

# *I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur* Dervishes Ceremonies in Constantinople Described by Western Travellers and Painters between Sixteenth and Eighteenth Century

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**Abstract** Between the sixteenth century and the eighteenth century many Europeans visited Constantinople, the new Ottoman capital, and wrote reports that took various aspects of its cultural and musical life into consideration. Among the recurring elements of such reports, we note the description of Dervishes and their ceremonies, often accompanied by engravings and more rarely by musical transcriptions. Through time, such a description became a topic (and a stereotype) both in literature and in fine arts. Without claiming to be exhaustive, my article retraces and comments descriptions of Dervish ceremonies, in a chronological order, by Western travellers and scholars between sixteenth and eighteenth century, between the so-called Age of Exploration and Modernity.

**Keywords** Dervishes. Dervish Ceremonies. Mevlevî Dervishes. Mevlevî Ceremonies. Sufi Music. History of Sufism. Ottoman Classical Music. Ottoman History. Western Travels History.

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## 1 Introduction

Between the sixteenth century and the eighteenth century many Europeans visited Constantinople, the new Ottoman capital, and wrote reports that took into consideration various aspects of its cultural and musical life. Among the recurring elements of such reports, we note the description of Dervishes and their ceremonies. In particular, at a certain point of their sojourn in Constantinople, ambassadors, aristocrats, wealthy merchants, and other worthy travellers invariably would be taken, or at least directed, to the lodge of the famous *mevlevî* dervishes, better known as ‘Whirling Dervishes’, situated in Pera, the European part of town. Upon their return at home, the observers published books containing, amidst many other subjects, the description of such Dervish rituals, often illustrated by engravings and more rarely by musical transcriptions: through time, these ceremonies became a topic (and a stereotype) both in literature and in fine arts.

The whole inclusions and exclusions process of what was (and what was not) noted and reported in Constantinople by Western travellers would be capable of raising many questions, yet, it is worth saying that, at the time, almost every Sufi brotherhood of the vast Ottoman world had a centre in the capital:<sup>1</sup> according to Ottoman historian Evliyâ Çelebi (1611-1684), in his time in Constantinople there were five hundreds and seventy seven *tekkes* (large centres) and six thousands *zaviyas* (small centres) of dervishes.<sup>2</sup> For this reason meeting a dervish in the street must have been a rather common experience for Western travellers. Yet, if such a curiosity for these ‘strange’ figures, was, after all, rather normal, I am wondering why did Ottomans think that European visitors would have enjoyed such dervish ceremonies or been impressed by it? What the *mevlevî* ceremonies was likely to have represented for Ottoman hosts? Was it a ‘performance’ of which they were especially proud? And for their part, why were Europeans almost invariably fascinated? *What* did they see in such rituals, aside from mere picturesque element?

Without any pretension of exhaustiveness, in the following pages I will focus on some first traces of such a curiosity that we find both in travellers reports and in fine arts between sixteenth and eighteenth century, a fervid period between the so-called Age of Exploration and modernity. Of course, Western curiosity for the Dervish-

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**1** Called, in order of magnitude and importance, *tekke*, *zaviya*, *dargâh*. In addition to these general terms, the more specific *asitâne* was applied to the headquarters of a given Sufi order, while *mevlevihâne* was used only for the bigger *mevlevî* dervishes centres.

**2** Musicologically, it seems rather interesting that, despite the distance, a dervish coming from Bukhara could meet, for instance, a brother from Baghdad and find a common musical background made by hymns (*ilâhi*) and other more sophisticated genres.

es ceremonies continued, after our chosen time frame, throughout nineteenth century, from Romantic exoticism *reveries* about a 'far' East, to hippies staying at the Pera Palas during their travel to India; little by little the engravings, devoured by curious upper class Westerners during XVI-XVIII, gave way to photographs and videos, arriving to nowadays Istanbul, where tourists crowd the reopened Pera/Galata centre (a recurring place in our travellers descriptions) and many 'secular' theatres propose each day 'dervish ceremonies' for the tourists in town.

## 2 **Nicolas de Nicolay, *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* (1568)**

The same term *dervish* seems to appear for the first time in Europe in a book of travels, as is Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* published in Lyon by Guillaume Rouillé in 1568. In 1551 French king Henry II (1519-1559) ordered de Nicolay to follow Gabriel de Luetz, Baron et Seigneur d'Aramon et de Vallabregues (?-1553) in Constantinople, where he was French ambassador to Suleyman the Magnificent (Kanunî Sultan Süleyman, 1494-1566). Aramon's entourage included many famous scholars as Pierre Belon (1517-1564), Pierre Gilles (alias Petrus Gyllius, 1490-1555), André Thevet (1516-1590) and Guillaume Postel (1510-1581). Translated in many Western languages,<sup>3</sup> de Nicolay's book had an enormous success and became a source for Orientalism through the centuries thanks also to the precious copper engravings made by Louis Danet, probably after de Nicolay original drawings. In our perspective, among the peculiarities of Constantinople, the author noted 'men of religion' and classified them in four categories; according to such a classification, the chapter XVII of the third book is devoted to the third category, *De la tierce secte des religieux turcs, appelez deruis*. As stated above, the meetings with such *religieux turcs, appelez deruis* must have been rather frequent in Constantinople, yet, de Nicolay chapter is mostly devoted to a harsh and Eurocentric description of the severe ascetic practices of the most unorthodox (and picturesque) dervishes named *qalandâr* (Ottoman-Turkish *kalender*), still existing nowadays in Indo-Pakistan area and in Xinjiang [figs. 1-2].

**3** Among them, Nicolas de Nicolay (1580). *Le Navigationi et viaggi fatti nella Turchia*. Novamente tradotto di francese in italiano da Francesco Flori da Lilla, aritmetico. Venezia: Francesco Ziletti.



**Figure 1** *Deruiso religioso Turco che si fa tagli p la vita.*  
Engraving by Louis Danet,  
from Nicolas de Nicolay, 1580

Given the academic public of this review, I hope it is not redundant to briefly remember here that, according to current knowledge, the term *deruis* come from Persian *darvish*, equivalent to Arab *faqīr* and *mishqīn* ('poor'), probably indicating who is 'poor' in front of the only One who, according to the Ninety-Nine divine names/divine attributes (*al-asmā al-husnā*), is *al-ghānī* ('Rich', 'Self-sufficient'). According to another possible etymology, the term derives from Persian *dar* (door, threshold) so that *darvish* would literally mean 'the one standing at the door'. Yet, such a 'door' may have different meanings: the dervishes may have moved from door to door (Persian, *dar ba dar*) during the begging; in a second sense they moved from one spiritual threshold to another asking for divine revelations, in a third sense they stood on the door between this and other worlds (see Papas 2001, 3: 129-35). Be that as it may, during the Middle Age the term began to be used for those who adopted a style of life in which detachment and renunciation were both material and spiritual.



**Figure 2** *Calendario Religioso Turco che porta anella oltra l'altre parti del corpo al membro virile per farsi inhabile al coito.* Engraving by Louis Danet, from Nicolas de Nicolay, 1580

### 3 Guillaume Postel, *De la republique des Turcs* (1560)

From the same French environment in Constantinople, Guillaume Postel (1510-1581) was a highly gifted French linguist, astronomer, cabbalist, and diplomat who possessed a particular interest in spirituality. His travels were made during a period of alliance between the French King François I, who reigned from 1515 to 1547, and his new ally Sulayman 'the Magnificent' (Kanunî Sultan Süleyman), who ruled the Ottoman Empire between 1520 and 1566, and continued under the reign of Henri II. In his *De la republique des Turcs*, published in 1560, Postel describes the travels that he made in the 1530s and provides a description of a dervish ceremony:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This and the following passages cited in the article preserve the original orthography and punctuation, despite obvious differences from modern forms of French, Italian, or English.

Commancent en branlant la teste, et tout le corps, l'un vers l'autre, disans 'alla, alla, alla, alla, alla' tant des fois et long de temps repentant qu'ils cheent à bas comme estourdis, et disent que alors leur esprit va avec Dieu porter lassala, ou l'oraison. En la Surie et Natolie ou Turquie en y a qui se mettent à fort tourner disant 'alla, alla' etc. que jamais pirouette n'est fist imitation, en fin que tous estourdis demeurent comme mors, et en extase, et alors dient que leur esprit va avec Dieu. (Postel 1560, 52)

They begin by bowing the head, and all the body, one toward the other, saying 'alla, alla, alla, alla, alla' so many times and repeating it for so long that they fall as if they were stunned, and they say that their spirit takes the prayer<sup>5</sup> to God. In Syria and Anatolia or Turkey there are some who begin to whirl so powerfully while repeating 'alla, alla' etc. that a pirouette could never imitate them; so that finally they are all stunned and remain as if dead, in ecstasy, and they say that their spirit goes with God.

If the first observation made by Postel seems to depict a *dhikr jāhrī* (vocal invocation) of the *qiyyam* (standing) type, the second phrase, with his precise verb *tourner* (to whirl), suggests a Mevlevī *semâ*. However, in the absence of any remarks about musical instruments, the whirling of the dervishes while repeating the name of God seems similar to the *raqs-i samō* diffused in Central Asia and among the *Naqshbandī jāhrī* (or *Naqshbandī āfāqī*) in what is now Xinjiang (De Zorzi 2013, 173-210).

#### 4 **Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il Pellegrino descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari al suo erudito amico Pietro Schipano* (posthumous)**

The third report is that of the Roman antiquarian, composer, musicologist and Orientalist Pietro della Valle (1586-1652). Between 1614 and 1626, his journeys took him to the Holy Land, through the Middle East and North Africa, and as far as India. In his second letter from Constantinople, he describes a visit to the centre of the Mevlevī dervishes in Pera, the European quarter of the city.

Un venerdì, che secondo il costume de' Turchi si va più del solito alle meschite, e vi si predica, andai qui ne' borghi di Pera, dove noi abitiamo, in un luogo di dervisci, che ci è, dove aveva inteso che si soleva fare in tal giorno una buona musica... andai al luogo di costoro, che hanno qui fra le vigne di Pera, e trovai che già vi si predicava... finita la predica, si raunarono i dervisci in mezzo della meschita in giro; e quivi al suono di quattro o cinque flauti, fatti di canne, che con distinzione di

<sup>5</sup> In the French original, *lassala* probably represents *lasalāt*. In Arabic, *salāt* is the stipulated ritual prayer, meant to be performed five times in a day, rather than spontaneous prayer.

tutte le voci, basso, tenore, contralto e soprano facevano una bellissima armonia, cominciarono a ballare: talora sonando senza ballare e talora sonando e ballando insieme a vicenda: e ballando, ora tutti insieme, ora alcuni di loro, ed ora alcun solo. Il moto de' piedi, ne' lor balli, è appunto il medesimo che quello degli Spagnoli nelle loro ciaccone; che i Mori, nella Spagna, dovettero insegnarlo, ma questi, ballando, si girano sempre attorno sopra un piede; e chi gira più presto, e dura più a girare, è più valent'uomo. Nel principio cominciano con moto lento e soave, adagio adagio: ma poi, poco a poco riscaldati, lo vanno ogni ora più affrettando; finché al fine, cresciuto quasi in eccesso il fervore, si danno tanta fretta e si aggirano con tanta velocità, che appena gli arriva la vista di chi gli riguarda. Nel girare invocano spesso Dio; replicando forte, volta a volta, la parola *Hù*, che si interpreta *Esso*, ovvero *E'*, e s'intende per Dio, che solo ha vero essere... Però la musica che fanno è galante, e degna in ver d'essere sentita: e quei flauti che chiamano *nai*, ovvero più correttamente *nei*, che in persiano significa propriamente canna, come di canna son fatti, non si può credere quanto dolce suono rendano. (Della Valle 1843, 47-8)

One Friday, the day on which by custom Turks go more than usual to the mosques, and listen to sermons, I went in the area of Pera, where we live, to a place of dervishes that is there, where I heard that good music would be played... I went to the place that they have there among the vineyards of Pera, and I found that they were already listening to the sermon... When the sermon had finished, the dervishes gathered in the middle of the mosque; and here, to the sound of four or five flutes made of reed, with a sweet harmony produced by all the voices, bass, tenor, alto and soprano, they began to dance: at times they played without dancing and at times they were playing and dancing at the same time: and at times they all danced together, at times some of them danced, and at times only one. The movement of the feet, in their dances, is the same as that in the dance of the Spanish, in their *chacónes*; the Moors, in Spain, must have taught them, yet, when they dance, they whirl always on one foot; the one who whirls faster and longer is considered to be the most able. At the beginning they start with a slow and sweet pace, adagio, adagio: but after a while, they accelerate the movement little by little, constantly increasing the pace; at the end, attaining an almost excessive fervour, they whirl with such a speed that is difficult to follow them with the eyes. When they are whirling, they often invoke God; repeating loudly the word *Hu*, which means 'He', God, the only Being... But the music they play is really gallant, and worthy of being heard: and the flutes that they call *nai*, or more correctly *nei*, a term that in Persian means 'reed', because they are made of reed, it is impossible to believe what a sweet sound they make.

The remarks of Pietro della Valle about harmony are quite puzzling and may simply reflect his Western musical education, because Ottoman music is monophonic and heterophonic. While there are indeed many sizes of *ney*, even if they were played together, they would play in unison by transposing the melody. Instead, his observation that the musicians alternated sections of music with sections of music and dancing accurately reflects the structure of a *mevlevî* ceremony (*âyın*) in which purely musical sections, such as *na'at-i Mevlânâ*, *peşrev*, and *baş taksîm*, are included along with sections in which the *semâzens* are in motion. His remarks about the speed of the *semâzens*, gradually accelerating and attaining a great velocity, may recall comments by the musicolo-

gist Jean During (1988, 172) about the gradual shift of the Mevlevî *sêmâ* from an ecstatic ceremony, disordered and full of energy, as it appears in the observations of Pietro della Valle and in commentaries produced by the Mevlevî themselves, to the more formal and composed performances of modern Mevlevî ceremonies. Finally, his remarks on the *ney* accurately reflect the etymology and the sweet sound of the flute and confirm the status among the Mevlevî of an instrument dear to Mevlâna when he composed the eighteen distiches that open his *Mesnevî*.

## 5 Two Western Residents in Town: Wojciech Bobowski and Demetrius Cantemir

Our next encounters are with two European *residents* of the city, rather than the occasional travellers who provide the majority of our accounts. Dervishes are present in their pages but in a subtler way, beyond their simple and picturesque description: the first of these European residents is a multitalented man called Wojciech Bobowski, *alias* Albertus Bobovius Leopopolitanus *alias* 'Alî Ufukî, *alias* 'Alî Beg el-santurî (Bobowa, 1610?-Constantinople, 1675?): born near Leopoldis, a city known through times as Lemberg in German, Lwów in Polish, and Łviv in Ukrainian, he was captured by Tatar marauders, sold at the slave market in Constantinople and set to work at the court as *ıçoğlan* (pageboy),<sup>6</sup> playing, among other duties, the hammered zither known as *santûr*. Moreover, thanks to his studies, to his colleagues' amazement Bobowski *transcribed* the musical compositions that he had been learning by ear according to the *meşk* method, so that he could refresh his memory.

In our particular perspective, it seems worthy of note that it is generally believed that he converted to Islam, taking the name 'Alî Ufukî', and entering a Sufi brotherhood, the *Celvetîye*.<sup>7</sup> If this is true, dervishes were not a mere picturesque element in his life. Apart

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<sup>6</sup> More precisely as a 'music pageboy'; in the title of the Italian version of the *Serrai Enderum* (Ottoman *Seray Enderûn*) we read, in fact: "Serrai Enderum Del Serraglio del nuovo delli Gran Signori Ottomani descritto da Alberto Bobouio Leopolitano Polacco, il quale [...] hà iui con officio di paggio di musica parecchij anni abitato". Cf. Cornelio Magni, *Quanto di più curioso e vago ha potuto raccorre Cornelio Magni nel primo biennio da esso consumato in viaggi e dimore per la Turchia. Resta distribuito in questa Prima parte in varie lettere scritte in Italia, le quali principalmente includono l'esame della metropoli di Costantinopoli, de' luoghi soggiacenti e dell'esercito Ottomano, sì in marcia, come in campo. Dedicata all'inclita città di Parma sua patria. Aggiuntavi la relazione del Serraglio del Gran Signore, e delle parti più recondite di esso, distesa da Alberto Bobouio Leopolitano trattenutosi con nome di Bey in qualità di paggio* (Parma, Rosati 1679, 502).

<sup>7</sup> The *Celvetîye* was a branch of the *Halvetîye* founded by Şeyh Uftâde (d. 1580) that was very active at the Ottoman court during the seventeenth century. According to the descriptions that have survived, *Celvetî* dervishes seem to have performed a distinctive *zîkr* with musical instruments. Cf. Feldman 1996, 63, 68.



from his inner life, the dervishes repertoires that he transcribed in his private carnet and that arrived to our days are of great importance: in fact, at the end of his life, after a career as a man of letters and translator (Dragoman, *tercuman*), he entrusted two copies of his private notebook containing his musical transcriptions to some travellers. These two copies, not identical, are preserved at the British Library in London (GB Lbl Sloane 3114) and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (F BnF Turc 292). Both are precious sources of information about the music of the time because the author transcribed *all* the music that he heard at court and elsewhere - as a sort of *avant la lettre* ethnomusicologist - of secular as well as spiritual genres, including folk songs (*türkü*), urban popular songs (*şarkı*), the songs of the dancing boys (*köçekçe*), calls to prayer (*ezan*) and, in our perspective, dervishes hymns (*ilâhi* and *tevşih*).

