday Arabic life; Arabic culture is very social, valuing relationships and groups above the individual (Esherick, 2006).

III. Understanding socio-cultural interactions, influences, and changes through ethnomusicology:

In Southeast Asia, ethnomusicology has contributed to a more thorough understanding of the impacts of syncretism—the integration and fusion of two or more cultures—and the result of introducing various religions on music culture and social structure. In the case of Southeast Asia, religion was incorporated which resulted in the mixing of musical styles, with some musical areas more influenced than others; in the case of Tamil, the caste system remains and continues to impact musical style. Both studies display how ethnomusicology contributes to a more thorough grasp of an area’s social, historical, and religious backgrounds and reveals nuances in understanding how music has changed due to influences, contributing to an interdisciplinary comprehension.

To an unfamiliar observer, it may not be easy to differentiate the qualitative differences between musical cultures in Southeast Asia. In “Southeast Asia: Musical Syncretism and Cultural Identity,” Simon³⁸ argues that this results from many different exchanges over centuries within and between cultures and ethnic groups. Simon demonstrates that ethnomusicology can offer deeper insights into the historical social background of an area, as the music and instruments of Southeast Asia are reflective of historical and social interactions within the area. Thus, ethnomusicology can contribute to interdisciplinary understandings of culture and groups.

Despite the influence of major religions in Southeast Asia such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, which have significantly altered the traditional religious landscape (with native religions wrongly labeled as animistic), each ethnic group still identifies itself strongly with its traditional music.³⁹ For example, the famous *slendro* and *pelog*, tonal systems of Central Java, are different from the preferred tonal systems of their neighbors, the Sundanese and the Balinese. Even techniques and execution in the playing and making of instruments are unique and culturally specific. However, according to Simon, syncretism has influenced most Southeast Asian cultures due to aspects of Indian and Middle Eastern cultures, and others in Southeast Asia, being introduced. This has resulted in unique syncretism in practically all aspects of art and philosophy. One example is the autochthonous family of bossed gongs that are heavily incorporated into Southeast Asian ensembles in accompaniment with double-reed South and Southeast Asian instruments. This syncretism has also resulted in certain physical alterations of instruments when introduced to a different culture. For example, the Javanese *rebab*, a bowed instrument, was based on the Arabian *rebab*, but

incorporates a different mechanism between the strings and an attached soundboard that produces a more nasal sound.

There are a few particularly noteworthy examples of syncretism’s impact on Southeast Asia. One important development was the arrival of bronze to Southeast Asia in the form of bronze axes, which were introduced by migrating Deutero-Malays and which Indonesians associated with magic and power.⁴⁰ The fascination with bronze as a material led to the creation of bronze gongs, likely for religious purposes. Refining the bronze gong led to the development of the bossed gong containing a gong boss, which was a round bump in the center of the gong which could allow the gong to be tuned to different pitches. These gongs were the basis for the signature *slendro* and *pelog* tonal systems of Central Java.

Another example of syncretism is evident in religion. Islamization by Indian traders began in the twelfth century, but the Islamic faith and its tenets were assimilated in a way that is characteristic of Southeast Asian cultures. The Muslim faith was adopted, but despite Islamic views, which discouraged ancestor worship and Southeast Asian musical practices, traditional religious practices were firmly rooted in Southeastern Asian culture and enforced by the *adat*, an unwritten code governing personal actions from life to death. They were untouchable. Indeed, large gamelan ensembles were first brought together after Islam arrived, and ancestor worship became interwoven into Southeast Asian Muslim rituals.⁴¹

Simon’s study of syncretism in Southeast Asia identified striking examples where items or traditions were taken from their original contexts and assimilated into Javanese contexts, like the Javanese adaptation of bronze axes into a musical culture containing signature bronze gongs. It has also identified how Southeast Asian cultures have incorporated and, in some instances, rejected the introduced religious practices. Finally, Simon has contributed to existing research showing how syncretism has impacted areas such as history and other aspects of society by showing how music has evolved and been interchanged with and influenced by different cultures due to syncretism.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, ethnomusicology has revealed the impact of the introduction of Christianity on Tamil social structure and how Tamil Christians have used music to influence social structure. Ethnomusicologist Sherinian⁴² ascertained that Protestant Christians in Tamil Nadu, India, have, for more than 150 years, made conscious choices in changing the musical style of the *kirttanai*, a devotional form of Hindu music, to reflect changes in social identity and needs. Sherinian highlights how different performances of a single Christian *kirttanai* can provide various different stylistic musical changes created by the various subgroups of Tamil Christians. She explains that these stylistic changes create different musical codes that are contextual and specific to the subgroups they serve. Sherinian focuses on three styles in this study: *Karnatak*, *girāmiya*, and *light* (classical elite, village, and Western pop with classical elements). She uses music as a pathway to explore the “socio-cultural elements associated with the identity of its Christian users”—namely, caste, class,

their musico-religious identity, consisting of the Tamil dialect used by and theological orientation of the individual.⁴³ Finally, Sherinian also describes music's impact on religion and maintaining social structure in Tamil Nadu; the different musical styles in Tamil Christian subgroups, all contextually specific, create a musical code that can enforce or change the socio-religious structure.

