

❖ **“This is our culture, only for ourselves. Thank you for being interested”: Kodava song and the public non-assertion of difference**

John Napier – University of New South Wales

Abstract

The Kodava or Coorgs, form a substantial minority in the Kodagu (Coorg) district of South India. Speaking a separate language, adhering to a clan-based social structure, following a belief system that is at substantial variance to, but increasingly influenced by, Sanskritic Hinduism and at times even asserting a historical origin exterior to India, the group carries a larger number of markers that has led them to be regarded and portrayed as one of India’s groups of ‘internal exotics’. Moreover, the position of the group within broader contours of cultural change in India is well known through M.N. Srinivas’ seminal work on Sanskritization. This paper examines a core musical repertoire of the Kodava, the *dudikotapat*. (“songs with the beat of the *dudi*”). Conveying texts grounded in ancestor worship, accounts of localised deities and heroes, the relationship of the Kodava to adjacent regions, and the minutiae of life-cycle rituals, these songs are presented in a melodic style that the Kodava themselves regard as austere and limited. They are most frequently sung in circumstances which might lead one to conclude that both singers and listeners treat the music that represents them and allows them to identify and situate themselves culturally, with scant regard: in the midst of processions and rituals featuring much louder simultaneous performances, against a background of dancing and fireworks, or as people chatter. At the same time Kodava regard these performances as essential and derive greater pleasure from singing.

Drawing together various threads of discussion, I argue that though there are more visible markers of Kodava identity in the form of dress, martial games and ritual, the *dudikotapat* form a crucial means of self-identification, and of resistance to both Sanskritization, and, through the seeming indifference of performers, the exoticising gaze of the broader community.

Introduction

I will commence with two anecdotes which I hope to interrelate. In early 2008, Club Mahindra, a chain of upmarket resorts, announced that as part of the cultural program offered at its establishment in Madikeri, the capital of Kodagu district, couples could have a mock ‘Kodava marriage’ ceremony in which they might dress as Kodava, and renew their vows.

The traditional Kodava ceremony varies from the many marriage ceremonies of much of Hindu India in that it is non-Sanskritic, does not require the presence of a priest, and substantially consists of an exchange of vows led by senior relatives of the bride and groom. The ceremony as actually outlined on the resort’s website was a strange confection of both the Kodava and

the mainstream. Protest quickly followed, substantially through the internet, and in part led by Kodava living outside the district.¹ Within a few weeks, this particular item of cultural tourism ceased to exist.² This, along with contemporaneous protests against the use of the image apparently of a ceremonially dressed Kodava man as a sort of 'maitre d'' for luxury train travel in Southern India,³ suggest not only a defence of cultural particularity, but also a shift in the way Kodava wish to be regarded by other Indians.

The second anecdote is more personal. Shortly before, and early in, my time in Kodagu, I was offered interesting critical information about Kodava music. "You are going to find this music very dull." "It is the least interesting music here." "You know, the Kodava only have one tune." "The Kodava are at the north pole, music at the south." These comments are of course red rags to any ethno-musicological buffalo. But before this bull could charge, it had to be accepted that most of these comments came from the Kodava themselves.

It is necessary to somehow square these two anecdotes: on the one hand valorisation and protection of particular markers of Kodava difference, which extends beyond marriage ritual and dress to include sporting and military prowess; on the other, indifference, reticence and even embarrassment about their music. In order to illustrate in words something of the 'embarrassment' or reticence about the music, I will describe just two of the circumstances under which it might be heard, or not heard, as the case may be. The annual festival at the shrine of the gods Kakot Achayya, Akkavva, and Kari Kotta at Kakotaparambu near the town of Virajpet, celebrates the arrival of two gods from Kerala, and their deified companion. During the first evening of the festival proper, ritual objects, *koyimes*, are brought from the four houses of local families associated with the shrine. The first indication that the procession is approaching are the occasional sounds of the *kombu*, a large brass trumpet, blown at great volume with little apparent regard for stability of pitch. These sounds then juxtapose with those of the fireworks. As the procession approaches, the sound of the *valaga* comes to dominate. This is a form of dance music originally from Kerala, played by Dalit musicians on two double reed aerophones, frequently *nagaswaram*, and one or two drums, either local variants of the *thimila* of Kerala, or modern military style tenor and bass marching drums. If the listener manages to get into the heart of the procession, they may hear the quietest stratum of the music, the one that the men in this picture are playing and singing.

