

Persian influence on Hindustani music

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Location of fieldwork: India

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- Research background

There are two different styles of classical music in India. One is Hindustani music, which is chiefly played in the northern part of India, and the other is Karnataka music, which is primarily played in the southern part. Generally speaking, the latter upholds an older tradition because there was less Islamic influence on it in the medieval era. On the other hand, Hindustani music is said to have been influenced by Islam and Persian culture. However, there is no research that explains how and in what ways Persian influence can be observed in modern Hindustani music practice. In this research project, I will attempt to clarify this point.

- Research purpose and aim

In order to carry out this research, I took three different approaches.

- 1) To learn Hindustani music from native musicians in order to understand the construction of this music system.
- 2) To conduct interviews with native Hindustani musicians in order to understand their thoughts about Persian influence on Hindustani music.
- 3) To read literary sources on music in medieval India.

I conducted fieldwork from August 13, 2014 to September 17, 2014 at the Sangeet Research Academy (SRA) in Kolkata. SRA is one of the best Hindustani vocal academies in India. The students' skill levels are quite high and most of the gurus are well-known Hindustani vocalists or instrumentalists.

- Results and achievements of the fieldwork

At the academy, I had a chance to learn about both the vocal and instrumental aspects of Hindustani music. I was also able to conduct interviews with Abdul Rasid Khan, a one-hundred-and-seven-year-old Muslim vocalist, and with Brajeswara Mukerjee, who gave me basic vocal lessons. Both of them were extremely helpful in providing me with information about Persian influence on Hindustani music; thanks to them, I was able to collect a great deal of information on the topic.

- Implications and impact on future research

Although I was unable to find any written documents or books related to this research, I did acquire a large amount of important raw data from people in India. It is now my task to review these materials and make use of them in writing my doctoral dissertation. In addition, I would like to learn about the Iranian percussion music called *tombak* in order to compare Persian rhythmic theory to Hindustani rhythmic theory (*tala*). These tasks will make it possible to scrutinize the Persian musical influence on Hindustani music.

Finally, I greatly appreciate the help that I received from the Integrated Area Studies Unit of Kyoto University in conducting this field research.



The main building of SRA



The small concert performed by SRA tutors



With one hundred and seven years old Muslim singer Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan