

Sikh Formations

Religion, Culture, Theory

ISSN: 1744-8727 (Print) 1744-8735 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsfo20>

Songs to the Jinas and of the Gurus: historical comparisons between Jain and Sikh devotional music

Bob van der Linden

To cite this article: Bob van der Linden (2019): Songs to the Jinas and of the Gurus: historical comparisons between Jain and Sikh devotional music, Sikh Formations

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2019.1565304>



© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 11 Jan 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Songs to the Jinas and of the Gurus: historical comparisons between Jain and Sikh devotional music

Bob van der Linden

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany

ABSTRACT

Jain worship has always been accompanied by music and likewise for Sikhs the performance of and listening to the singing of hymns, as composed by several of their Gurus, continuously has been central to the community's spiritual experience. For different reasons, however, Sikh and Jain devotional music, known as *kirtan* and *bhakti* respectively, until recently were neglected subjects in historiography. This article investigates the parallels and differences among the two genres from a historical comparative perspective against the successive backgrounds of the *bhakti* movement and Indic culture, the imperial encounter and globalization. In doing so, it particularly emphasizes the importance of identity politics to the making of modern Sikh and Jain devotional music, as well as the fact that, in comparison to Jain *bhakti*, Sikh *kirtan* generally remains North Indian 'Hindustani' art music, rather than regional folk music.

Introduction

Until the final decades of the last century the focus in modern South Asian music studies largely has been on the North Indian 'Hindustani' and South Indian 'Carnatic' art music traditions (see further on Hindustani music: Bor et al. 2010; and on Carnatic music: Subramanian 2006; Weidman 2006). Indeed, in the context of Indian national music making since the imperial encounter, both Indian art musicians and musicologists generally looked down upon folk music. They not only associated it with tribal and low caste groups but increasingly also viewed it from a Western evolutionary perspective (van der Linden 2013, 5). With the emergence of ethnomusicology as an academic discipline, this division between art music and folk music was further strengthened because the study of Indian art music provided ethnomusicologists around the world with a legitimate field for study, one that was equal with musicology. Thus, by and large, ethnomusicologists adopted art music as part of India's 'great traditions', whereas anthropologists sometimes studied South Asia's 'little traditions' of folk music and largely left Indian art music aside (Weidman 2006, 23–24). Partly as a consequence of this situation, then, Jain and Sikh devotional music until recently remained understudied subjects.

Even more important to the neglect of the study of Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* in historiography was the fact that Jains and Sikhs for a too long time have been studied in a

CONTACT Bob van der Linden  vanderlinden.bob@gmail.com

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

nineteenth century Protestant manner from a textual point of view rather than as living traditions. In result, both traditions were mainly identified as ‘Jainism’ and ‘Sikhism’, two distinct and self-contained ‘religions’ with, for example, lineages of teachers and ‘true’ doctrines of belief that are to be found in the essential Jain and Sikh ‘scriptures’. Music certainly had no place in this text-centred methodology (see further for the Sikhs: Ballantyne 2006, Chapters 1 and 2; and for the Jains: Cort 1990). Ethnomusicologists and anthropologists probably also did not feel encouraged to study Jain or Sikh devotional music because, rather than with music, Jains and Sikhs over time became dominantly associated with asceticism and martiality respectively.¹ Now, as a contribution to the emerging literature, this article looks at the historical parallels and differences between Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan*. It assumes that such a comparison is appropriate for the following two reasons: first, because the two traditions have historical and geographical links to the *bhakti* movement of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (on the *bhakti* movement: Hawley and Juergensmeyer 2004); and second, because both experienced more or less similar changes due to the imperial encounter and processes of globalization. In addition, I believe that scholars of Jain *bhakti* can learn from the historiography on Sikh *kirtan* in connection to musical developments since the imperial encounter.

Devotional music in the early Jain tradition

For contemporary Jains, the *Sakra Stava* is a daily hymn and it is the mythological source for Jain *bhakti*. In it, Sakra, better known as Indra, the king of Gods, celebrates the birth of each of the twenty-four Jain spiritual masters or *Jinas*. Jain manuscripts also contain innumerable mythological references to music and dance. The *Kalpa Sutra*, the most revered canonical text of the Svetambar Jains which recounts the lives of the Jain masters, mentions that the birth of the last one, Mahavir (c. 599–527 BC), was accompanied by music and dance. In one of her dreams, his mother apparently saw a celestial palace that resounded with music made by celestial musicians and, accordingly, the king ordered musicians and dancers to celebrate Mahavir’s birth (Pal 1997, 127). Three folio manuscripts are further interesting to mention in this context. The first is from a late fifteenth century manuscript of the *Kalpa Sutra* (Ibid., 136, figure 83). In this almost page full composition we are given an unknown artist’s view of an entertainment in progress in Indra’s heavenly court, a much loved episode by illustrators of Jain texts. Eight male musicians, larger than the dancers, stand on the side and provide music. In the centre, in four registers, celestials of both sexes perform a vivacious and colourful group dance in couples. Another *Kalpa Sutra* folio from Gujarat (c. 1475) shows how Indra enjoys ‘great heavenly pleasures amidst surroundings that reverberated with the sound of song and dance and of music made by strings, hand cymbals, horns, the deep-toned *mridanga* drum and the soft-voiced *pataha* drum’ (Goswamy and Smith 2005, 32 for citation and 33 for figure). Over time, in fact, the *Kalpa Sutra* was frequently copied and illustrated by devout Jains and given to monks and temples as an act of piety. The third folio is a sixteenth century picture of the heavenly assembly of a *Jina*. According to tradition, upon attaining enlightenment a Jain master delivers a sermon before an assembly of all creatures: gods, humans and animals. The folio shows a version of this special occasion with the master seated in the centre on a throne within a circular citadel-like *mandala*

with four gateways: ‘The crowned and adorned *Jina* has two attendants who use their fly-whisks to keep him cool. All around, however, instead of an audience, is a group of lively dancers and musicians either entertaining the *Jina* or celebrating the occasion’ (Pal 1997, 138, figure 85).