Mevlevî culture seems to have influenced in a subtler way the treatise composed by the second European resident, the Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), entitled *Kitâbu 'İlmi'l-Mûsiki 'alâ Vechi'l-Hurûfât* (The Book of the Science of Music according to Alphabetic Notation). Written in Constantinople between 1700 and 1703, when Cantemir was held hostage in the capital to ensure that his father remained loyal to the sultan, the treatise comprises a theoretical section written in Ottoman that is followed by a second section of 351 entirely instrumental compositions, mostly *peşrev* and *semâî*, which are anonymous or attributed to various composers. They are all written in a notational system often said to have been invented by Cantemir and therefore known as *Kantemiroğlu Notası*. However, according to recent scholarship, his system was a revision of an earlier and similar system of musical notation invented by the Mevlevî dervish Osman Dede (1652-1729), a composer and musician revered as the *kutb-u nâyi* (Pole of the *Ney*) of his epoch.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, as above for Bobowski, also for Cantemir the relations with dervishes were far from a mere picturesque description.

<sup>8</sup> *Kutb* (pole) referred to the axis around which the heavens turned. The term was applied to a figure of unrivalled sanctity and also to the foremost exponent of an art or science. For Cantemir's treatise, see Wright 1992 and 2000. On the relationship between the musical notation system invented by Osman Dede and Cantemir, see Feldman 1996, 33, 52, 92.

154 *Relation du Voyage*

Hymne. *I ki hezar a feryn, ay ay, I ki hezar a feryn bou nidge Sultan olur dgiu-num Kosli olan Kechiler, dgianium, hufreu u hba-kan olur.*

Des les caracteres ont esté fournis par Monsieur Ballard, seul Imprimeur du Roy pour la Musique.

**I** Ki hezar aferin bon nidge sultan olur,  
Kosli olan kechiler, hufreu-u hba-kan olur,  
Ayaghinang tozini surme theken guceuzine,  
Nejne guur guuzi kim valihu heiran olur,  
Che-behinang catrefin her kim ut-her dgiurefta,  
Gunli guher dolaben sinefi umman olur,  
Sanga direm, dedey salma deni dunsade,  
Nefsi deuin zapt iden dinde juleyman olour,

**Figure 3** Musical transcription of the Hymn *I ki hezar aferin* from Jean Antoine du Loir, *Les voyages du Sieur du Loir* (Paris: Gervais Clovzier, 1654, 154). Under the score it can be read: "Dons les caracteres on esté fournis par monsieur Ballard, seul imprimeur du Roy pour la musique". (Whose [typographical] characters was furnished by Mr. Ballard, one and only King's music printer)

## 6 Jean Antoine du Loir, *Les voyages du Sieur du Loir* (1654)

After these residents, we return to the description of a Mevlevî ceremony written by another traveller, this time French aristocrat Jean Antoine du Loir (XVII), published in 1654 and accompanied by a valuable and innovative – albeit very short – musical transcription from a setting of the verses beginning with *I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur*, that inspired the title of this article [fig. 3]. The transcription is accompanied by a precious and accurate translation from Ottoman into French, that can be intended here as a sign of a deeper curiosity for the ‘Other’ and, at the same time, one of the first examples of Orientalism.

Deux fois la sepmaine un des leurs fait une predication dans leur couvent, & les femmes qui par tout ailleurs n'ont point d'entrée aux lieux où sont les hommes y assistent par un privilege particulier, estant bien raisonnable qu'elles soient admises aux devotions de ces Religieux amans. Celuy qui preche prend pour texte quelque versets de l'Alcoran & je vous assure que les plus devots Chrestiens pourroient profiter de la Morale de son Sermon.

Cependant tous les dervichs sont renfermez dans une balustrade pour n'estre pas emportunez de la foule des assistants, & pour n'estre pas troublez dans l'exercice de leur ordre, que ie vais vous descrire.

*La predication estant finie, les Chantres qui sont dans une galerie, comme sont icy les orgues dans les Eglises, accordant leur voix avec des flutes, qui pour estre merueilleusement harmonieuses sont deffendües a tout autre sorte d'usage, commencent un Hymne à la cadence d'un tambour de biscaye. Voicy les parolles de cét Hymne, que j'ay nottéés, afin que ceux qui sçauent la Musique en puissent juger.<sup>9</sup>*

I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur,  
 Kouli olan kichiler husie-u hhakan olur,  
 Ayaghinung tozini sureme theken gucceuzine,  
 Nesne gurur gueuzi xim valihu heïran olur,  
 Che beiinnung catresin her kim ither dgiuresin,  
 Gungli guhert doluben sinesi ûmman olur,  
 Sanga direm, dedey salma deui dunsade,  
 Nefsi deuin zapriden dinde suleyman olur,  
 Sen malungne tapmaghil, xiokchu saray yapmaghil,  
 Ol dourouchub yaptughung sung oudgi viran olur,  
 Beslemeghil icnugni nimet-u bircan ile,  
 Bir gun olur ol tenung damoude biriaïn olur,  
 Her xichi kimal bolour senma ki deuler boulur,  
 Deuleti boulan kichi allah: boulan olur,  
 Her ki bougun veledé inanuben yuz sure,  
 Yokhsoul ise bai olur, bai ise soultan olur.

Voicy l'explication de cette Hymne, dont asseurement vous trouverez le sens meilleur que le chant.

Ha combine de loüanges merite, & combien est grand ce Seigneur,  
 dont toutes les esclaves sont autant des Rois.  
 Quiconque frottera ses yeux de la poudre de ses pieds,  
 verra quelque chose qui luy donnera tant d'admiration qu'il tombera en extase.  
 Celuy qui boira une goutte de son breuvage,  
 aura le sein comme un Ocean remply de pierreries & de liqueurs precieuses.  
 le te le dis, ó pere! Ne lasche point dans ce monde la bride à tes passions,  
 quiconque le reprimera sera un vrai Salomon dans la voy.  
 Ne t'amuse point à adore les richesses, n-y a bastir des kiosks, & des palais.  
 La fin de ce que tu aurais basty n'est que ruyne,  
 Ne nourris point ton corps avec tant des delicatesses & des friandises.  
 Il arriveroit un iour que ce corps resteroit dans les enfers.  
 Ne t' imagine point que celuy qui trouve des richesses trouve du bon-heur.  
 Celuy qui trouve le bon-heur n'est autre que celuy qui trouve Dieu.  
 Tout ceux qui se prosternent avec respect & humilité, croiront aujourd'huy en Velé,  
 Seront riches, s'ils estoient pauvres, & s'ils estoient riches deviendront des Rois.

*I ne vous ay point escrit cette traduction interlineaire, parce que la phrase du François ne se rencontre pas avec celle du Turc, & i'ai cru que ce seroit traduire ces Vers assez exactement que de mettre ligne pour vers comme ie vous l'enuoyer. Vous remarquerez*

<sup>9</sup> The following words appear in a small typeface under the musical score: *Dons les carachteres on esté fournis par monsieur Ballard, seul imprimeur du Roy pour la musique* (Whose characters were provided by M. Ballard, sole musical printer of the King).

seulement que le ay, ay qui est une particule d'exclamation, ni le mot agianum qui signifie mon ame, ne sont point partie des deux premiers Vers, mais que souvent il les mettent à la cesure & à la fin des couplets, & qu'ils ont plusieurs semblables mots qu'ils appliquent de mesme en chantant, mais a propos et selon le sujet.

Durant le premier Verset de cét Hymne tous les Dervichs sont dans une posture fort devote, assis sur les talons, les bas croisez & la teste baissée. Le Superieur qui est dans la queblé, orné d'une estolle de poil de chameau, frappe des mains aussitôt que le second commence, & tous les dervichs s'estant incontinant levez, les plus proche de luy passant devant le saluë, avec une profonde inclination de teste, & se met à tourner, pirouëtant petit à petit d'un mouvement si viste qu'à peine peut on s'apercevoir; Celuy qui suit en fait autant, & aussi tous les autres qui sont trente ou quarante. Cette danse circulaire ayant duré quelquefois plus d'un demy-quant d'heure, dans son plus rapide mouvement cesse tout d'un coup au mesme signal qu'elle a commancé, & les dervichs, comme s'ils n'avoient bougé de la place où ils se trouvent, se remettent assis sur en leur premier posture iusques à ce que leur Superieur les fasse encore recommencer. Ainsi cette danse continuë quelquefois une heure et plus, a quatre ou cinq reprises dont les derniers durent toujours plus longtemps, parce que les dervichs sont plus en haleine & plus en bransle pour tourner, estans vestus fort à propos pour ce suiet d'une espece de lupon volant, taillé en rond comme les chemisettes des femmes en France. (du Loir 1654, 153-7)

Twice a week one of them makes a sermon in their convent, and the women who cannot enter elsewhere in places where there are men are granted a special privilege, so it is reasonable that they be admitted to the devotions of these religious lovers. The one who preaches takes as a text some verses from the Qur'an and I assure you that many devout Christians could benefit from the moral of these sermons.