To fully appreciate the context in which these changing musical styles take place, one must first understand India's caste system of social organization. The caste system, as opposed to ethnicity or class, is India's primary division of society. Christian missionaries who arrived in the nineteenth century disapproved of it but could not end it. Indeed, the caste system was only impacted to accommodate Christianity, with caste divides creating different variations of Tamil Christianity. The caste divide between Tamil Christians is relevant to the discussion because the Vellalar, the highest and most educated caste, created the devotional song form of *kirttanai* in the original *Karnatak* style. The *kirttanai* was then taught to the lower castes who, over time, created their own styles, including the *girāmiya* and *light* or *film* styles. Across all of the styles, the words to the *kirttanai* remain the same and the contexts and situations in which the music was performed have not changed.

The *Karnatak* style, still typifying the Christian music of the Vellalar, is written in a form of Sanskrit which few are literate enough in the language to understand. Many of the core features of the *Karnatak* style have remained the same throughout the years, save for a few minor musical simplifications. The same cannot be said for other castes. Sherinian describes the influence of India's signature film music on the *kirttanai*: it aided in creating the "light" or film style, which became popular due to its affordability, ease of access, and familiarity.⁴⁴ The ragas of light/film *kirttanai*, characteristic patterns of notes with certain embellishments and intervals, had been noticeably simplified to appeal to a larger audience and also infused with Western elements. The language, too, had become either Sanskritized Tamil or Simple Tamil (a change Srinivas [1957] discusses as both linguistic and pertaining to social mobility). The light/film style of *kirttanai* appealed to the middle and lower castes.⁴⁵ Finally, there is the *girāmiya pāttu*, or Tamil Christian folk music, sometimes derogatively referred to as *nāttupāttu*, or "country song." The language of this folk music is Tamil. This, as well as the fact that the *girāmiya* style appeals and is most accessible to villagers and the lower castes, has resulted in discrimination from those of higher castes. This discrimination is now being challenged by many Tamil activists who, because of the discrimination against those who use the colloquial Tamil spoken by villagers, have used Tamil extensively to confront its devaluation. This has sparked academic interest in Tamil folk music, and, since the Tamil pushback from activists in the 1990s, has garnered increased attention from academic researchers.

A religious text and its use in religious music may fill the same niche across different strata in a social structure, even if expressed in various ways and carrying different meanings:

Karnatak style music contains Brahmanical Christian theology, carries upper-caste (Vellalar) sensibilities and the values of virtuosity and refinement. Light music is usually associated with evangelical theology, is eclectic in its sound elements, and is associated with modernity and Westernization as well as urban sophistication. Folk music is often associated with protest, or in the case of the Dalit Christian movement and Dalit Liberation theology, positive identity reformation. It draws on the various genres, rhythms, tunes, and instruments used in villages.⁴⁶

As with previous examples, this evidence shows how lived experiences can result in the formulation of values that make their way into the music of a people. While the influence Eastern Orthodoxy had on Stravinsky and his music is relatively clearer, in Sherinian's study of Tamil Christian music, the linear relationship is less direct due to the limitations of considering a large sample size of many Tamil Christians; however, it is still evident, especially when contrasting the lives and the music of the varying castes and how varying general experiences and values of groups have impacted their music. Additionally, it shows an example of how the introduction of a religion—Christianity—has impacted an area's music and social structure but has not eliminated pre-existing social structures.

■ Conclusion

Studying music anthropologically helps us understand the values and ideals embedded in the cosmology of a people. The anthropology of music is valuable because it offers a deeper understanding of music to musicians and a deeper understanding of a culture based on what the culture's musicians reveal in their music, both consciously and unconsciously. In the relationships between religion, music, and ritual (as with right singing in Estonian Orthodoxy, ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil, and the initiation rituals of the Ambonwari), we find that music can not only aurally express the values of a religion but also act as a ritual in and of itself, and even at times hold together a religion by making its belief logical to its believers. The relationship between music and religion is evident and complex; in other words, music is often instrumental in religion for purposes beyond the embellishment of rituals because music can be used to discipline and maintain social structures such as caste systems and gender roles. Finally, all of the texts have evidenced that musical techniques are culturally specific. They shape their people's musical and cultural identity and reveal a unique habitus, as with the *maqam* technique and native musicians' difficulty in explaining it. Each of these seven examples has shown how studying music anthropologically has allowed insight into the societies engaging with these musical practices. Studying unique aspects and backgrounds of certain music—music being a part of culture itself—has enabled us to work backward from the culturally specific music to the values and experiences of the people who make it.

The knowledge gained from studying music anthropologically is valuable not only to anthropologists seeking to understand people's lives, values, and cosmology, as well as the interactions between aspects of a single culture or several cultures, but also to musicians seeking to understand the

cultural context and meaning of music itself. This understanding of the relationships between music and culture is also valuable for musicians. An example includes Bach's B-minor mass, which was written for a religious setting but is now often performed in secular settings (Roy *et al.*, 2010). Due to the widespread adoption of Christianity and the widespread circulation of Bach's works in many places worldwide, while the context has changed, it can retain meaning. However, this cannot be said of all music: much of non-Western music does not enjoy prominence in mainstream global markets. Having a greater understanding of the cultural contexts that led to the development and performance of music can allow listeners to understand the significance of this music, especially when it is not as globally circulated as mainstream genres.

The value of ethnomusicology and its application will continue to change as new approaches to research arise around very human concepts like music and sound. Scholars exploring sound studies continue to question the construct of "music" and explore sound through how it is perceived and listened to. Scholars of eco-musicology will also continue to observe how humans have impacted the world through incorporating environmentalism, ecology, and musicological analysis. As ethnomusicology continues to broaden as a field, it will play an increasingly vital role in not only understanding diverse cultures but also in addressing global issues such as sustainability, social justice, environmental conservation, and more. As the breadth of ethnomusicological study increases in the coming years, its value will only grow.

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