Besides these mythological depictions of musicians and dancers in hymns and manuscripts, Jain temples are generally graced by numerous intricately carved out images of celestial dancers (*apsaras*) and musicians (*gandharvas*). Altogether, these images, as well as those of Hindu deities such as Ganesh, Lakshmi and Saraswati, which continue to be worshipped by Jains today, show that the tradition was (and continues to be) much embedded in a wider Indic culture.² In fact, although the iconographic programmes differ, Jain temples share the same architectural forms with those made by Hindus and Buddhists, and likewise ‘the same aesthetic norms and iconometric theories govern the divine images of these all three traditions’ (Pal 1997, 126). Moreover, rather than to mythology alone, the images of female dancers (*apsaras*) in Jain temples refer to an early form of institutionalized Jain *bhakti*. At the time, as in Hindu and Buddhist temples, Jain temples often had a group of female temple dancers (*devadasis*) attached to them for the service and veneration of the deity. As a matter of fact, the eleventh century Jain reformer Jinavallabha expressed concern ‘at the morally corrupting presence of numerous dancing girls at the Jain temples of Rajasthan’ (Guy 1997, 29). A mid-fifteenth century miniature painting gives clear expression to this same concern (Ibid., 31, figure 6): ‘It illustrates the Jain maxim that those monks seeking perfect chastity should avoid the attractions of women: the monk, clad in the white robes of the Svetambar sect, stands passively whilst the temple dancers so disapproved of by Jinavallabha, seek to arouse him with dance and music’ (Ibid., 29).

Until recently, scholars have depicted Jain *bhakti*, with its music and dance, in contrast to the ‘true’ tradition of asceticism as a Hindu aberration exercised by lay Jains. Yet, as John Cort and Whitney Kelting emphasized, textual, archaeological and epigraphical evidence proves that image worship and devotional music have been central to the tradition for over two millennia, both among the mendicants and the laity (Cort 2002a, 2002b; Kelting 2001a, 2001b). It remains unknown of course what kind of devotional music was actually sung and played in the early Jain tradition. Even so, John Cort has discussed how at present some Jains musically praise asceticism with much enthusiasm and devotion. In fact, he argued that the energetic, loud and ecstatic way in which these Jain devotees sing hymns to the joys of asceticism in their temples ‘sound little different from a hymn-singing gathering at Krishna temple’ (Cort 2002b, 735). This mutual reinforcing practice of asceticism and *bhakti*, then, most likely connects to the early Jain devotional music and dance tradition and its Indic context mentioned above.

Pre-Twentieth Century Sikh and Jain Devotional Music: A Meeting in *Bhakti*?

On the whole, the comparison between the oldest living ascetic tradition and the youngest monotheistic tradition of South Asia may seem somewhat out of place. To begin with, however, both the Jain and Sikh traditions are non-Brahmanical and share a lineage of spiritual masters, which in the case of the Sikhs eventually led to the canonization of the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, as a living guru. Furthermore, since Jains have been present in the Punjab from ancient times onward, the two communities

culturally interacted as well. Although I do not know about the existence of Jain writings that mention something about the Sikhs and their ten gurus, the other way around, three examples of Sikh references to Jains immediately came to my mind. First, I thought of the negative remarks of Guru Nanak (1469–1539) in the *Guru Granth Sahib* about ‘dirty’ Jain ascetics who never washed themselves.³ Second, I remembered that the tenth guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1708), wrote in a composition, entitled *Parasnath Avatar*, within *Rudra Avatar* in the *Dasam Granth* about the life of Parsvanath (c. 872–772 BC), the twenty-third Jain master and the most popular object of Jain devotion. Indeed, the *Dasam Granth*, of which a great part is attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, remains a fascinating text. For a long time, it was as important as the *Guru Granth Sahib* but during the late nineteenth century it was put aside due to the Singh Sabha reformation (c. 1880–1920), when modern Sikhism was defined (Oberoi 1994; van der Linden 2008). The main reason for this undeniably was that it contained too many references to Hindu, Buddhist and Jain mythologies, and it is for this reason that for many Sikhs today it still remains a controversial text.