Meanwhile all the dervishes are gathered within a balustrade in order not to be disturbed by the crowd of the audience, and to avoid being troubled in the exercise of their order, which I am going to describe to you.

When the sermon is over, the singers, who are in a gallery like those which exist where the organs in churches are [kept] here, begin to tune their voices with some flutes, which are beautifully harmonious and are prohibited for any other use, beginning a hymn to the beat of a frame drum.<sup>10</sup> Here are the words of this hymn, which I have written, so that anyone who knows music can judge.<sup>11</sup>

Here you have the translation of this hymn, whose sense you will assuredly find better than the song.

Ah, how many praises he deserves and how great is this Lord,  
 all of whose slaves are so many kings!  
 Whoever will rub on his eyes the dust of His feet  
 will see something so admirable that he will fall in ecstasy.  
 Whoever will drink a drop of His wine,  
 his breast will be like an ocean full of precious gems and liqueurs.

<sup>10</sup> According to Soullier 1870, a *tambour de biscayne* is a sort of 'tambour de basque avec grelots et castagnettes', which means that it was a frame drum with cymbals. Du Loir very probably depicted an Ottoman *def* or *daire*.

<sup>11</sup> The transcription from the Ottoman, beginning with the line *I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur*, is provided above.

I tell you: O father! Do not let your passions run unbridled in this world,  
 whoever will tame them will be a real Solomon of the faith.  
 Do not indulge yourself by worshipping wealth; do not build kiosks and palaces:  
 The end of what you have built is nothing but ruins.  
 Do not feed your body with so many delicacies and sweetmeats:  
 The day will arrive when your body will remain in hell.  
 Do not imagine that one who finds wealth finds happiness.  
 He who finds happiness is none other than he who finds God.  
 All those who prostrate themselves with respect and humility,  
 who believe today in the Friend,  
 Will become rich if they are poor, and if they are rich will become kings!

I did not provide an interlinear translation, because the phrases in French do not correspond with those in Turkish, and I also thought that it would be tedious for you if I translated these verses so exactly that the lines were placed together. You will notice that I have omitted from the first verses the exclamations *ay, ay*, just as I have omitted the recurring term *agianum*, which means ‘my soul’,<sup>12</sup> but often these are in the caesura and in the end of the couplets, and there are many similar words that may be used in the same way while singing, but according to the subject.

During the first verse of this hymn all the dervishes are in a very devout posture, sitting on their heels, their arms across the breast and their heads bowed. The Superior who is in the *qibla*, dressed in a robe of camel hair, claps his hands as soon as the second begins, and all the dervishes rise up at once, the nearest passing in front salutes him, with a deep bow, and begins to whirl, spinning little by little to attain a movement so rapid that it is difficult to see. The one who follows does the same, and so do all the others, who are thirty or forty. This circular dance, having sometimes continued for more than half of a quarter of an hour, suddenly stops at its maximum speed with the same signal that began it, and the dervishes, as if they had not moved from the place where they were, return again to the same posture, as if nothing had happened, remaining sitting in their initial posture until their Superior makes them begin once again. So this dance continues sometimes for an hour or more, four or five repetitions of which the final ones continue for longer, because the dervishes are more transported and aroused for whirling, being dressed very suitably for this task in a sort of a flying petticoat cut round like the chemisettes worn by women in France.

Many remarks could be made about this long passage written by du Loir, from the presence of women at the ceremony to the accurate and pioneering translation of the Mevlevî hymn *Hey Ki Ezar Afer-*

<sup>12</sup> *Agianum*, which the author translates as ‘mon ame’, is clearly an attempt to represent the Turkish *canım*.

in, that inspired part of this article title, at a time when the study of Turkish was only beginning in Europe. The hymn, which is often reduced to its first four verses, recurs many times in the corpus of Mevlevî ceremonies, from the third *selâm* (salutation) of the ceremony (*âyın*) in *makâm pençgâh*, which is considered to be the earliest Mevlevî *âyın*, onward.<sup>13</sup> While interested readers can listen to the hymn in many versions, I suggest the warm and intimate performance by the late Nezhîh Uzel (1938-2012).<sup>14</sup>

About the musical transcription, it seems worthy of note that, according to Turkish musicologist Feza Tansuğ, the du Loir transcription should have been the source of inspiration for the famous chorus of Dervishes entitled: 'Du hast in deines Ärmes falten' from Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) *The Ruins of Athens*, performed in February 1812 and concluded by the 'Turkish March', still quite famous today.

Finally, the posture of the dervishes while they are sitting and the deep bow that they make to the *shaykh* before they begin turning are the same that we see today, although once again the speed with which they are said to turn seems very different from the severe and highly composed performances of the modern era.

## 7 John Covel, *Extracts from the Diaries of Dr. John Covel, 1670-1679*

The next description is that of John Covel (1638-1722), an English cleric and scientist who became Master of Christ's College at Cambridge and Vice-Chancellor of the University. While serving in Constantinople as Chaplain to the Levant Company,<sup>15</sup> Covel travelled widely in Asia Minor in search of ancient Greek texts. His diaries were published between 1670 and 1679 and contain a rather different account of dervishes, music, and musical instruments because they include so many details about finance and administration.

I was at the Dervises in Galata, which Dervise Mustapha the Nâizam bashè,<sup>16</sup> or head of the players of the pipe which they call Nâi.<sup>17</sup> He hath been there 14 years, his pay is 45 aspers; to the rest he payes 5, 6, 7, 8, or more, as they are deserving.

<sup>13</sup> Texts of the hymns that are sung in the ceremonies (*âyın-i şeriflerin güftelerin*) are conveniently presented in Heper 1979, 533-60.

<sup>14</sup> *Music of the Whirling Dervishes*. New York: Atlantic Recording Corporation, 1987, CD 82493, track 6.

<sup>15</sup> The Levant Company was an English chartered company formed in 1581 and reformed in 1592 to oversee trade with the Ottoman Empire. See Wood 1935 and, more recently, Mather 2009.

<sup>16</sup> 'Head *ney* player', i.e. *neyzenbaşı*.

<sup>17</sup> Nâi = a flute made out of a reed (note by John Covel).

They have 100 kilos of wheat per annum vacoof,<sup>18</sup> 3000 aspers per man; from the G. Sr<sup>19</sup> 10 sheep at little Beiram,<sup>20</sup> 100 at Ramazan. They have usuall prayers in the houses, and he that is devout may pray all night long, fast etc. There are 4 Tekyes or monasteryes, of them here one, two Kasoumpasha, 3 Bisicktash, 4 Yenicaon;<sup>21</sup> on Stambal side there are eighteen sorts of them. These founded first by Molàh Hunkyòr, Harset meulanàh, for he goeth by both the names. Heretofore they preach't, danc't, and piped every Tuesday and Friday. 3 lye here buried. 1. Arzéh Mahmet Effendi, a great benefactor to them; 2. Ismél Effendi, another benefactor, who was once their sheik (or head, though it signifies prince) and benefactor. 3. Ismaél Effendi, another benefactor, who built them 10 chambers and left 1,000 dollars. They let their neighbours be there buried for their money. Formerly, the *Baltagee*<sup>22</sup> of Galata seraglio were buried; now they have a corner apart. There Govisë Achmet is their Sheik now, who receives all the money and himself 1 ½ d. per day. Their musick is a Tamboor, and a long week small lute with wire strings, to which they sound their Nai or pipe, whereof they have two sorts, a base and a treble; for the middle ones partake of that to which they are nearest. The little pipes have 7 holes on the upper side all in a row, and an eighth at the bottom, a little of one side, and just in the middle (measuring from that lowest eighth hole upwards) on the back in a 9<sup>th</sup> hole. Some of these are a foot and ½ long; some lesse, some more. The long pipe hath six holes, on one side three, and three at equal distance, and on the back side, just half way there is a 7<sup>th</sup> hole. There is neither a fipple<sup>23</sup> above, nor noze<sup>24</sup> in the mouth, but the head is a horn sloped up and brought to a very fine edge, which leaning sideways to the mouth, gives the sound, as boyes (with us) used to whistle in acorn cups, this πλαγιαυλος;<sup>25</sup> whence our flageolet. Shepherds use small pipes of wood with such mouths, and some I have seen of the wings and thigh bones of Crowes, Bistards, Pelicanes etc.,<sup>26</sup> from whence of old were cal'd *tibia*. These dervish pipes are very dear, not one of twenty proving good and true. The smallest and deepest he ask 3 dollars for, and some of the largest he valued at 20 dollars. One (which had belong'd to the Convent these 300 years) he valued at 50 dollars.; yet more for its sweetness, than antiquity. They play mournfull tones, but seldom any point of musick. They are all made of Indian canes, just as we make our fishing rods in England of; the workmanship and luck in proving good give them their price.<sup>27</sup>

18 *Vakouf* = money from the mosque property (note by John Covel).