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Fig. 1: Procession to the shrine of Kakotaparambu.
The *koyimes* are wrapped in the

red bundle. Four Kodava men perform the *dudikotapat*. Author's photograph.

This song is a *dudikotapat*. ("song with the beat of the *dudi*"). It is sung by the Kodava themselves and tells the story of the arrival of these gods. Unless the listener enters into the procession to seek it out, it is inaudible.

Similarly, each Kodava patrilineal clan, or *okka*, celebrates its ancestry on a specific annual day called the *karana name*. On this day, not only the founding father of each *okka*, but successive generations "until the present", are saluted. A *dudikotapat* giving an entire genealogy is sung over a period of up to eight hours.

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As each living person is named, they are expected to honour their older relatives and make a prayer offering at the *nellaki bolca*, a clay lamp in a niche in the western wall of the central hall, that forms the centre of devotion in a traditional Kodava house.



Fig. 2: *Karana pat* performed at the *Ain-mane* (ancestral house) of the Mevada *okka*. Author's photograph.

As this *Karana pat* is performed, most people engage in noisy socialising and celebration outside, enjoying the ignition of fireworks, and dancing to the sound of the *valaga*. Though some people at times listen intently, for much of the day the music largely appears to be ignored.

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Inaudible and ignored though it may appear to be in both instances, the music however *must* be there. In this paper I will argue that its presence is maintained not merely through a resistance to change within established ritual, but because the music itself is resistance.

Music as resistance

The near ubiquity of music in public human interactions means that it will inevitably be linked

at least through co-occurrence to acts or feelings of resistance. As such, this is a subject that scarcely requires exposition. Since resistance is almost the inevitable opposing counterpart to cultural re-formation, such as occurs with *Sanskritization* and the incursion of its supporting political forces, it is usually closely linked to the formation, definition and assertion of identity and difference. Most studies centre on identity formulation and resistance to extant or increasing hegemonisation: race, gender, class, religion, and sexuality, or mixtures of these. This is straightforward enough when particular genres are seen as the locus of particular groups, (traditional blues, 'women's songs'), but a little more complex when the genres themselves, such as rock, may be readily appropriated by cultural hegemony, may be contested, as in the case of rap, or may simply 'move'. In many such instances the thrust of resistance may become textual rather than musical. Hebdige's seminal work on subcultures (1979) showed that musical *styles*, rather than textual content or contextual happenstance, may become indicators of resistance, but that the link between musical style and elective subcultures, may be both selected and somewhat arbitrary.

Later hermeneutic studies advanced on Hebdige's position, by attempting to demonstrate that aspects of musical style or even non-verbal content specifically encode resistance. These range from MacDonald's (1990) contentious reading of coded messages in specific passages in the music of Shostakovich, through to those of Manuel's (1989) reading of flamenco as featuring a collection of musical techniques each of which is almost the antithesis of a valued technique of the music of the Spanish courts. I will argue that the *dudikotapat* offer a resistance that is textual, in presenting accounts linked to pre-Sanskritic Kodava life, contextual in that the songs are performed within broader cultural events that are thoroughly and unmistakably Kodava, and stylistic, in that the style is distinctively 'local', allowing for the careful presentation of crucial texts, and offering a homology of the reciprocity that is central to traditional Kodava life.

The Kodava and difference

The notion of resistance might appear to imply that the Kodava are a somewhat beleaguered group, an idea which itself might provoke a level of resistance. The Kodava, or Coorgs and Coorgis as haphazardly translated by late eighteenth century Englishmen, form a substantial minority in the Kodagu (Coorg) district of the state of Karnataka in southern India. Numbering approximately eighty thousand of a district population of half a million, they form neither a majority nor the largest group. However, they are culturally dominant, giving the district its name, its image, and a substantial part of its political and economic leadership. There is some resentment of this on the part of other groups. Though the Kodava do not feel threatened by this resentment, there is a long established movement for autonomy, Kodava language education, and restriction of rights of land ownership.

