

MY EXPERIENCE AND SOME QUESTIONS

A year ago when I was attending a sound healing seminar in Badger California I experienced vivid images when I was practicing giving voice healing sessions. With my mind's eye I would observe magnificent colors, silk and featherlike textures with detailed geometrical shapes as soon as I made sound with a clear intention. As the workshop progressed, the colors and shapes got so vivid and aesthetic that I wanted to keep sounding because I just wanted to watch them. I often wished I had the ability to draw them but the shapes were changing very quickly and I had no drawing skills. It was impossible to capture the beauty of the images. The experience repeated for a week during the workshop every time I practiced giving a session. I developed a strong inner knowing that I was connecting with a new world. After the workshop, I decided to remain at Badger retreat center for another night. In the afternoon I took a walk around the area. While walking next to a house, I met an older man who kindly introduced himself and asked me if I was staying at the retreat center. It turned out that he was one of the founders of the center. He was a sound healing practitioner and a painter. He invited me to his house.

When I entered his house I immediately noticed his paintings on the wall. I was very surprised because the paintings were very similar- almost identical- to the images I had seen in my mind's eye when I was practicing voice healing sessions. I asked him what the images mean. He said that he has been painting angels for years.

I am a practical person with a deep sense of wonder and openness for the unknown. I have a yearning to connect the spiritual to the worldly and vice versa. Yet to be able to do that I first have to have a kinesthetic experience which informs me what I am seeing/believing is not an illusion. In other words I need confirmations disguised as repeated bodily sensations and synchronicities. After the repeated experience of seeing magnificent images and later encountering them on the wall of a stranger, I was experientially convinced that sound is a powerful tool to connect the visible to the invisible. And the invisible is always present whether I chose to tune into it or not.

In practicing sound healing sessions on my friends in Istanbul and on my peers at the Institute in SF I became aware of similar sensations in my body. The most consistent sensation was that the temperature of my body changed when I got present. There was no imagery but a deep connection to the flow. The sound of my voice kept changing to the extent that my peer's feedback was that at times I sounded like a man.

In my practice as a movement theater artist I often had the experience of connecting to something larger than me. During the movement explorations for a play on the theme of depression, a character emerged. I called that character the Flower woman because she had flowers blooming from all the parts of her body. She spoke many languages including extinct ancient languages and the current ones. And she had a drum. With Flower woman I kept stomping, drumming and singing in the studio to develop her further. Over the course of the time she gave birth to the healer part of me. I also found out that Flower woman is a shaman even though I had no personal encounter with a shaman throughout my life.

While practicing various treatments on my friends I saw her appear over and over again. Writing this paper gave me the possibility to do some research on the healing traditions in Turkic cultures to see what I could find out in terms of sound healing practices and whether I might have a cellular memory of Shamans in my body.

I am aware that Shamanic practices are intrinsic to many cultures and tribes and maybe to being human. Mainly because of the distorted interpretation and practice of Islam and because of the negative judgements projected on it and on the region of the Middle east today, I was curious to see what I could find in the Turkic traditions pre and after Islamic periods in regards to sound healing practices.

I believe we have various healing gifts in us, each one of us. Like we spoke at the Institute, some people are bowl people, some are drum people, some naturally gravitate towards electronic music, some towards tuning forks to name a few. Even though those categorizations sound restrictive, I sense that we each carry various healing modalities in our make up so we naturally gravitate towards certain types of healing. That does not mean that other modalities can not be mastered. Yet I believe it is important to find the resonant frequency of the intrinsic healing gift/s in one, so that the energy is released and all its potential is boosted to further one on the path of service and evolution.

My gravitation is towards theatrical practices, drum, movement and voice healing. I like to deal with emotions- going in, out, above and through them. I enjoy the process of transformation into love, while feeling my body and being connected to the earth and to the beating of the drum. Through

singing mantras I feel my energy field clear up. I need to use my body and voice as an instrument in service for healing. Do I have a cellular memory that is attached to the healing practices of the culture I grew up in? Or am I connecting to another web, a wider family beyond time and space? I wanted to start exploring these questions in this paper.

SOME ANSWERS

Nasreddin, the wise old man of the village who makes everyone laugh is playing the tambur. As he is playing the same note over and over again the villagers ask him why he is repeatedly hitting the same note on the string.