19 I.e. *Gran Signore*.

20 I.e. *Ramazan Bayrami*, at the end of Ramazan.

21 I.e. the Mevlevihânes of Kasımpaşa, Beşiktaş, and Yenikapı; Beşiktaş later moved to Bahariye on the Golden Horn.

22 I.e. *baltacı*, lit. a maker or seller of axes, a halberdier in the palace.

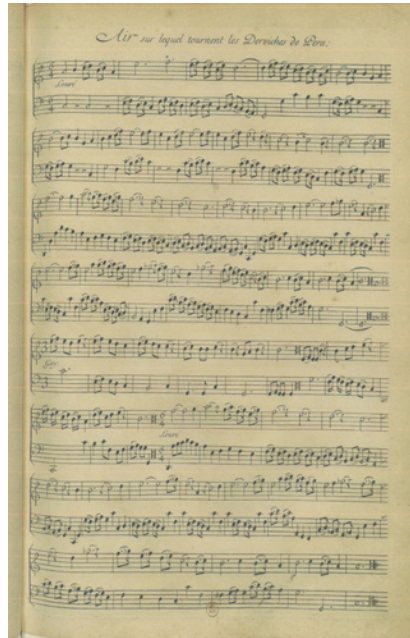
23 Fipple = a stopper. "In recorders, which go with a gentle breath; the concave of the pipe, were it not for the *fipple*, that straiteneth the air much more than the simple concave, would yeld no sound" (Bacon, *Nat. Hist.*, 116) (note by John Covel).

24 Noze = nozzle (note by John Covel).

25 πλαγιαυλος = Mod. Gr. a transverse flute (note by John Covel).

26 Still in use in the Greek islands (note by John Covel).

27 Dallam, Covel, Bent 1893a; 1893b, 168-70.



**Figure 4** Air sur lequel tournent les Derviches de Pera, noté par le Sieur Chabert qui était avec M<sup>e</sup> de Ferriol et qui en a composé la Basse. From Charles de Ferriol (1652-1722), *Recueil de Cent Estampes représentant différentes Nations du Levant*, Paris, par les soins de M. Le Hay, 1714, 17

As we remarked above, Covell provides a pragmatic or even mundane account of the Mevlevî that might in places seem rather dull. Nevertheless, it includes very valuable information. After all, Covell is the first visitor who mentions the *four* Mevlevîhânes in Constantinople at the time, rather than the most famous Mevlevîhâne at Pera to which ambassadors, diplomats, and travellers were evidently taken as part of the usual tour of the city. He is also very accurate and indeed modern in his approach to musical instruments.

## 8 Charles de Ferriol, *Recueil de Cent Estampes représentant différentes Nations du Levant* (1714)

We shall examine now another description of Mevlevî ritual, which is accompanied by a precious musical transcription made by the Sieur Chabert. They appear in the famous *Recueil de cent estampes représentant les diverses nations du Levant*, published in 1714 and reprinted with additional plates in 1715 [figs. 4-5].

When Charles de Ferriol (1652-1722) was sent by Louis XIV as ambassador to the Ottoman court, he invited a young Flemish nineteen-year-old artist named Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737) to accompany him. The collection of engravings in the *Recueil de cent estampes*





**Figure 5** *Les Derviches dans leur temple de Pera, achevant de tourner.* Engraving by Gérard Jean Baptiste Scotin son (1678-?). From Charles de Ferriol (1652-1722), *Recueil de Cent Estampes representant différentes Nations du Levant*, Paris, par les soins de M. Le Hay, 1714

*représentant les diverses nations du Levant* were made by Vanmour and served as models for a large number of later painters and engravers and, moreover, was the source for the most important engravings that depict Ottoman instruments, i.e. the *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* of Filippo Bonanni (1639-1725) published in 1716, immediately after the *Recueil*, which provides the first modern essay in musical organology, well described by Cristina Ghirardini (2013, 53). In our perspective, Ferriol in his *Recueil de cent estampes* wrote a few paragraphs entitled 'Dervichs qui tournent' in order to describe an engraving depicting Mevlevî dervishes and to introduce the rare musical transcription made by Chabert.

Cette Planche represente le Temple des Dervichs de Pera, qui est fait en Dôme; il est clair, & bien parqueté: il y a une Tribune où l'on met la Musique. On a joint icy l'Air noté que les Musiciens jouent pour faire tourner les Dervichs: ils tournent les bras ouverts, & paroissent extasiés: les jeunes tournent d'une vitesse incroyable. Le Superieur & les vieux tournent plus lentement; & quand ils sont las, ils se mettent à genoux le visage contre terre. C'est la Musique qui les anime; ils prétendent qu'elle a quelque chose de divin: plusieurs ont assuré M. de Ferriol que, sans la Musique, ils ne pourroient pas faire trois tours sans tomber, au lieu qu'ils tournent près d'une heure.

La danse est précédée par la lecture de quelques passages de l'Alcoran que le Superieur, ou un des ses principaux Dervichs explique aux Assistans.

Le double cercle, qui est suspendu en l'air, ne sert qu'à mettre des Lampes dans les tems du Ramazan; & les Inscriptions qu'on voit au-dessus des colonnes, & autour du Dôme, sont des Sentences, ou des passages de l'Alcoran à la louange de Dieu.

*Il y a encore un Couvent des mêmes Dervichs sur le canal de la Mer noire.*<sup>28</sup>

This table shows the temple of the Pera Dervishes, which is a dome; it is clear and well parquetted: there is a gallery where the music is performed. We have added here the musical notation of the air which the musicians play in order to make the dervishes turn: they turn with open arms and seem in ecstasy: the young turn at an incredible speed. The Superior and the elders turn more slowly, and when they are tired they place themselves on their knees with their faces to the ground. It is music that animates them; they claim that it is in some way divine: many have assured M. de Ferriol that, without the music, they would not be able to perform three turns without falling, while they turn for nearly an hour.

The dance is preceded by the reading of some passages from the Qur'an, which the Superior, or one of his principal dervishes explains to the audience.

The double ring, which is suspended in the air, is only for lamps which are erected during the period of Ramazan, and the inscriptions under the columns, and around the dome, are sentences or passages from the Qur'an in praise of God.

There is another convent of these same dervishes on the Black Sea channel.<sup>29</sup>

Although concise, the description provided by Ferriol is accurate when compared to the travellers who preceded him. The passage "C'est la Musique qui les anime..." raises an important and difficult question. For centuries, Westerners believed that the dervishes whirled in response to the music. Dervishes themselves, however, offered a different explanation: ecstasy lies in human soul from the primordial covenant between man and God known in Turkish as *bezm-i elest*.<sup>30</sup> The act of listening (*samā'*) revives this immanent but often disconnected inner state. What counts is the intention of the listener (*niyya*) toward the act of listening. With this in mind, it should be emphasised that there is no Sufi music per se, but, rather, music *listened to* by the Sufis. The views attributed to the dervishes by Ferriol are therefore intriguing and need to be explored in greater detail and at greater length.

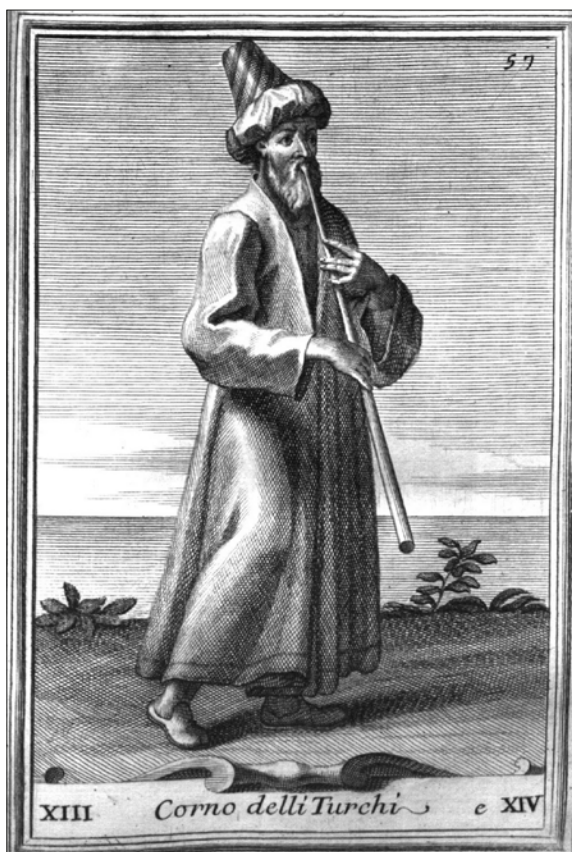
<sup>28</sup> Charles de Ferriol 1714. The expanded edition published in the following year included a second title page: *Explication des cent estampes qui representent differentes nations du Levant avec de nouvelles estampes de ceremonies turques qui ont aussi leurs explications* (Paris: Jacques Collombat, 1715). The passage cited above appears on page 26. The music score appears on page 27. In some editions, the caption above the score contains not only "Air sur lequel tournent les Derviches de Pera" but also "Noté par le Sieur Chabert qui était avec Mr. de Ferriol, et qui en a composé la Basse" (Air to which the dervishes of Pera turn, written down by the Sieur Chabert who was with Mr. de Ferriol and who composed the bass).