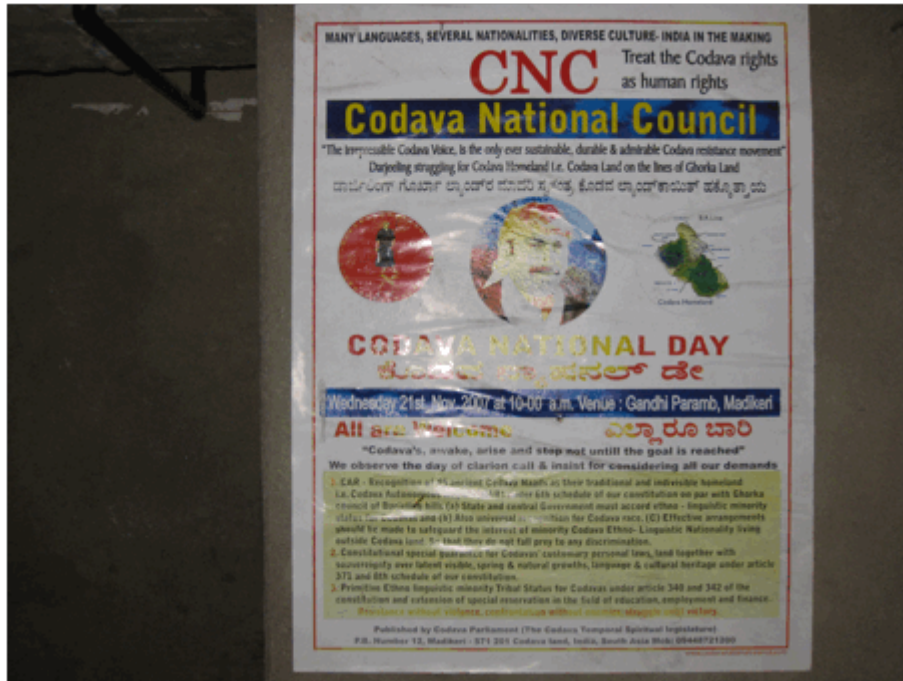


Fig. 3: Poster of the Codava National Council, advocating amongst other things restrictions on non-Kodava ownership of land in the district. Author's photograph.

The origins of the Kodava have been much theorised. One text lists 25 theories, ranging from local origin through to the descendents of Kurdish mercenaries and deserters from the army of Alexander the Great, who fought and intermarried their way south (Cariappa & Cariappa, 1981:131). Needless to say, theories that suggest a foreign origin tend to be downplayed by those seeking greater autonomy for the Kodava within the district. Nevertheless, the group carries a larger number of markers that have led them to be regarded and portrayed as one of India's groups of 'internal exotics': male ceremonial dress, martial prowess, perceived physiognomy, particularly fairness of skin, a separate language with a body of words that have been argued to have equivalents in widely dispersed non-Dravidian languages (even the word Kodava is sometimes claimed to be related to Kurd) , religious distinctiveness, and social organisation into 800 patrilineal clans or *okka*, often paired in reciprocity, wherein cross cousin marriage was, maybe is, highly prized. Their exoticisation by Club Mahindra and Indian Railways was nothing new.⁴



Fig. 4: Kodava men at Kota Beta play *kolayat*, a martial game. The long-sleeved white *kupya*, worn over shorts or rolled up trousers, is worn by only a few groups in more remote parts of the district. The more common black *kupya* is seen in Figure 6. Amongst other groups of Kodava, *kolayat* is generally very stylised and safe. Author's photograph.

The *dudikotapat*

The *dudikotapat* are central to the musical repertoire of the Kodava, and thus to many rituals. Conveying texts grounded in ancestor worship, accounts of localised deities and heroes, the relationship of the Kodava to adjacent regions, and the minutiae of life-cycle rituals, these songs are presented in a melodic style that the Kodava themselves regard as austere and limited. They are sung exclusively by men, and to the best of my knowledge, are never sung by non-Kodava.



Figure 5: A generic transcription of the most frequently used melody. The ubiquitous dudi beat is also given. This melody is subtly varied both from performance to performance, and within performances. Contrary to proffered opinion, there is more than one Kodava tune.