‘ Other musicians play all the other notes. Why don’t you play like them and simply make music? ‘ they ask him. Nasreddin continues hitting the string and says ‘All the other musicians are looking for that one note I am playing. I am just reminding them that it is here. ’

Oruç Güvenç one of the pioneers of sound healing who combines ancient music therapy traditions of Turkic people along with the practices of the Ottoman era and of today’s Turkey, emphasizes the importance of the things we need to remember as we practice letting go. Letting go negativity in your mind and body is not enough he says, you need to know what you are going to replace it with. He mentions that all the ancient knowledge that is intrinsic to our healing is in our subconscious and we can use music to access deeper dimensions of healing in ourselves. (Oruc Güvenç presentation in Turkish) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SethEOtOT6o>

Hacı Bektaşî Veli one of the prominent Sufi poets of Anatolia mentions that two feelings can not rest in the heart at the same time. You either have one or the other. What Sufis mean by that is that the frequency of negativity can not rest in a heart that is touched by the repeated frequency of love. The shining light of presence and the love for Source helps the frequency of light increase hence the vibrations of negativity get entrained into the vibration of

Source/Love. Like Eckhart Tolle points it out in today's language: The cure for the pain body lies in shining the light of presence on it.

All the sound and movement practices in Sufism is to bathe the organism with frequencies of Source/Love so that one is drunk by Love and has no room in the heart for negativity.



In Azerbaijan on Gobustan hills there are the paintings of dancing people. The paintings are believed to be at least 25000 years old. In my research I found out that healing through movement and music has been an intrinsic element of life in the Turkic cultures. According to Oruç Güvenç the Uyghur Turks in Central Asia have been doing healing work through dance and music therapy since many centuries. They have had over 400 thousands instruments and in all of central Asia the Turkic tribes used over 1000 musical instruments in therapy. Oruç Güvenç believes that we

need to remember the timbres of these instruments to access deeper states of consciousness and health.

In an extensive research done by Nil Sari

(<http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/ottoman-music-therapy>)

I found out that Turkish communities have been practicing music therapy in the pre-Islamic era with the help of Shamans. Nil Sari states that *Kam*, the Turkish shaman tried to get into relation with the spirits of the other world by means of his or her *davul*, the drum and *oyun*, the ritual ceremony; hence they tried to benefit from their supernatural powers. The *kam* tried to affect the spirits by utilizing music, either driving evil spirits away, or attracting the help of good spirits so as to achieve treatment. You can watch a *Kam* ritual on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CTzYmMa1YE>

I found another video on the Tuvan cultures when I found out that Tuvans are a Turkic tribe and speak a language called the Tuvan Turkish. The video depicts a Tuvan Shaman and the degeneration the society is experiencing as a result of leaving their nomadic lifestyle. The video has English subtitles.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dPb6pXREOA>

At this point, I decide to include some important sections of Nil Sari's research paper as she gives detailed and grounded information on the sound healing traditions of both pre Islamic and Islamic era. She is including the philosophy behind the work extending from ancient tribes into the Islamic era. The philosophy hidden between numbers, astrology and sound along with the relationship between health and music are all depicted in the research.

‘According to the earliest Turkish sources, the cosmos was created by the word *kü / kök*, as the order of the creator. This means that the initiation of the cosmos was started by sound. This is an expression of the Creator's sound coming down and the "Godly sound approach" that is found in cultures of various ancient peoples. This being in accordance with the Islamic belief, which is based on several verses in the Koran, "*when He decrees a thing, He only says to it 'Be', and it is*" (Qur'an, Bakara 2/117). The Turkish peoples' idea on the divine character of sound was reinforced after conversion to Islam from the 11th century on. The belief that God was comprehended through words and sound being perceived as letter, the essence of existence was believed to be "sound". The number and differences of letters were related with the variety in the creation and existence. Hence, words were believed to be the cover of essence. This relation played an important part in fostering the belief that music therapy might re-establish the upset harmony of the patient, creating a sane balance between body, mind and emotions.

In pre-Islamic Turkish music theory, there was a different melody for each day of the year; in addition there were nine melodies which were to be played every day; and specific melodies were to be played during certain hours of the day. That is, the time of the day was an important factor to be respected in playing music. Although the pre-Islamic Turkish calendar, its calculations, and the pre-Islamic Turkish cosmology differed from the Islamic ones in some respects, the traditional Uyghur Turk's *nöbet*, the turn of playing before a sovereign or ruler, was a stable tradition which continued as a symbol of sovereignty in the Seljuk and Ottoman period.