The most interesting Sikh reference to the Jain tradition that entered my mind was an image of the green-bodied Jain master, *Arihanta Deva*, in the *Sheesh Mahal* (Hall of Mirrors) of the *Qila Mubarak* in Patiala. (Figure 1) Similar to the *Dasam Granth*, the painted chambers of this huge fortified palace complex in the heart of the city represent a great example of the shared culture in which pre-twentieth century Sikhs and Jains lived. The fully decorated chambers, with frescos made by Rajasthani and Pahari artists, are dominated by Vaishnava themes. The reason for this is that the Sikh maharajas of Patiala originally descended from a Rajput family in Jaisalmer in today’s Rajasthan. From their genealogy it seems they converted to the Sikh tradition in the early eighteenth



Figure 1. View from walls of the inner fort (*Qila Androon*) on the entrance gate and square of Patiala’s *Qila Mubarak*. Source: Author’s own photograph, 6 March 2014.

century 'but their earlier lineage traces its origins to the mythical hero Yadu, who in turn was the ancestor of Krishna' (Singh 2003, 75). For the maharajas of Patiala, therefore, Krishna is one of their own ancestors 'besides being a god or a cultural hero' (Ibid). Hence, when the maharaja would receive audiences, while sitting in an alcove in his Audience Hall elsewhere in the palace, he would not only see a painting of one of his predecessors, maharaja Karam Singh, but also icons of Vishnu in various manifestations, knowing himself to be a creation of the same god. (Figure 2) Actually, besides paintings of happenings from the lives of the Sikh Gurus, the rest of the Audience Hall is dominated by narrative paintings of themes relating to the life of Krishna, including 'the story of Sudama, and the events of the abduction of Rukmini' (Ibid., 73). (Figure 3) Thus, as emphasized by Kavita Singh, a public statement was declared, for in both these narratives Krishna comes out as 'the role model of a good, just, and caring king' (Ibid., 75). In this way, the maharaja modelled himself on Krishna.



Figure 2. Paintings of maharaja Karam Singh and various Vaishnava icons on the sides in the Audience Hall of Qila Mubarak, Patiala. Source: Author's own photograph, 6 March 2014.



Figure 3. Three panels (below) about Krishna's abduction of Rukmini in the Audience Hall of Qila Mubarak, Patiala. Source: Author's own photograph, 6 March 2014.

Intriguingly, the earlier mentioned Hall of Mirrors also contains paintings of *avatar* traditions of Vishnu 'that do not adhere to the now-canonical tenfold form' (Ibid., 76). Although the Indic theory of *avatars* was developed to explain divine intervention in the affairs of the world when the balance between good and evil had been upset, as argued by Kavita Singh, 'classical and local traditions all over India have long used it to incorporate various deities and legendary figures into the Vishnu tradition' (Ibid.). Accordingly, the green-bodied Jain teacher ends up in Patiala through this *avatar* sequence, which is also mentioned in the Dasam Granth⁴ (Figure 4). Here, however, it should be said that the word Jain is not mentioned in the Dasam Granth because the term was introduced as a self-designation only during the late nineteenth century (Flügel 2005, 3). In any case, the Patiala paintings show that, similar to Buddha for example, Parsvanath had been assimilated into the larger Indic world through the *avatar* theory. Guru Gobind Singh used the latter theory in the Dasam Granth, of which the paintings in the Qila Mubarak by and large are a reflection, as a way to legitimate his rule, status and power in comparison to all those *avatars* who were before him (I am thankful to Pashaura Singh for this insight). As a matter of fact, still today heterodox Jains sometimes conceive their *Jinas* as *avatars* and the first one, Adinath, is also included as Rsabha in one Hindu list of the *avatars* of Vishnu (Long 2009, 194). Thus, the adoption of the *avatar* theory remains a shared Indic culture phenomenon of the pre-twentieth century Jain and Sikh traditions. Likewise fascinating in the light of the idea of a righteous Sikh ruler remains a gouache from c. 1840–1845 showing maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), the founder of the Sikh Empire which emerged in the Punjab region and existed from 1799 to 1849, going through a bazaar on an elephant

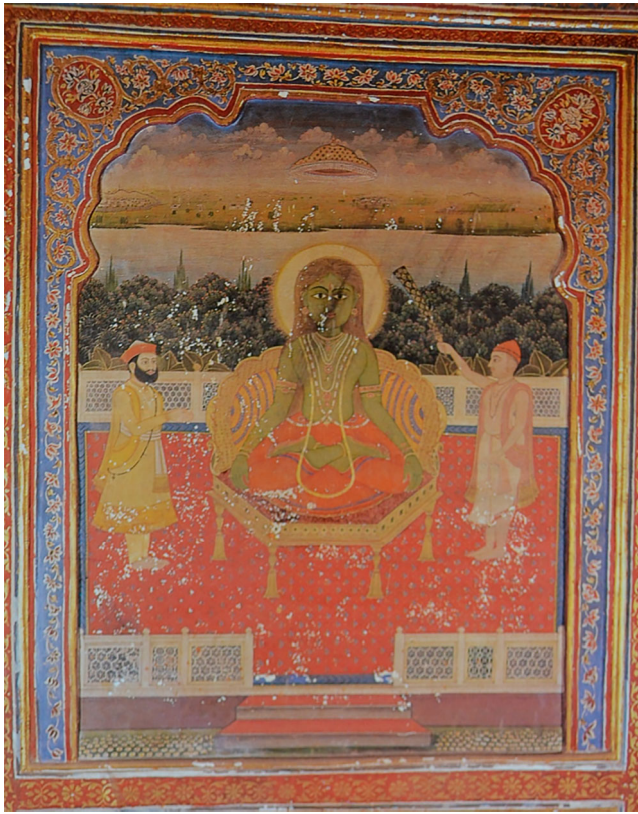


Figure 4. *Arihanta Deva*, Jain master Parsvanath, Sheesh Mahal, Qila Mubarak, Patiala. Source: Author's own photograph, 6 March 2014.