The *dudi* is an hourglass drum, held most commonly by taking the tensioning ropes in the left hand, and struck with a switch. The songs are performed by two pairs of men.⁵ Each pair will sing between two and four stanzas, before the second pair, usually by singing an anacrusis phrase (translated as 'listen' or "so we say"), signal their intent to take over. The interruption may be a regular alternation, or may be in response to a perceived lapse in memory. The style within each pair could be described as heterophonic. Rich heterophony is prized, and is created by divergent timing and ornamentation of the basic melody, largely through a wide vibrato. The coordination of the four drums is generally imprecise. As the songs may take many hours to

perform, singing is often done in shifts, and it is sometimes amusing to watch the efforts of a singer to find someone to take his place.



Fig. 6: Four Kodava men, wearing traditional dress, perform *dudikotapat* at Kakotaparambu. The man second from the right was not manually increasing the tension of the skin at this point. Author's photograph.

As outlined in the introduction to this paper, the *dudikotapat* are most frequently sung in circumstances that might lead one to conclude that both singers and listeners treat the music that represents them, and allows them to identify and situate themselves culturally, with scant regard. Certainly as an identity marker projected to and recognised by the wider community, song is in no way equivalent to some of the other markers listed above. At the same time, Kodava regard these performances as essential, and older Kodava derive great pleasure from singing. Until about 80 years ago, it was considered the mark of a Kodava man that he sings these songs. Though older Kodava lament that younger men do not wish to sing, that the same complaint was voiced forty-five years ago suggests that if the number of people able to sing is in decline, this decline is slow rather than rapid (Sri Sathyan, 1965: 441). During my fieldwork, solicited performances turned into occasions of great celebration, which the current researcher, a vegetarian who is easily inebriated, found demanding.

***Dudikotapat* and Sanskritization: Song as resistance**

However many of the songs are maintained as projection of identity and for the pleasure derived from performance, I believe what is important is the manner in which much of the repertoire engages and reiterates part of the history of religious and political colonisation of the district. The position of the Kodava within broader contours of cultural change in India is well known through M.N. Srinivas' seminal 1952 work on Sanskritization, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. As a theory, Sanskritization endeavours to explain the process of the spreading of cultural practices of high-caste Hinduism, particularly those associated with Sanskrit language ritual and text, across much of India. The minimal definition of this process is that:

the lower castes have a tendency to take over the customs and rites of the higher castes ... [ensuring] the spread of Sanskritic ritual and cultural forms at the expense of others" (Srinivas, 1952: 209).

Srinivas's original definition focuses on the instigation of caste mobility: a caste may advance itself hierarchically "by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon" (Srinivas, 1956: 481). At the same time as it operates within a seemingly divisive hierarchy however, Sanskritization may have a socially cohesive effect. By locating themselves within a hierarchy, the adoptive group establishes and redefines the relationships necessary for integration to village life, both in its day to day manifestations and in its ritual activity. Furthermore, the ritual practices and ideologies associated with upper castes have a much broader geographical spread, thus ultimately linking the local with the Pan-Indian (Sriniva, 1989: 53-72). Thus Sanskritization acts as both a vertically and horizontally cohesive force.

Sanskritization however, represents only one stage of the cultural and religious transformation of the Kodava. The first stage consists of incursions, largely through trade, from Kerala. The exact details of these incursions are not clear: local historians suggest that they date from about the 12th century (B.P. Appanna, interview with author), though there is evidence for trade as early as 200 BCE (Sri Sathyam, 1965: 224-225; Kamath, 1993: 54). What is important for this paper is how these incursions are represented in sung repertoire, for with this trade, come gods. Fleeing the unbearable fishy stench of the coast, they establish themselves as a supplement to isolated ancestor worship and animism, and become the ritual responsibility not of single *okkas*, but of a number of families, sometimes from throughout the district.