We find Ottoman books and pamphlets on the influence of sound on man and the effect of music in healing, both in works on medicine and music. Ideas of Al-Farabi, Al-Razi and Ibn Sina on music were followed by several Ottoman writers such as *Gevrekzade* (d. 1801), *Şuuri* (d. 1693), *Ali Ufki* (1610-1675), *Kantemiroğlu* (Prince Dimitrie Cantemir, 1673-1723) and *Haşim Bey* (19th century). The study of music by these writers as a therapeutic means and comprehensive information given by them on the effects of music on man's mind and body note the existence of interest and curiosity on the subject during the Ottoman period. Ottoman medical writers such as *Abbas Vesim* (d. 1759/60) and *Gevrekzade* offered music to be included in medical education, along with mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, as in order to be a good physician one ought to have been trained in music. This recalls us that music had been included in the *quadrivium*, the Latin curriculum taught at universities until the late Middle Ages and which included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.'

Ottoman music for healing Insomnia

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_XsHiE47Yk

'Muslim scholars appropriated the ancients musical theories and information related with therapeutic music, which can be traced back to the Hellenistic sources, borrowed mainly from Sumerian, Babylonian and Egyptian concepts, perspectives and mysticism. While Muslim Turks traced the ideas of the ancient people, being a part of the Islamic society, they at the same time acted as the main transferors of the Chinese and Indian, that is far eastern ideas to the Near and Middle East and especially to Anatolia,

meanwhile introducing their original concepts of central Asian music therapy tradition. These were being reflected specially in Sufi rituals, the *zikr*.'

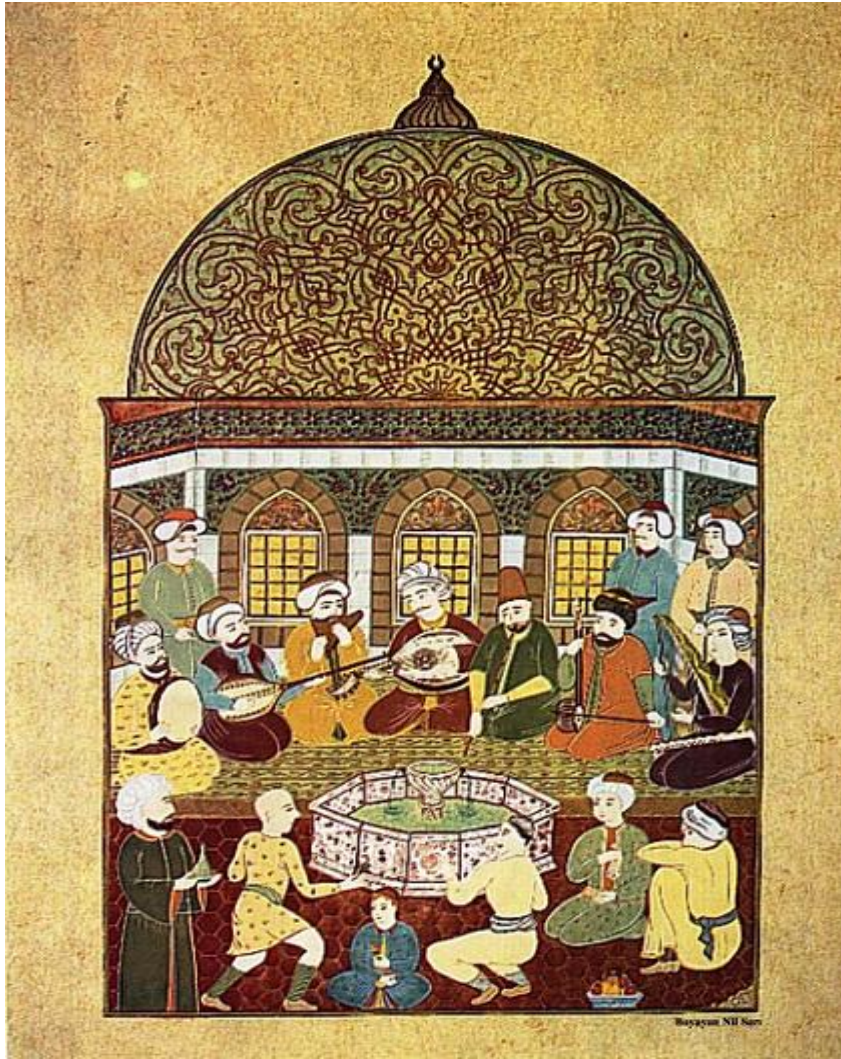
Zikr is unaccompanied homophonic chanting with heavy vocalised accents at key moments. A strong exhaling style is used which is rhythmical in duple time and with acceleration of the tempo as a higher level of excitement is achieved. There are various changes of direction and explosive vocal expostulations. This leads and turns into rhythmic audible external breathing.