(see: <https://howard-hodgkin.com/indian-collection/artwork/maharaja-ranjit-singh-in-a-bazaar>). Aside the elephant, a Svetambar Jain monk is walking amongst Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Probably the scene was painted for a French officer at the court in Lahore (Topsfield 2012, 180–181). Intended or not, the work seems to demonstrate the cultural diversity that was possible under the just rule of the Ranjit Singh.

But when pre-twentieth century Jains and Sikhs more or less lived in an overlapping cultural world, did they also share parallel, if not intersecting, musical experiences? From the very beginning, music was essential to the Sikh tradition because Guru Nanak found that his teachings were best expressed through it. Together, Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* undeniably should be situated within the wider fifteenth to seventeenth century *bhakti* movement in South Asia. Compositions in the two musical traditions, for instance, generally follow the *pada* verse form that is commonly associated with it. Likewise, they were often written in local dialects rather than in Sanskrit, although the later Sikh gurus increasingly composed in a more literary language and used Braj Bhasha, Sanskrit and eventually Persian rather than, for example, old Punjabi, as Nanak did. No doubt, this process was directly related to the growing power and institutionalization of the Sikh court over time. Alternately, Jain *bhakti* had been written in every language used by Jains over the centuries. Thus, older hymns are written for example in Sanskrit and Tamil, while the

majority of the medieval and modern ones are written in Gujarati and Hindi, including in dialects such as Marwari. Simultaneously, Jain and Sikh hymns differ from the standard trope of Hindu *bhakti* poetry, which focuses on passionate attachment to a god and glorifying of the divinity for favours. Instead, Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* emphasize the cultivation of spiritual progress, although Jains specifically praise the virtues of their masters.

As common to the *bhakti* movement, Jain and Sikh devotional music linked up to various folk music genres. At the same time, however, Jain composers and the Sikh gurus were to different degrees familiar with the art music of their times. The Guru Granth Sahib is specifically organized on the basis of thirty one *ragas* (tonal frameworks for composition and improvisation). A few *raga* designations can also be found in Jain hymn books, though these most likely refer to folk melodies rather than actual *ragas* (Kelting 2001b, 235, 2016). As Whitney Kelting suggests, these *raga* titles might have been the result of the music performed during the earlier mentioned dances by *devidasis* at Jain temples (Kelting 2001b, 235). The use of the so-called *ragamala* ('garland of musical modes') painting tradition remains another interesting cultural parallel. Sikh manuscripts sometimes have illustrations of *ragas* in this tradition and the Guru Granth Sahib actually ends with a *ragamala*, a composition of twelve verses appended as a list of *ragas*. Jain manuscripts repeatedly contain illustrations of *ragas* as well (Goswamy and Smith 2005, 34–35). Even so, it remains a matter of speculation whether there was any actual relationship between the illustrations of *ragas* and contemporary music practice. In contrast to Jain *bhakti*, nonetheless, Sikh *kirtan* clearly belonged to the world of Hindustani music in terms of music theory, performance practice and instruments used (van der Linden 2015a). Although illustrations in early Jain manuscripts and images in temples sometimes show stringed instruments (see for instance: Pal 1997, 139, figure 85), as far as I know, the playing of stringed instruments and intricate drumming such as in the Sikh musical tradition never became part of Jain devotional music. Also the drone that is so characteristic to Indian art music was –until recently, but I will come back to that– never used in Jain music.

All in all, Sikh *kirtan* became based on the art music styles of *dhrupad*, which since at least the sixteenth century had been the form of art singing used at North Indian courts and, as a genre, follows a strict adherence to the purity of the *raga* and the *tala* (rhythmic cycle) as well as regulated improvisation around the used text, and later *khayal* (on these art musical styles, see: Sanyal and Widdess 2004; Wade 1984). On the other hand, Jain *bhakti* remained firmly based upon various Western Indian folk music genres and a trans-regional Jain musical tradition never emerged. But all this was to be expected. For, while within the Jain tradition, intellectuals had their debates with Mughal rulers, *bhakti* texts sometimes were influenced by Muslim literary culture and 'hybrid' painting styles developed as well (Dundas 1992, 124–127; Kelting 2001a, 84; Mitter 2001, 100–101; Truschke 2015), the Sikh tradition generally matured much more in interaction with Persian and Central-Asian cultural practices. Two reasons for this were the geography of Punjab and the closely intertwined, though often violent, historical relationship between the Sikhs and the Mughals. Sikh illustrated manuscripts, court culture and musical practices are only a few examples here (van der Linden 2015a). Also, the lineage of Muslim performers of *kirtan*, the so-called *rababis* who entered the tradition in the footsteps of Mardana, the fellow traveller and accompanist on the *rabab* of Guru Nanak, remains telling in this context. Unfortunately, however, this tradition has

almost died out because of modern Sikh identity politics and the partition of British India into India and Pakistan in particular.