The second stage begins in the late 16th century, with the ascendancy of the Haleri rajas of the Ikkeri dynasty. Though belonging to the *lingayat* sect of Hinduism, which ostensibly denies caste, the Kodagu rajas began to employ Brahmin priests from the adjacent districts of Dakshin Kannada and Tulunad, initially as teachers to their sons. Along with establishing temples to Siva, these priests began to assert control over aspects of worship and even interpretation at the more important temples. Previously localised deities became associated with or even renamed as Sanskritic deities (Srinivas, 1952). For example the temple of Iguthappa in Kakkabe, a rain god who is sung to have migrated from Kerala, became associated with Subramaniam, the son of Siva, greatly and widely revered in the south of India. According to one cynical Kodava autonomist, this was simply because someone found an image of a peacock, Subramaniam's vehicle, carved on one of the temple walls. When I visited the temple most recently in October 2008, I was told it was a Siva temple, that men were to wear a lungi to enter, and that non-Hindus were not allowed into the shrine. When I asked if it were really a Siva temple, the priest looked at me, perhaps a little abashed, and said "Siva-Subramaniam" before walking away.

There have been ongoing critiques of Srinivas' theory, a number of which were summarised by Staal (1963): McKim Marriott quickly observed that Sanskritization does not take place by eliminating local little traditions, but adds to them – Nehru's idea of Indian civilization as palimpsest at work (Staal, 1963: 263). Staal also cites Dumont and Pocock's characterisation of the results of Sanskritization as "a more distinguished or prestigious way of saying the same things" (Staal, 1963: 264). According to Carroll (1977: 358-9), in response to definitional difficulties, and in recognition of the 'two-way' nature of processes, Srinivas later reduced Sanskritization to generalised process, downplaying the values inherent in his earlier definitions. She therefore asks whether

Sanskritization is really anything other than that phenomenon common to all societies where to a greater or lesser degree the plebeians follow the social and cultural lead of the elite, emulating the latter to the extent that their own financial resources and the presence or absence of social sanctions supporting elitist

prerogatives permit (1977: 359).

Though her point is valid, it implies that Sanskritization is adopted *by* the group, not forced *upon* it. She draws attention to this when she argues that the prevailing anthropological model of India attempts to downplay power struggle in favour of struggle over ritual form, and that using Sanskritization as a mode of interpretation facilitates this (1977: 367-8).

Sanskritization is an interpretation of social movement in India which implicitly associates adoption of higher caste practice with upward mobility, and assumes that such adoptions are regarded as desirable by those who undertake them. What is under-recognised is the possibility that Sanskritization represents a process of internal colonization, and that this may be resisted. Srinivas (2000: 630) himself notes early Marxist critiques of his theory, and in a later study points to the role of the "dominant, landowning castes in the *transmission* of cultural forms, ideas, and patterns of behaviour *to* the people living within their jurisdiction" (1997:17. Author's emphases). This suggests that Sanskritization is *imposed* from the top, or that it is a good strategic choice, and not just a direct social climbing on the part of the adoptive group.

It was only much later that he recognized the potential for the revolutionary strategy of withdrawal from the Hindu social order and repudiation of upper-caste lifestyles as models for emulation by the socially deprived castes (Madan, 2001:17, Srinivas, 1997).

Though is impossible to think of the Kodava as a "socially deprived caste", Madan's obituary draws direct attention to the possibility that Sanskritization may be resisted.

In fact, Srinivas hints at this when he argues that the Kodava

took quite easily to British diet and dress, and certain activities like dancing, hunting, and sports", and that the association of these practices with British power may well have acted as a bulwark against Sanskritization in these matters (Srinivas, 1956: 487-88).

Whatever the case, with a few exceptions, vegetarianism and teetotalism have made no headway amongst the Kodava, and animal sacrifice has declined only so far as some shrines have become vegetarian, and some people chose to absent themselves from temples and shrines when animal sacrifice occurs. Hunting parties have declined, largely through government restriction, and through the realisation that the combination of drinking and hunting during particular traditional festivals was not always particularly sensible.

I maintain that contemporary political resistance, which of course is selective, and established cultural resistance, are paralleled in sung resistance, and that this resistance is both textual and stylistic. The *dudikotapat* repertoire textually represents two phases of Kodava culture. They represent the earliest and most intimate of surviving Kodava cultural practices, those that predate the arrival of Gods from Kerala: ancestor worship and the minutiae of traditional life, such as the *Kotholi Koniumbaiah Pat*, which celebrates the arrival of Cardamom in Kodagu. This repertoire also maintains songs that celebrate obsolete but still highly valued ideals, most notably the *Nari Mangala Pat*, a song that traditionally accompanies a ceremony whereby a Kodava man or woman is married to the spirit of a tiger they have killed. The repertoire also celebrates the second phase, that of the arrival of the gods and the advance of multi-familial and district-wide integration. The songs sing of reciprocal weddings between *okkas*, of brave men who made the difficult journey to Kerala and returned, of warrior heroes, and above all, of gods who came from Kerala, to find good people in the beautiful land of Kodagu of the golden necklace.