Example of Zikr:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjfqhLbj378>

'The ancient theory of numbers and harmony of spheres, that is the motion of the stars, their intrinsic properties, and their effect and influence on mankind, the scheme of *cosmic music* were reflected to Islamic, hence Ottoman music theory. The theory of numerology expressed in musical terms was developed by Pythagoras, who was influenced by Babylonian astrology. Ottoman writers too "related sound to the cosmos through a mathematical conception of sound vibrations connected with numbers and astrology." The inaudible sounds produced by the movement of celestial bodies, called the "harmony of the spheres" were believed to express the mathematical harmony of the macrocosm. Hence, modes, or sequences of musical notes were believed to have a mathematical meaning. "The search for reason and intellectual logic in music therapy depended on the idea that man was a part of the universal harmony." Just as celestial bodies were believed to have counterparts in the human body, sound vibrations as a reflection of celestial bodies as well, were supposed to affect a diseased part of the body. Attaining harmony between body and soul led to health.

Patients suffering from a certain illness or the emotions of persons with a certain temperament were expected to be influenced by specific modes of music. Certain *makams*, that is musical modes, were prescribed for therapeutic purposes. *Makam* is "a concept of melody which determines tonal relations, as well as an overall indication of the melodic patterns." Modes, as patterns of organized sounds, were believed to express special meanings. Though there are about 80 Turkish modes; usually only 12 were prescribed for therapy, in accordance with the limitation of the related theories of cosmic elements and numerology, as it is in the Islamic and ancient sources. From the old texts we can deduce the kind of music which was supposed to cure a certain disease or create certain feelings and favour certain behaviours; though the musical modes of those days are not the same as those that we know today.



A miniature picture depicting an insane patient during a musical therapy session at the Bayezid II's Hospital. Picture copied by the permission of Nil Sari and Ulker Erke from: *38th International Congress on History of Medicine, Turkish Medical History Through Miniature Pictures Exhibition*. (Drawn by U. Erke, organized and edited by Nil Sari), Istanbul 2002.

The aims of Ottoman music therapy by playing specific modes prescribed for certain physiognomies and nations can be classified as: treatment of mental diseases; treatment of organic diseases; maintaining/re-establishing the harmony of the person – a healthy balance between body, mind and emotions by pleasing him/her; leading the way to emotions, such as getting people laugh or making them cry etc., preventing vicious feelings and attracting good ones, training the self and thus reaching perfection.

As we learn from the *Book of Travels* (1664) of *Evliya Çelebi* and the *Adjustment of Temperaments* by the physician *Şuuri* (d.1693), treatment by music therapy was through listening; and music therapy in Ottoman hospitals was not practiced as one - to - one relationship, but a group of patients listened to a group of players and singers, that is music therapy was probably a collective activity. But, if in theory its effect was supposed to differ from one temperament or illness to another, it must have been practiced on members of a group of specific temperaments or diseases. Whether or not or to what degree practice depended on theory is a matter of discussion not solved so far. There is no description of the way of application by music therapy in Turkish texts; only advises were made for treating illnesses, without any detail such as the distance between the patient and the player or singer. Nothing is noted in medical works about the healer and his or her relationship with the patient, and no mention is made of whether patients played instruments or not.

The philosopher, the physician and the Sufi, observing that some music modes have joyful and others have saddening influences, they utilized the effects of sounds. It was generally believed that using music's influence in the right way trained the soul. Ottoman writers on music expected music to be also a means to develop an ideal character. Attaining harmony between intellect and emotions could lead a man to become conscious of himself. We recall that ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle believed that certain musical modes possessed an ethical value and produced certain effects on the morality of the listener and helped in the development of character.

For the Sufi, purification and enlightenment came through the *heart*. The heart was described as the most virtuous organ and the symbolic center of man's existence and the feeling of love felt through the heart was accepted as the key of being aware of the existence of the Creator. This was an educational approach to music. Sufi music was used as a means of training for ideal perfection, which also meant becoming harmonious with oneself. Man, being accepted as the symbol of the universal creation, was described and evaluated as a micro-cosmos. It was believed that all the characteristics of the universe were awarded to man by the Creator. Therefore, the ultimate aim of music was to attain freedom of the self (*nefs*), so as to reach his/her soul to the divine origin.'

In Ankara, capital of Turkey, extensive research has been done with music therapy. Patients with chronic pain have been tested after a music therapy session and it was proven that the stress level of their heart dropped by 40 percent. The impact of various modes in Turkish music on the emotions have been tested by research done on the brain. Patients in deep coma have shown changes in their delta and theta brainwaves when played different modes. Research done with autistic children and children with ADD and ADHD. The different middle eastern rhythms and modes had a positive effect on their behavior.