Modern musical changes: colonial rule and globalization

In an earlier book chapter, I discussed the canonization of Sikh sacred music since the imperial encounter and especially through the activities of Singh Sabha reformers (van der Linden 2013, Chapter 5). Needless to say, the case of Jain *bhakti* is different because the tradition does not have a Guru Granth Sahib organized on the basis of specific *ragas*. Recently, however, John Cort wrote about the growing authority of modern science among Jains during this period (Cort 2012), and this despite the fact that orthodox Jains often obstructed, sometimes violently, the publication of Jain scriptures, which was pioneered by European Indologists from 1808 onward, because they objected ‘to the cruelty of the printing press to micro-organisms, and to the open accessibility of the sacred scriptures’ (Flügel 2005, 2). It seems reasonable to argue in this context, then, that Jain devotional music to a certain degree also was canonized, for example by printing *puja* books that were written by Jain mendicants, and from which formal rituals today still derive their liturgy (Kelting 2001a, 140).

From the late nineteenth century onward, elitist Sikh and Jain reformers increasingly campaigned for the public self-identification of their respective communities as ‘Sikhs’ and ‘Jains’ by claiming, among other things, separate political representation and support for modern educational institutions from the colonial government. They particularly did so when the decennial Census was held and many Sikhs and Jains still identified themselves as ‘Hindu’.⁵ Undeniably, the tallying of communities at the time of the Census was crucial to the emergence of modern representative politics in South Asia. Furthermore, local consciousness about these ‘politics of numbers’ was much influenced by the competitive activities of Christian missionaries and, especially in the case of the Punjab, the Arya Samaj (see for the Sikh case: van der Linden 2008; and the Jain case: Cort 2012; Flügel 2005). In fact, the widespread building of Jain temples and Sikh gurdwaras during the nineteenth century was financed by newly emerging Jain and Sikh elites whose fortunes were closely tied to British rule and who were generally eager to institutionalize their wealth in religious expression. The glittering Jain Parsvanath temple made in 1847 of Belgium glass in Phalodi in Rajasthan and the grand gurdwaras built by the maharajas of Patiala and Kapurthala are only a few examples here. It is well known that that Sikh maharajas and businessmen patronized performers of *kirtan* (van der Linden 2015a), but I would like to know whether rich Jains did do the same with *bhakti* performers or, for example, the compilation and printing of *puja* books. Anyhow, colonial rule certainly had musical consequences for the making of traditional Jain and Sikh music due to the introduction of the harmonium and brass bands. In the case of the Sikhs the Western harmonium, with its (pseudo-) well-tempered tuning and semitones, became central to the education and performance practice of *kirtan*. Although the instrument did not play a similar role among Jains, to some extent it probably influenced Jain music as well. Likewise, for some time already, brass bands have been hired for processions, for example to celebrate the birthdays of Guru Nanak or Mahavir. In fact, during Sikh processions brass bands regularly also perform devotional songs. No doubt, the hiring of these bands is directly related to modern identity politics,

for it not only contributes to the prestige of the community but also converts public space into ritual space.

One of the biggest differences between the modern practice of Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* is that the first is largely dominated by women, whereas Sikh women play no role in the official performance of *kirtan*. The latter was partially the result of the fact that paternalistic male Sikh reformers wanted their women to stay at home, to retain the status and morality of the family and the community (van der Linden 2008, 159–170). Having said this, Sikh women continued to sing *kirtan* in private, alone or in groups, and in recent decades increasingly also in public. In this context, then, I wonder to what extent the more or less institutionalized way in which Jain women perform *bhakti* in a seated dance, in line opposite each other and often with sticks rhythmically clashing against one another (as adopted from Gujarati *rasa-garba* folk dance), is the result of a process of modern male and moral redefinition of tradition.⁶ The non-celebratory dances that Jain women currently perform in temples certainly seem different from those of earlier female temple dancers as depicted in Jain manuscripts and carved out in temples. In addition, it remains typical that female Jain hymn singing groups generally perform during liturgical ceremonies and male groups more do so during festive and public ones. Also, according to Whitney Kelting, the use of microphones in the making of Jain music is very male-oriented, as they are often turned off when women perform (Kelting 2016).

Until the early twentieth century, various stringed instruments and different kind of drums, cymbals and horns were used in the performance of Sikh *kirtan* and the dominantly used combination of harmonium and *tabla* (the best known of Indian hand drums) of today therefore is only a modern standardization. To some extent, Sikh reformers did not want to use string instruments because of their association with Muslim musicians and they soon actually banned the *sarangi* from appearing inside the Golden Temple (Lallie 2016, 53, 62). By and large, Sikhs found it more practical to sing with the harmonium than with stringed instruments and, as a result, *kirtan* became more accessible to interested Sikhs with little or no musical training, including female groups singing at home (Ibid., 64–65). Apart from this change in instrumentation, *kirtan* was performed at the time in a way that was much more similar to what was common in Hindustani music practice, with more improvisations and hand movements for instance. The musical revivalist movement among the Sikhs that developed rapidly since the 1990s, then, seeks to recover these former instrumentations and musical practices. It more or less followed in the wake of the first Adutti Gurmat Sangeet Sammelan (Unique Gathering of Sikh Religious Music) that was held in Ludhiana in 1991 and which has been organized annually ever since. Its original goal was the performance of *kirtan* in the *ragas* mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib and the reintroduction of string instruments. Indeed, it could be argued that, after the earlier violent Sikh politics that led to attack on the Golden Temple by the Indian Army, murder of Indira Gandhi and the Delhi riots of 1984, the revivalist movement in *kirtan* emerged as a soft alternative form of identity politics. Its greatest achievement so far has been the establishment of the Gurmat Sangit department at Patiala University headed by Professor Gurnam Singh since 2003.