With one or two exceptions, the *dudikotapat* that are commonly sung do not celebrate any aspect of the Sanskritization of Kodagu, though Sanskritic elements appear such as in the dedicatory mentioning of deities. Though most of the political domination which may have facilitated Sanskritization came from the north and the east, no songs sing about this. They neither celebrate explicitly or implicitly the arrival of newer gods or heroes, nor lament what has occurred. Even the most traumatic event in Kodava history, the exiling and forced conversion to Islam of thousands of Kodava men by Tipu Sultan in 1785, seems to be referred to only once in Kodava cultural activity, as a spoken vow in some variants of the wedding ceremony.⁷ Political rule came from the north and east. Culture and religion, come from the south and the west. The one *dudikotapat* that does seem to have some relation to the Haleri rajas, the *Desi Kata Pat*, a song that outlines the division of the district into smaller units, or *nads*, is widely believed to mark only the reorganisation and formalisation of an existing political structure (Boverianda and Boverianda, 2003:10. Appanna, interview with author). The last lines of this song, apart from a following envoi that is common to most if not all *dudikotapat*, neatly encapsulates the layering process:

A Madeva for every *nad*,

A Povvedi for every village,

An Ayappa for every hamlet,

A Nata for every lane

A Puda for every *okka*. (Boverianda and Boverianda, 2003: 39)

Madeva is a vernacularization of Mahadeva, or Siva, Povvedi or Parvati or Bhagavati, Siva's consort. A local hunting deity is here renamed as Ayappa. a name that is less supra-regional than Siva, though known through much of Indian. A Nata is a deified snake, the representation of which may be found in many places other than just at the corner of 'every lane', and a Puda is a *bhut*, a ghost recollection of ancestor worship.

The exception that seems most clear is the *Kaveri Pat*, the song of the river Kaveri. Here is an obvious Sanskritization, particularly since the *pat* uses a so-called Kaveri Purana, of recent invention, as its text (Moegling, 1855: 17-18). Though this would seem to be a clear instance of a Sanskritic *dudikotapat*, the Kodava maintain that the Kaveri is theirs. The sources of the Kaveri is in Kodagu, and though the story may be an interpolation, the worship is not. "No one else in India worships Kaveri the way we do." Moreover, there is some contestation of the claim that the source of the Kaveri, Talacavery, is a Pan-Indian site. As far as some Kodava are concerned, not only is Kaveri theirs, but it is theirs alone. In both instances, Kodava are able, through interpretation, to 'rescue' the texts from Haleri domination and Sanskritization.

Performed cultural resistance takes other forms, which are beyond the scope of this paper to explore in any detail. I will summarise two briefly. First, resistance has become textually inscribed in the form of a compendium of song texts, aphorisms and proverbs, and general descriptions of Kodava life, the *Pattole Palame*, by Nadikerianda Chinnappa in the early twentieth century. This text has been published in numerous Kodava language, Kannada script editions, and was translated to English in 2003 by the grandchildren of the original compiler. Though this text itself, and the comments of the English translators, may be seen as evidence of Sanskritization, with its 'Kodava National Anthem' mentioning Parvati, it summarises a substantial body of traditional repertoire, and has established itself as a resource to be consulted at times, if not used as an alternative to memorised performance.⁸