<sup>29</sup> I.e. the Bosphorus.

<sup>30</sup> Lit. 'Assembly of Alast'. The first word is the Persian *bas̄m* (assembly, meeting, banquet) and the second is Arabic, adopted from the question that God asked mankind on the Day of Creation: *alastu bi-rabbikum* (Am I not your Lord?). See Qur'an VII: 172.

## 9 Filippo Bonanni, *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* (1716)

Filippo Bonanni (1639-1725) copied five instruments from the above-mentioned *Recueil de Cent Estampes* for his *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* (1716): among these a rim blown flute *ney*, a central instrument for *mevlevî* dervishes culture, that he apparently interpreted as a cornet, and then a kettle drum, a long-necked lute, a zither and castanets. According to Cristina Ghirardini (2013, 53), Bonanni probably used a copy of the *Recueil*, which lacked the captions that gives useful information on each plate: this is maybe the reason why he does not mention the whirling dervishes of the *mevlevîhâne* of Pera, which, as we saw, were one of the most renowned attractions of Istanbul for Western travellers, and where the music of *ney* were heard as in the reports we quoted above.



**Figure 6** Filippo Bonanni, *Corno delli Turchi*. From *Gabinetto Armonico*, Roma: Giorgio Placho, 1723, table XIII/XIV

## 10 On Some Jean Baptiste Vanmour Works

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam preserves three paintings made by Jean Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737), probably after the de Ferriol's *Recueil* mentioned above. Two of them correspond to engravings of the same subject that we find in the *Recueil*: the ritual of the whirling dervishes at the temple of Pera [fig. 7], and a single dancing dervish [figs. 9-10]. A third painting depicts a group of dervishes during a convivial meeting in a private house [fig. 8].

His return to the topic should suggest that the picturesque theme had become, somehow, a stereotype. The very relaxed atmosphere of 'Dervishes at dinner' seems worthy of note: here three *mevlevî* dervishes, easily recognizable from their high conical hat (*sikke*), are playing *ney* flutes. The rendering is not accurate, but the flutes seems different in sizes: one may suppose a *şah* *ney* for the upstanding dervish while two *mansûr*, or a *mansûr* and a *kız*, for the sitting ones. Be that as it may, while they are playing other brethren are laughing, smoking and chatting, in a inner state rather far from the concentration required during a *samâ'* (listening, audition, spiritual concert). The flask in the foreground, one may think, should know the reason for such a gaiety as well as for the flushed cheeks of the laughing dervish.

## 11 Charles Fonton, *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne* (1751)

I mention only in passing a long and detailed essay written in 1751 at Constantinople by a French dragoman named Charles Fonton (1725-1793), illustrated by his friend Jean-Baptiste Adanson (1732-1803) and entitled *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*. The essay, unpublished and unknown until recent times,<sup>31</sup> does not discuss the question of dervishes aside from an illustration in which two Mevlevî dervishes with their conical hats (*sikke*) are depicted playing the *ney*.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Fonton, *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*, Bibliothèque nationale Ms. 9137. The essay was translated and edited in German by Eckard Neubauer as "Der *Essai sur la musique orientale* von Charles Fonton mit Zeichnungen von Adanson". *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften*. 2, 1985, 277-327 and 3, 1986, 277-324. The work was translated into English by Robert Martin and published as "Essay Comparing Turkish Music with European Music". *Turkish Music Quarterly*, autumn 1988, 1-9; winter 1989, 1-11. A Turkish translation and commentary was published by Cem Behar as *18 yüzyılda Türk müziği: Charles Fonton*. Istanbul: Pan, 1987.



**Figure 7** Jean Baptiste Vanmour, whirling dervishes at the Galata Mevlevihâne in Pera. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



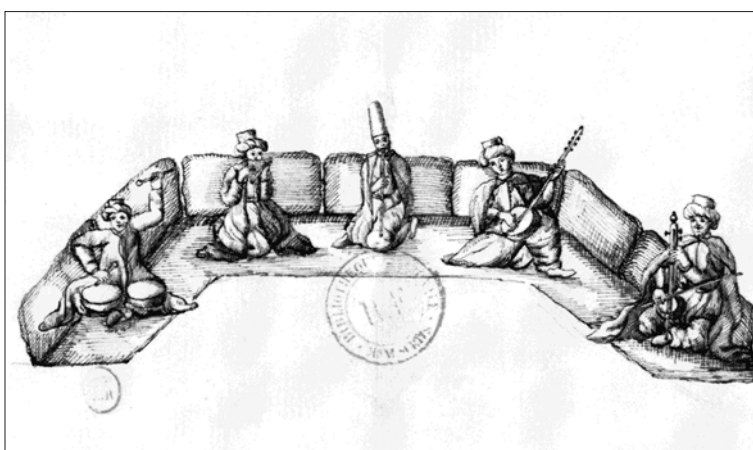
**Figure 8** Jean Baptiste Vanmour, dervishes at dinner. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



**Figure 9** Jean Baptist Vanmour, *Dervich ou Moine Turc qui tourne par devotion*. From Ferriol, *Recueil de Cent Estampes*, pl. 25



**Figure 10** Jean Baptiste Vanmour (workshop), *Dervish*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



**Figure 11** Musical Ensemble in Charles Fonton (1725-1793), *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*. Engraving by Jean-Baptiste Adanson (1732-1803). A mevlevî dervish with his conical hat (*sikke*) playing *ney* (flute) is clearly visible

## 12 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763)

After this long procession of male travellers and artists, the next report comes from a woman, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), wife of the British ambassador Edward Wortley Montagu, who followed his husband in the capital when, in 1716, he was appointed British ambassador to the Sublime Porte. There, 'on the field', as modern anthropologists would say, she wrote many letters that recorded her impression of Ottoman society and culture. The letters were published posthumous in 1763 and among her acute observations, I will focus on her visit to a dervish centre, already a 'must' among West-erners, and the description of the Whirling Dervishes ceremony:

I had the curiosity to visit one of them and observe the devotions of the dervishes, which are as whimsical as any in Rome. These fellows have permission to marry, but are conned to an odd habit, which is only a piece of coarse white cloth wrapped about them, with their legs and arms naked. Their order has few other rules, except that of performing their fantastic rites every Tuesday and Friday, which is in this manner. They meet together in a large hall, where they all stand, with their eyes fixed on the ground and their arms across, while the imam or preacher reads part of the Alcoran from a pulpit placed in the midst; and when he has done, eight or ten of them make a melancholy consort with their pipes, which are no unmusical instruments. Then he reads again and makes a short exposition on what he has

read, after which they sing and play till their superior (the only one of them dressed in green) rises and begins a sort of solemn dance. They all stand about him in regular figure, and while some play the others tie their robe, which is very wide, fast round their waists and begin to turn round with an amazing swiftness and yet with great regard to the music, moving slower or faster as the tune is played. This lasts above an hour without any of them showing the least appearance of giddiness, which is not to be wondered at when it is considered they are all used to it from infancy, most of them being devoted to this way of life from their birth, and sons of dervishes. There turned amongst them some little dervishes of six or seven years old who seem no more disordered by that exercise than the others. At the end of the ceremony they shout out; 'there is no other god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet', after which they kiss the superior's hand and retire. The whole is performed with the most solemn gravity. Nothing can be more austere than the form of these people. They never raise their eyes and seem devoted to contemplation, and as ridiculous as this is in description there is something touching in the air of submission and mortification they assume. (Montagu 1994, 130-1)