As a result of these revivalist initiatives, Sikh devotional music underwent a process of classicization that surpassed the earlier Singh Sabha process of musical standardization. In particular so through the use of Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande's writings, system of *raga*

classification system, which he actually based upon the semitones of the harmonium, and his notation system in syllabic script, which generally replaced all other existing systems in Hindustani music.⁷ Interestingly, this process led to unhistorical claims and discussions about authentic music making that largely mirror earlier Western ones in relation to the early music movement (see further: Kelly 2011; van der Linden 2013, Chapter 5). To a certain degree, the revivalist movement likewise led to an increasing individualization of master musicians, as has been common in Hindustani music in modern times, whereby *kirtan* musicians often position themselves musically in relationships with Hindustani musicians in order to gain authority. By and large, of course, these master musicians remain known among Sikhs alone rather than the general public because they perform only in gurdwaras and/or before Sikhs audiences.

Most likely, modern Sikh *kirtan* became more standardized than Jain *bhakti* because of the musical nature of the Sikh scripture. Yet, although the Sikh Gurus seem to have known enough about music to set their music to various *ragas*, this does not mean that the division of the Guru Granth Sahib in *ragas* is the consequence of their knowledge of music. After all, the names of *ragas* were repeatedly changed in the different earlier versions of the Guru Granth Sahib (Mann 2001, 132–133; Singh 2000). The *ragamala* at the end of the Guru Granth Sahib makes the issue of prescribed *ragas* even more complicated because the *ragas* in the list do not correspond with the main and mixed *ragas* used to categorize the hymns of the scripture. The *ragamala* section therefore perhaps stands for a catalogue of *ragas* that were in use at the time and could be used besides the prescribed ones. Dissimilar from the Sikh case, Jain *bhakti* does not have a tradition of professional performers. Although some male Jain professional musicians do exist, Jain devotional music is largely performed by amateur women in relatively institutionalized hymn singing groups, and partly for this reason also it remains based on regional folk music genres. Having said this, the performance of Jain music undeniably experienced a process of classicization in this century. As emphasized by Whitney Kelting, singers now aim to sing ‘pretty’ and consequently their notes tend to be more toward the pitches of the Western well-tempered scale. Also there has been a tendency among female singers to sing in more high pitch, as is common in Indian music, instead of in a nasal way, as before. Furthermore, Kelting noticed a shrinking of repertoire because of recordings and more private than public listening experiences (Kelting 2016). Then again, in view of twentieth century recordings and historical witness accounts, it can be argued that Sikh *kirtan* underwent an inward turn and generally came to be played in a much more disciplined manner as the result of modern reforms that disseminated the idea of spirituality as a feature of the ‘true’ Sikh tradition. One would like to know of course whether something similar did happen in the case of Jain *bhakti*. In any case, characteristic to both traditions and another sign of modern standardization are the competitions held for the best performances of Jain ritual (*puja*) and Sikh *kirtan*.⁸

Besides musical classicization, already for some decades both Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* are increasingly performed in different popular music styles, which include the appropriation of Bollywood film melodies and the use of synthesizers, guitars and so on. Among the Jains this mostly happens in the male hymn singing groups. This process was boosted by technological innovations from cassettes to the digital era of the internet.⁹ So, for example, the orthodox Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGCP) has a website with live broadcasting of Sikh *kirtan* from Amritsar’s Golden

Temple. Two well known Jain TV channels, Paras TV and Mahavir TV, broadcast from India but are available for online viewing elsewhere, for example on YouTube. Such websites and TV channels, however, mainly cater to Jains and Sikhs in diaspora (Vekemans 2014). To a great extent, these technological innovations stimulated standardization in the performance of Jain and Sikh devotional music, for example in terms of steadiness of metre and pitch, especially among the young. By and large, the listening to recordings and use of the internet led to a more private experience of Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* and often replaced live group singing. Also it remains interesting to mention that Jain recordings are dominantly sung by men and in an art music style, which includes the use of a drone and *tabla* for example, because they almost never sing solo in temples due to the existing idea that female voices are believed to be more auspicious (Kelting 2016). In chorus, the performance range of Jain and Sikh devotional music has expanded because of the migration of Jains and Sikhs around the world. Here it should be noted, however, that the Sikh revivalist movement in music largely takes place in Indian Punjab alone and that elsewhere (Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada, the US and so on) *kirtan* is generally performed by three musicians: two singers with a harmonium and one *tabla* player. These musicians mostly were trained in Punjab, especially in the SGCP music school in Amritsar, and perform in a popular musical style. Alternately, the Western popular musical styles in which the white Sikh converts of the so-called Happy, Holy and Healthy Organization perform *kirtan*, including at the Golden Temple, remain a peculiar example of globalization in the Sikh music tradition. The situation of Jain *bhakti* obviously is different because white converts to the tradition do not exist.