I will also recount one instance of mimetic resistance. At the annual festival at Kakotaparambu, the tenuous nature of the hold of Sanskritic deities over ritual may be observed on several

occasions. There is ongoing contrast between such elements as the vegetarian offerings to the Sankritised Kakot Achayya and the sacrificing of chickens and pigs to Kari Kotta, and the Brahmin supervised darshan of Kakot Achayya and Akkavva whilst the *dudikotapat* recounts their arrival from Kerala. In the order of ritual, Kari Kotta is worshipped first, though he was originally a Dalit whom the two other Gods adopted as a sort of chaperone, and though he is given no Sanskritic transformation. Tensions are acted out most dramatically on the second day. Kakot Achayya, now taking on aspects and the pan-Indian significance of Ishwara, or Siva, is carried from the shrine on the head of an entranced Brahmin, for circumambulations of a tree. These rounds are themselves an acknowledgement of traditional animism. Having promised firewood to a local goddess, Chaundi, and then having reneged on that promise, Ishwara is attacked by Chaundi and her servant, who are represented by entranced Dalit men. Should Ishwara, who is portrayed as cowardly, not be able to reach his temple in time, no festival is to be celebrated for twelve years. This calamitous event is avoided only by the unparalleled strategy of tackling the Goddess to the ground as she charges towards her intended victim. The ambivalence of the situation is to be celebrated: the Sanskritized deity 'wins', but only by a margin: the threat of the 'local' remains ever-present. That the rescue of Ishwara is effected through a traditional Kodava pastime, sport, is itself telling.

Resistance in song

Having argued that a particular song genre is effective as performed resistance to the process of cultural domination, I will demonstrate that song style, both in its difference from other genres and in its specifics, embodies and reinforces such resistance. I maintain that it is more than the presence of the songs, and their textual content, that gives them efficacy. It is the quality of the singing. Firstly the *dudikotapat* varies from other song types performed by the Kodava. Most notably and obviously, it varies from the style used to sing songs about more widespread Hindu deities. These songs are sung in a more generic South Indian style, accompanied often by harmonium and *tali*, small brass cymbals, and often use melodies found elsewhere. Close unison singing is sought, not heterophony. At the same time, the *dudikotapat* melody notated above may be heard, sung at much faster tempo for purposes of dancing, by performers from the Yereva tribe, another local group who in the past were frequently the slaves, now the servants, of Kodava households. At this stage, I cannot say whether the Yereva style is the *dudikotapat* sped up, or the *dudikotapat* is the Yereva style slowed down. What is important is the affirmation of indigeneity that may be drawn from the similarity of styles.

Beyond this, the style of *dudikotapat* effects resistance, both indirectly by facilitating rigid memorisation, and directly by paralleling the reciprocity that is essential in traditional relations between groups of Kodava. The performance of the songs in heterophonic pairs both necessitates and aids memorisation. Because pairs sing, the well-known strategies of extensive oral performance, repetition, centonisation, formulaic substitution, are impossible. The singing within each pair acts as a check against lapses of memory, and heterophony smudges over slight inconsistencies in the words. At the same time, the alternation of pairs ensures that one group can override the other if it is perceived that there are lapses of memory. The slow tempo accommodates 'thinking time'. That the antiphonal structure of performance homologises idealised reciprocity which in turn is homologised by the insistence that at any event the people should "stand in two rows", may almost be too obvious to draw attention to. Finally, the style of the *dudikotapat* is perceived as one that "is haunting and evokes images of *times long past*" (Boverianda and Boverianda, 2003:19. Author's emphases).

For many Kodava, 'times long past' are best represented in the singing found in the more remote valleys of the west and the south of the district. As more than one Kodava pejoratively described it, "The singing is best in those places because the people are the most backward." Here a friction within Kodava society must be acknowledged. It is between the most developed

and wealthiest central part of the district, around the towns of Madikeri and Virajpet, and the more remote villages of Mokudlu, Kalur, Surabhi and Poradu.⁹ Certainly, the heterophony in songs recorded in Mokudlu and Kalur is richer and more complex, and a distinctive repertoire of melodies is used in Poradu. X But perhaps more importantly, the valorisation of the songs from the remote parts speaks of a differentiation from the centre, from that part of Kodagu most strongly under the sway of the Rajas.