### 13 Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura turchesca* (1787)

Our final encounter is with a scholar who is considered to be the last European traveller in the eighteenth century who made a significant contribution to the study of Ottoman music, bringing to an end an epoch that had been marked by a curiosity for Turkeries. Giambattista Toderini (Venice, 1728-1799) was a Jesuit abbot who arrived at Constantinople in October 1781, after a busy career as a scholar and teacher, in the entourage of the Venetian ambassador (*bailo*) Agostino Garzoni and his wife Pisana Querini Stampalia who had asked him to serve as a theologian and preceptor for their son. As he wrote in the introduction to his *Letteratura*, he remained in the city from October 1781 to May 1786 and lived in the house of the ambassador. During the first months of his sojourn, he began to devote any available time to research that followed his earlier interests. Little by little, however, the idea occurred to him that he should write a history of printing in Constantinople that would include a survey of all the books that had been published there. As the idea grew, he began to study Turkish literature in its entirety, pursuing his investigation through the main archives and libraries of the imperial capital and eventually producing the three volumes of his *Letteratura Turchesca* (Turkish Literature). They were published at Venice by Giacomo Storti in 1787, only a year after Toderini returned from Constantinople. The wide circulation and enthusiastic reception of his work by a European readership consisting of scholars and intellectuals seems to be proven by the many reviews that it received immediately after



its publication and by the two translations, into French and German,<sup>32</sup> that were published within three years of its appearance. In the midst of the eighteenth-century curiosity for *Turcherie*, which had been nourished by the accounts of travellers, *Letteratura Turchesca* provided a solid point of reference that was increasingly admired as a reliable source of information about Ottoman culture.

Through the centuries, *Letteratura Turchesca* has also served as a source for the study of Ottoman music. The reason for its importance to musicologists is the lengthy Chapter XVI, consisting of thirty pages and two engravings, which appears at the end of the first volume. Entitled 'Musica', it contains observations on the subject that are often the fruit of Toderini's conversations with Mevlevî dervishes. He deals with many topics and themes, from the history of Ottoman music, in which he follows Cantemir,<sup>33</sup> to its theoretical basis in the context of Arab-Persian musicology, an alphabetical Greek and Arab-Persian notation, and a description of musical instruments and the division of the octave into twenty-four unequal microtones, ending in a series of epistolary exchanges with his Jesuit colleagues Abbott Pizzati (1732-1803) and Abbott Juan Andrés (1740-1817). Moreover, the chapter concludes with two illustrations that have become very famous: the first depicting a long-necked lute known as a *tanbûr*, including its fretting and its inherent musical system of 24 unequal microtones, and the second of a composition entitled *Concerto Turco Nominato Izia Semaisi*.

From a dense chapter written in eighteenth-century Italian, I have extracted only the passages that concern the Mevlevî:

La maggior parte de' ragguardevoli Turchi, e signori piglian piacere della Musica, la quale, come usavan li Greci, entra nel sistema della loro educazione. Su false relazioni scrisse il Niebuhr,<sup>34</sup> che i Turchi di condizione signorile credebbono disonorarsi apprendendo la Musica. Nella sua Repubblica determinava Platone,

**32** Toderini, Giambattista (1789). *De la literature des Turcs*. Transl. by the Abbott de Cournaud. Paris: Poincot, 1789); *Litteratur der Türken. Aus dem Italianischen des Hern Abbé Toderini, Mit Zusätzen und Anmerkungen von Philipp Wilhelm Gottlieb Hausleutner*. Königsberg: Friederich Nicolovius, 1790. A Spanish translation by the Chilean Jesuit Warcisse Vas remains unpublished.

**33** See Demetrius Cantemir, *Histoire de l'Empire Othoman, où se voyent les causes de son aggrandissement et de sa decadence* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1743). The treatise *Kitâbu 'İlmi'l-Mûsiki 'alâ Vechi'l-Hurûfât*, which has been mentioned above, was not in wide circulation during the life of Toderini.

**34** Toderini provides the following note: "Niebuhr, *Voy. En Arabie*, T.I. p. 142". He is referring to Karsten (or Carsten) Niebuhr (1733-1815) and to his *Reisebeschreibung von Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern*, which was first published in 1772. French and Dutch translations of Niebuhr's narratives were published during his lifetime. Toderini seems to have used the French translation that was published in the Netherlands: C. Niebuhr, *Voyage en Arabie & en d'autres pays circonvoisins*. Amsterdam: S.J. Baalde/Utrecht: J van Schoonven, 1776.

che s'applicassero i giovani tre anni a questa scienza. I Turchi coltivano lungamente, e i più cogli' stromenti a corde e col Neì. Tengono schiavi, e schiave, che suonino a lor diletto. Disdegnano però i Signori d'alto stato di farsi udire nelle pubbliche adunanze, fuorchè suonando il Neì tra gli amici, perché viene reputato stromento di studio. Così imparai da Ibraimo Efendi, mentre nelle praterie di Bojux-derè, ove concorrono molti d'ogni nazione a diporto, sonò un Ulemà mio amico in compagnia del più valente Dervis Mevlèvi, venuti quel giorno perché sentissi il suono dolcissimo dello stromento... (Toderini 1787, 228)

Most of the notable Turks and the nobility take pleasure in music, which, as it was among the Greeks, has entered their system of education. Based on an unreliable source Niebuhr wrote, that Turks of high social standing are convinced that their honour is diminished if they learn music. In his *Republic*, Plato recommended that the young apply three years to the study of this science. The Turks study and practice music for a long time, in particular [focus] on stringed instruments and on the *Neì*. They keep male slaves, and female slaves, who can play for their amusement. Yet, the nobles of high rank do not want to be heard in public, unless they play the *Neì* among friends, because it is considered to be an instrument of study.<sup>35</sup> This I learned from Ibraimo Efendi in the meadows of Bojux-derè,<sup>36</sup> when a man of religious learning who was a friend of mine played for me in the company of the most talented Mevlèvi dervishes, who came that day in order to make me listen to the sweetest sound of that instrument.

[...]

I Dervis Mevlèvi, così nominati dal Fondatore, avendo introdotto qual religioso culto la danza nel loro Oratorio (che in nessuna maniera vuol chiamarsi Moschea) coltivano molto la musica, e sono de' migliori sonatori. Usano stromenti da fiato, e timpani, come vidi trovandomi presente alle turbinose lor danze, ove celeramente s'aggirano quasi un palèo. Suonano finalmente il Neì, non usando, come noi, dell'estremità delle dita, fuorchè del mignolo, ma delle seconde giunture. Stromento egli è questo di malagevole imboccatura, essendo tutto aperto nell'alto, di singolare dolcezza, e somigliante alla voce umana. (1787, 241-2)

The Mevlèvi<sup>37</sup> dervishes, who are named in this way after their founder, having introduced the dance as a religious devotion in their oratorio<sup>38</sup> (which they would

**35** It is not clear if the Italian *stromento di studio* is intended to refer to the usual study and practice of a given instrument or if it alludes to a form of inner practice, typical of those who devoted themselves to the *ney*, especially among the Mevlèvi.

**36** Although the area is still known as Büyükdere, the meadow can no longer be seen.

**37** Either Toderini or his publisher has written 'Mevlèvi' instead of 'Mevlevi'. The latter form is obviously correct and appears elsewhere in the chapter.

**38** As with the terms *sonata* and *cantata*, which have been discussed above, modern readers may be tempted to understand *oratorio* in terms of European music during the classical period. However, the term was used here in its Latin sense, referring to a place in which people pray (*oratorius*, from the verb *orare*), normally distinct from the church. With this in mind, the comment by Toderini is rather subtle. It assumes a clear distinction between a mosque and a Mevlèvi hâne, especially a *semâhâne*, the space in which the Mevlèvi performed the *semâ*, the liturgy accompanied by music.

in no way call a mosque) practice music assiduously, and are among the best musicians. They play wind instruments, and kettledrums, as I saw when I was at their whirling dances, where they turn quickly in the manner of a spinning top. They play the *Nei* well, not using, as we do, the top joint of the finger, apart from the little finger, but using the second joint. It is a difficult instrument to play, being all open on the top, but of a singular sweetness and similar to the human voice.

Toderini makes the following comment about attempts at musical transcription in Ferriol, made by Chabert, that preceded him.

L'aria, sulla quale ballano li Dervis, vedesi riportata con note europee nell'opera illustre dell'Ambasciatore Ferriol.<sup>39</sup> Sonata da valente Maestro sulle corde del violino non la riconobbero per dessa i Turchi uditori e bellamente ne risero. A dir vero, alcuni tuoni sono inesprimibili affatto coll'usate note europee. Conviene formare nuove figure, e darne loro giusto valore: faccenda alquanto spinosa, che domanda lunga meditazione, e non volgare perizia nella Musica nostra e nella turchesca. (1787, 242)

The melody, to which the dervishes dance, can be seen in European notes in the illustrious work of the Ambassador de Ferriol. However, when it was read and played on the violin by a talented master, the Turkish listeners did not recognise it at all and had a good laugh. To be honest, some tones are inexpressible in European notes. It is necessary to form new figures, and give them the correct value: a thorny task that requires prolonged meditation and unusual skill, both in our music as well as in Turkish.