All in all, I do not know what the Jain orthodoxy thinks about contemporary musical and aesthetic changes in Jain *bhakti*, but many leading Sikhs are especially critical about the incorporation of popular music in their tradition. Be that as it may, these transformations show that in the cases of Jain and Sikh devotional music, and despite the modern Sikh orthodox initiatives towards musical standardization, ‘tradition returns again and again, not to be used up or relegated to the past, but to be restored with new meanings in the present’ (Bohlman 2002, 21). Ultimately, therefore, it remains uncertain how Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* will sound like in the future.

Concluding remarks

At all times, music has been part of the Jain and Sikh traditions. Whereas Jain worship is virtually always accompanied by music, the performance of and listening to the singing of the songs of the Gurus to a great extent forms the heart of the Sikh experience, in private and in the gurdwara. However, although both traditions are linked to a common past Indic culture, which also of course incorporated Islamic cultural practices over time, they definitely differ musically. Jain *bhakti* is often directly related to the performance of ritual and therefore remains largely embedded in the wider world of Hindu *bhakti*. Even so, while the latter generally involves a personal emotional relationship with the divinity, the musical devotion of Jains and Sikhs seems more inward and concerned with the ideological principles of the respective traditions. By and large, unlike Jain *bhakti*, Sikh *kirtan* too belongs to the realm of Hindustani music. At the same time, colonial rule and globalization resulted in parallel processes of institutionalization of music. As far as

I know, nonetheless, the revivalist discussions about the authentic performance of *kirtan* remain typical to the Sikh tradition, which so far at least in comparison to that of the Jains generally manifests itself more outwardly in terms of identity politics.

Without any doubt, much research on Jain *bhakti* and Sikh *kirtan* still needs to be done. This article, however, begs that historical research should be the backbone for a better understanding of the ever changing historical worlds in which Jains and Sikhs have lived and live, and that comparisons can be helpful on the way. This not only to show how musical practices changed over time, but also to emphasize that many of them got lost forever as part of processes of musical standardization in a global imperial context. So, for example, it can be argued that the use of the harmonium and popular music forms (Bollywood songs and so on) led to a decline in the use of traditional Indian micro-tones and an overall inclination towards Western semitones (see further about processes of standardization in the Hindustani and Carnatic art music traditions: Bakhle 2005; Bor et al. 2010; Subramanian 2006; van der Linden 2013; Weidman 2006. For a global history perspective, see van der Linden 2015b).

Notes

1. It should be noted, however, that the Sikh tradition includes the ascetic orders of the Nirmalas and Udasis, who both claim to have originated from the Sikh Gurus. See further: Judge (2014); and particularly on the position of Nirmalas and Udasis in the process of modern Sikh identity formation: Oberoi (1994).
2. To be clear, until the early twentieth century statues of Hindu deities often also adorned Sikh gurdwaras. See further: Oberoi (1994).
3. The most famous one probably is the following from the Guru Granth Sahib:

They pluck the hair from their heads, drink water in which people have washed, and beg leftovers. They take up their excreta and inhale its smell [...] they always remain filthy, day and night, and there is no *tilak* (a distinctive spot of coloured powder or paste worn on the forehead by Hindu men and women as a religious symbol) on their foreheads. They sit about in groups as if in mourning and do not share in public activities. Brush in hand, begging bowl over the shoulder, they walk along in single file.

(as cited in Cole 2014, 254, translation added)

4. Jain monks are also to be seen on a few paintings in the Qila Mubarak's Ran Vassa building, which was used for guests and entertainment. See: K. Singh (2003, 78–81, figures 10 and 12).
5. Despite processes of modern identity formation which led to the emergence of the terms 'Jainism' and 'Sikhism' as representations of 'world religions' still today many Jains, in contrast to Sikhs, tend to identify themselves as 'Hindus' at certain occasions. As a matter of fact, as underlined by Jeffrey D. Long, the relationship between Jains and Hindus is very easy in the United States, 'even to the point of utilizing the same worship facilities and participating in one another's rituals—although the Jain and Hindu rituals remain distinct'. Moreover, he continues, a portion of the Hindu-Jain Temple of Pittsburgh also functions as a Sikh gurdwara (Long 2009, 14, 42).
6. Overall, I assume that the imperial encounter brought a 'moral dimension' into modern South Asian history because elitist Indians in general could not fully break with their 'traditions' in the light of 'progress'. This predicament, sometimes labelled the struggle between 'faith' and 'reason', existed also of course in the Western world, but undeniably it was far more urgent within non-Western civilizations and cultures because of the clash with European civilization. Since the nineteenth century and in the context of local 'Enlightenments', then, I argue that traditions were redefined into 'moral languages', of which

'Jainism' and 'Sikhism' are two, and partially because of this process, moreover, Indian 'nations' were already sovereign, even though the state officially was in foreign hands. Over time, these 'moral languages' continued to be of great importance as the basic points of reference for South Asian 'diasporic' identity politics in Western 'multicultural' societies which remained dominated by Christian morality, racism and a belief in 'progress'. See further: van der Linden (2008).

7. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936) remains India's most important modern music reformer. See further: Bakhle (2005) and van der Linden (2013).
8. Before the actual start of the yearly three day Adutti Gurmat Sangeet Sammelan *kirtan* competitions are held; on Jain *puja* competitions: Kelting (2001a, 172–173).
9. Many instances of Sikh *kirtan* can be found on YouTube; see for examples of Jain music, besides the many clips on YouTube, the links to recordings at the end of M. Whitney Kelting's 'Songs of Devotion' article at the Jainpedia website: <http://www.jainpedia.org/themes/practices/songs-of-devotion/mediashow/print/index.html>.