If style itself is resistant, through its facilitation of memorisation, its homologising of other aspects of social style, and through the valorisation of its 'remote' or 'old' variants, then it may be sufficiently strong to accommodate even those texts that seem to accept Sanskritic elements and Haleri domination. The style of *dudikotapat* confirms that the "Kaveri is worshipped our way", and that the performances of the 'backwards' districts are best, remote as they are from the transformations brought about by the Haleri. Almost as a footnote, but one that neatly summarises the last point, it is worth noting that the academic documentation of song as resistance may be older than we think:

The ritual has fallen completely into the lowland rut, but the song retains its pristine vigour and acceptance. It would seem as if the mind set up a sort of barrier against sacerdotal influence at certain points, reserving them, as it were, as perpetual tokens of early independence. The source is Grover's "The Folk-Songs of Southern India", published in 1871 (135)

Conclusions

In conclusion, I argue that though there are more visible markers of Kodava identity in the form of dress, martial games and ritual, the *dudikotapat* form a crucial means of self-identification and of resistance, textually, contextually and stylistically to both Sanskritization and the cultural and political domination which facilitated it. Furthermore through the seeming indifference of performers, the exoticising gaze of the broader community is negated. The resistance to this exoticisation was noted at the beginning of this paper. *Dudikotapat* offers a profound cultural expression that is seldom heard, and even less frequently appreciated by the non-Kodava, one that the Kodava frequently maintain that the non-Kodava are not likely to enjoy. But the *dudikotapat* need not be heard or appreciated to be resistant, it need only be. Appreciation is a bonus. As one performer said after a recording, "This is our culture, only for ourselves. Thank you for being interested."

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List of sound examples

Example 1: Batte pat (Song of the way) and valaga, Kakotaparambu, 14th December, 2008. Recording by the author.

Example 2: Mevada family Karana pat, Kakotaparambu, 12th December 2008. Recording by the author.

Example 3: Mevada family Karana pat, Kakotaparambu, 12th December 2008. Recording by the author.

Example 4: Kalachanda Palangappa, Katolappanda pat, Madikeri, 9th September 2008. Recording by the author.

Notes

1 See <http://www.kodagucommunity.com/2007/09/making-mockery-of-our-tradition.html> Accessed May 2008

2 See <http://www.kodagucommunity.com/2007/09/kodagu-community-impact-club-mahindra.html> Accessed May 2008

3 See <http://www.kodagucommunity.com/2008/02/indian-railways-gift-to-kodavas.html> Accessed June 2008

4 Twenty years ago, during my first visit to India, I was told several times that Kodava women were the most beautiful in India, and conversations revealed that they had a 'racy' reputation,

based in part simply on their high levels of participation in competitive sport.

5 Occasionally the songs may be sung by two men, but this is highly undesirable. One singer may demonstrate songs in response to enquiry. Apart from this, there will never be an odd number of performers, such as a pair alternating with one singer.

6 The extent and ferocity of Tipu's assault is hard to gauge, as we rely almost entirely on colonial accounts, which are unlikely to be sympathetic to the Sultan. The figures of 70 – 80 000 are impossible, given the population of the times (Wilks 1810 II, 283).

7 There is further contestation around ideas of indigeneity. Some activists and followers of the Kodava National Council reject the sung repertoire that sings of gods coming from Kerala, and avoid such shrines, arguing that they are importations that should be rejected in favour of ancestor worship and animism. Most Kodava are happy to maintain the implicit link to Kerala, and alternative festivities developed by the Kodava National Council have not gained much support.

8 The process of text recording continues. In September 2008 a performance of the *pat* of a local hero, Kayyandira Appayya was organised near the village of Poddamari on my behalf. The performance was attended by a female schoolteacher, a relative of the performers, who transcribed the entire text.

9 One local historian referred to the Kodava around Virajpet and Madikeri as the "Royal Kodava", because of their association with the rajas. Coming from one of the 'remote' villages, he used this expression with some irony.

About the author

Dr John Napier received his undergraduate training in music and postgraduate training in performance at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, graduating in 1983 with the Medal for Excellence. He immediately joined the Queensland Theatre Orchestra as principal cellist. He received his doctorate in 2001 for his study of accompanying ensembles in North Indian vocal music. His current research includes North Indian music, specifically the documentation of katha or epic singers in Eastern Rajasthan, music of the Kodava of South India, and diaspora music making. He is currently senior lecturer in Musicology and Ethnomusicology at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He continues a part-time career in performance.

Contact Details

John Napier - Email: j.napier@unsw.edu.au

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