Or veggasi la Tavola I e II, che presenta al lettore nuovo saggio, ossia tentative sulla Musica Turca espresso con note nostre Europee, approvate da'pratici esperti in questa scienza. Anzi i non esperti, se udirono l'arie, e sonate Ottomane, in queste note ravviseranno il genio e l'indole della Musica, che non avverrà loro sonando le carte di Mr. Ferriol Ambasciatore di Francia alla Porta, nè le alter più antiche del Bailo Donado mentovate più sopra.

Queste cognizioni apriranno per avventura nuovo campo ai Maestri per arricchire e vie più adronare la Musica Italiana. Queste potranno spandere nuova luce sulla scientifica Teoria, e illuminare l'oscura storia della Musica antica negli autori Greci e Latini. (1787, 241-2)

Now let us see Illustrations I and II, which present to the reader a new attempt, a tentative approach to expressing Turkish music in our European notes, approved by the real experts in this music. Even non-experts, when listening to these Ottoman arias and sonatas, will be able to perceive in these notes the genius

**39** Recueil de cent estampes de Mr Ferriol, 26. à Paris, 1714 (Toderini's footnote). Here the author refers to the above quoted "Air sur la quelle tournent les Dervichs": an analysis of this very particular musical transcription would give material for a whole other article.

and the spirit of this music, which will not happen if they play the musical scores arranged by Mr. Ferriol, French Ambassador at the Porte, or the earlier ones by *bailo* Donado mentioned above.

This knowledge may perhaps open a new field for the maestros to enrich and embellish Italian music. In this way they can shed new light upon scientific theory, and enlighten the obscure history of the ancient music of Greek and Latin authors.

Toderini is very acute in identifying Plato as a common source for the Ottoman conception of music as an ennobling practice while at the same time citing Islamic assumptions that music as an abstract science or as a source of amusement is licit, even if making a living by performing it would not be thought suitable for a member of the Ottoman elite. As he says, 'the grandees do not want to be heard in public'. The descriptions of the Mevlevî are standard, aside from the conversation that he seems to have conducted with them in the meadows of Büyükdere. Again, he seems to have made a very acute distinction between a *semâhâne* and a mosque. He demonstrates that he knows the musical transcriptions that preceded him and he criticises them on the basis of a new formulation in which the musical scale is divided into twenty-four unequal microtones, a remarkable innovation if we remember that the Cairo Congress of Arab Music, at which the octave was divided into twenty-four equal quartertones, would not be held until 1932. The last part of his chapter is primarily concerned with theory, transcription, and interval ratios as well as the two famous illustrations. The first of these illustrations, which represents a *tanbûr* with its fretting and its inherent microtonal musical system, is discussed in detail by Toderini throughout the chapter.



**Figura 12** Table II from Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura Turchesca* (Venezia: Storti Editore, 1787) with the *Concerto turco nominato Izia Saz Semaisi*

The second illustration is of greater interest. It presents a composition to which Toderini gives the name *Concerto Turco Nominato Izia Semaisi*.<sup>40</sup> With some variation, this is a composition that is now very well known: the *Hicâz Saz Semâ'îsi* that concludes at least three Mevlevî *âyınler*. In chronological order, it concludes the *âyın* in *makâm beyâtî* composed by Derviş Küçük Mustafa Dede (d. 1683), the *âyın* in *makâm hicâz* composed by Musahip 'Vardakosta' Ahmed Ağa (1724-94) and the *âyın* in *makâm hicâz* composed by Abdürrahim Kunhi Dede (1769-1831). Toderini or his assistants could have listened to the *hicâz son yürük semâ'î* from at least one of these *âyın* and decided to transcribe it because they admired its beauty or because its presence in Ottoman music was so noticeable.<sup>41</sup>

## 14 Final Remarks

The curiosity for the 'different', for the 'other', for 'what we don't have' is maybe a key for all the descriptions and reports we listed above and this naïve curiosity should be also intended as one of the first signs of what became later a mass phenomenon as is modern tourism.

The publication of travel diaries had, of course, political implications that went beyond cultural curiosity: observing and describing the culture of the 'other' also meant to study the culture of the 'enemy', as were often considered the Ottomans, at least from the masses; at the same time, showing interest for such a culture was also an opening diplomatic move.

If European observers reactions to such 'picturesque' figures as the dervishes, were, after all, rather normal, I am wondering, as in the beginning, why did Ottomans, granting permissions to visit a dervish centre, think that European visitors would have enjoyed such ceremonies? What the *mevlevî* ceremonies was likely to have represented for Ottoman hosts? Was it a 'performance' of which they were especially proud? From a cultural and political point of view, *mevlevîye* brotherhood was certainly regarded by the Ottomans as a learned Sunni brotherhood, with many poets, musicians and calligraphers among its ranks, and with many adepts among the high-class milieu. Far from its aura, the political and symbolical role of the brotherhood for the Ottomans was evident in the enthronement ceremony itself of a new sultan, in which the so called 'sword of Os-

<sup>40</sup> The *Concerto* has been recorded several times, for example by Concerto Köln with the Ensemble Sarband in *Dream of the Orient*, Deutsche Grammophon (2003), CD: 474 193-2, track 4.

<sup>41</sup> During my first visit to Konya in 1990, the composition could be heard incessantly almost everywhere in the city and it resonated in my memory long after my return to Venice.

man' (*taklid-i seyf*) was girded on to the new sultan by the prior of the brotherhood (*tarikatchı dede*), the Sharif of Konya. Such a privilege was reserved to the *mevlevîs* from the same Osman I (?-1323), mythical founder of the Ottoman dynasty, when he had established his residence in Konya in 1299, before the capital was moved to Bursa and then Constantinople. Yet, despite such an intellectual and politic 'respectability' of the brotherhood, *mevlevî* ceremonies were, and still are, deeply rooted in a particular Sufi tradition as is *samâ'* ('audition, listening, spiritual concert'), not exactly perceived as 'orthodox' in Islam and, rather, often severely criticized or radically prohibited elsewhere. This, somehow, reflects the multifaceted personality of its saint eponym, Persian language mystic poet Mevlânâ Jalâl ud-Dîn Rûmî (1207-1273), who was at the same time a renowned man of letters, a professor, an *'alîm* (scholar), a *faqîh* (doctor of the law) esteemed by the Seljuk rulers and an ecstatic, capable of whirling for days, according to the hagiography *al-manâqib al-'arifin* written by Aflaki (d. 1360), as it was for Mevlânâ's friend and tutor, the wandering dervish Shams al Dîn Tabrizî (1185-1248) held in great esteem by unorthodox dervishes *qalandâr*, that we met above in de Nicolay.

Europeans, in their reports, did not seem to perceive the complexity of Mevlânâ that, instead, had to be clear to Ottomans. Rather, they describe a ceremony in which dervishes whirl as spinning top, as a *paléo*, with the archaic Italian language by Toderini, somehow falling to the ground in ecstasy, shouting, like it happened, until recent times, in nowadays Xinjiang, in Indo-Pakistan area and elsewhere in the territories of Sufism. There is no need to say that all this is rather distant from nowadays *mevlevî* rite (*âyin*) in Turkey and its somehow forced composure.

In the light of Ottomans knowledge of Mevlânâ work, of his concept of *samâ'*, of the multiple levels of the rite, of the beauty of the verses sung, of the complex compositions in Art music (*maqâm*) style, and of the intense whirling in itself, yes, a *mevlevî* ceremony must have been considered a 'performance' of which Ottomans were proud.

From another point of view, dervishes themselves should have been well aware of their position, and were not ashamed to be the subjects for engravers and painters, as is in our reports, as well as for early photographers, between 19th and 20th century, maybe foreboding the severe closure of all the Sufi orders and centres that would be arrived in 1925.

Few among Europeans observers, as Lady Montagu or Toderini, perceived that there must have been something 'more' in the rite, beyond its global atmosphere. Yet *what* did Europeans see in such rituals, aside from mere picturesque element? Maybe it is worthy to remember the simplistic current interpretation diffused through the world nowadays (not only among Europeans), which read in the *mevlevî* ceremonies the reflex of the 'cosmic dance': the Creation, the

stars, the planets, the angels, human beings, all moves and rotates in the drunkenness (*mast*) of Love. The evident platonic resonances in this must have resonated, even unconsciously, in the observers. Such a theory is partial, simplistic and does not take into consideration the emic interpretation, given by dervishes themselves, about the rite, but for the moment it seems better to stop here this already too long journey, thanking the kind reader for sharing with me a long stretch of road.

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