Acknowledgements

Besides at the conference 'The Music and Poetics of Devotion in the Jain and Sikh Traditions', Loyola Marymount University (LMU), Los Angeles, on 26 February 2016, a subsequent version of this article was presented at a colloquium of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany, on 6 December 2016. I am thankful to Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa for her invitation to present a 'comparative' paper on Sikh and Jain devotional music at the LMU-conference. I learned a lot from it. Thanks also to Pashaura Singh and Whitney Kelting for their insightful comments upon my presentation, as well as to the anonymous reviewer for the helpful remarks.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References

- Bakhle, Janaki. 2005. *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Ballantyne, Tony. 2006. *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bohlman, Philip V. 2002. *World Music: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bor, Joep, Françoise Delvoye Nalini, Jane Harvey, and Emmie te Nijenhuis, eds. 2010. *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Cole, W. Owen. 2014. "Sikh Interactions with Other Religions." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, edited by Pashaura Singh, and Louis Fenech, 250–261. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cort, John E. 1990. "Models of and for the Study of the Jains." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 2: 42–71.
- Cort, John E. 2002a. "Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religion in South Asia." *History of Religions* 42 (1): 59–86.
- Cort, John E. 2002b. "Singing the Glory of Asceticism: Devotion of Asceticism in Jainism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 (4): 719–742.
- Cort, John E. 2012. "Indology as Authoritative Knowledge: Jain Debates about Icons and History in Colonial India." In *Trans-Colonial Modernities in South Asia*, edited by Michael S. Dodson, and Brian A. Hatcher, 137–161. London: Routledge.
- Dundas, Paul. 1992. *The Jains*. London: Routledge.

- Flügel, Peter. 2005. "The Invention of Jainism: A Short History of Jaina Studies." *International Journal of Jain Studies* 1 (1): 1–14.
- Goswamy, B. N., and Caron Smith. 2005. *Domains of Wonder: Selected Masterworks of Indian Painting*. San Diego: San Diego Museum of Art.
- Guy, John Guy. 1997. "Indian Dance in the Temple Complex." In *Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art*, edited by Jim Masselos, Jackie Menzies, Pratapaditya Pal, et al., 26–36. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Hawley, John Stratton, and Mark Juergensmeyer. (1998) 2004. *Songs of the Saints of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Judge, Paramjit Singh. 2014. "Taksals, Akharas, and Nihang Deras." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, edited by Pashaura Singh, and Louis Fenech, 372–381. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kelly, Thomas Forrest. 2011. *Early Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kelting, M. Whitney. 2001a. *Singing to the Jinas: Jain Laywomen, Mandal Singing, and the Negotiations of Jain Devotion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kelting, M. Whitney. 2001b. Jain (India, VI, 5: Religious Music). *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 12, edited by Stanley Sadie, 2nd ed., 235–236. London: MacMillan.
- Kelting, M. Whitney. 2016. "Tracking Changes in Jain Devotional Singing." Paper presented at the conference "The music and Poetics of devotion in the Jain and Sikh traditions", Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, February 26.
- Lallie, Harjinder Singh. 2016. "The Harmonium in Sikh Music. Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture." *Theory* 12 (1): 53–66.
- Long, Jeffrey D. 2009. *Jainism: An Introduction*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Mann, Gurinder Singh. 2001. *The Making of Sikh Scripture*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Mitter, Partha. 2001. *Indian Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oberoi, Harjot. 1994. *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Pal, Pratapaditya. 1997. "Buddhist and Jain Realms." In *Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art*, edited by Jim Masselos, Jackie Menzies, Pratapaditya Pal, et al., 126–141. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Sanyal, Ritwik, and Richard Widdess. 2004. *Dhrupad: Tradition and Performance in Indian Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Singh, Pashaura. 2000. *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Singh, Kavita. 2003. "Allegories of Good Kinship: Wall Paintings in the Qila Mubarak at Patiala." In *New Insights into Sikh Art*, edited by Kavita Singh, 68–85. Mumbai: National Centre for the Performing Arts/Marg Publications.
- Subramanian, Lakshmi. 2006. *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Topsfield, Andrew. 2012. *Visions of Mughal India: The Collection of Howard Hodgkin*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.
- Truschke, Audrey. 2015. "Dangerous Debates: Jain Responses to Theological Challenges at the Mughal Court." *Modern Asian Studies* 49 (5): 1311–1344.
- van der Linden, Bob. 2008. *Moral Languages from Colonial Punjab: The Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- van der Linden, Bob. 2013. *Music and Empire in Britain and India: Identity, Internationalism, and Cross-Cultural Communication*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- van der Linden, Bob. 2015a. "Pre-Twentieth-Century Sikh Sacred Music: The Mughals, Courtly Patronage and Canonisation." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38 (2): 141–155.
- van der Linden, Bob. 2015b. "Non-Western National Music and Empire in Global History: Interactions, Uniformities, and Comparisons." *Journal of Global History* 10 (3): 431–456.

- Vekemans, Tine. 2014. "Double-Clicking the Temple Bell: Devotional Aspects of Jainism Online." *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 6: 126–143.
- Wade, Bonnie C. 1984. *Khyal: Creativity within North India's Classical Music Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weidman, Amanda J. 2006. *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.