Below are the the effects of certain makams on the body:

1) NIHAVEND TONALITY: Gives a general feeling of relaxation and peace. Good for the abdominal area . Regulates blood tension and circulation. Relaxes the muscles and is more effective around noon. The speciality of the pentatonic tonality is that it induces feelings of confidence and determination.

2) RAST TONALITY (MAKAM): Aries. Fire. Also related with water and Mars. It is dry and warm in nature. It is effective at midnight and dawn. Effective on the cold organs such as the bones, the brain and the fats. Prevents over-sleeping. It corrects the disorders caused by humidity, especially in children, since their body is very humid. Good for mental disorders. It has connections with yellow gall. More effective during daytime and especially Tuesdays. Gives joy, inner peace and comfort. It is effective for the muscles and is beneficial against paralysis. Because of its ability to relieve spasms, it is beneficial for the treatment of the autistic and spastic children. It is good for the head and the eyes. It is one of the oldest tonalities and is one of the four main tonalities with high healing qualities. Rast means "right" and "truth" in

Persian.

3) REHAVI TONALITY: Induces feelings of eternity, infinitude and general relaxation; is good for the head and the eyes. Sign: Libra. More effective at dawn.

4) HÜSEYNI TONALITY: It is good for the internal organs; liver, heart and stomach. It increases resistance against malaria. Induces feelings of peace, calmness and relaxation. Sign: Scorpio.

5) HICAZ TONALITY: Sign: Sagittarius. Fire in nature. Warm. Has connections with Jupiter. More effective from evening to dawn. Beneficial against diseases caused by dry-cold effects. Has healing effects for the bones, the brain and for child diseases. Effective for the uro-genital system and the kidneys. The chest is another area that it is good for. Increases low pulse rate. Gives rise to the feelings of humbleness. It is one of the oldest tonalities. Shows closeness to the Zengule and Zirgule tonalities. It is named after the region "Hicaz" in Arabia.

6) PENTATONIC MELODIES: Induces feelings of self confidence and determination.

7) ACEMASIRAN TONALITY : Induces feelings of creativity and infinitude. Helps labour. Good against pains.

8) USSAK TONALITY: Sign: Pisces. Water natured. Cold and humid. Jupiter. More effective at dawn, dusk and Thursdays. It has connections with white phlegm, female and night. Beneficial against the pain of heart and feet (especially for the adult male) and gout. Induces laughter, joy, strength and

heroic feelings. Good against the warm and dry winds that effect all the organs of the children. It is a means to express deep love and mystic feelings. It is one of the oldest tonalities. Induces sleep and relaxation; it is good for resting.

9) SEGAH TONALITY : Strengthens the heart; is good for the brain. It induces bravery and relaxation.

10) SABA MAKAMI: Induces religious feelings, bravery and strength. It also helps relaxation. More effective at dawn.

11) BUSELIK TONALITY : Induces general relaxation. It is beneficial for the abdominal area and the muscles. Regulates blood tension and circulation.

12) ISFAHAN TONALITY : Removes negative thoughts; clears the mind and increases intelligence. Beneficial against gynaecological illnesses. Increases mobility and induces self confidence. Sign: Gemini.

13) NEVA TONALITY : Removes negative thoughts. Beneficial against waist and hip pains; good for gynaecological illnesses. Restores taste and induces relief and happiness. Sign: Aquarius.

14) BAKSHI DANCE: An ancient therapy dance originating from the Altai mountain range - improvised application.

15) ARCHETYPICAL MOVEMENTS: Therapy and preparation by arm, shoulder and head movements. Image Music: Helps therapy and healing process by inducing the visualisation of images.

16) SEMA - SEMAH: Examples from Sema and Semah (Whirling dance of dervishes).

17) IRAK TONALITY : Affects people with tan complexion. More effective in mid-morning. Helps learning, understanding and concentration. Beneficial for the stubborn and vulgar characters. Removes feelings of fear and exasperation. Sign: Taurus.

18) BUZURK TONALITY : Gets rid of apprehension and fear. Clears the mind. Directs thought. Beneficial against fever. Sign: Leo / Group: Fire.

19) ZIREFKEND TONALITY :Beneficial against back, muscle and acute abdominal pain. More effective after midnight. Sign: Cancer / Group: Water.

20) ZENGULE TONALITY : Good for the brain and the heart. Beneficial for stomach and liver disorders. It has a relation with hip joints and inner side of the legs. Sign: Virgo - Libra. Group: Earth

CONCLUSION FOR NOW

Do I have a cellular memory that is informed by the healing practices of the culture I grew up in? Or am I connecting to another web, to a wider family beyond? The answers to my initial questions are all positive.

I believe that I have a particular cellular and melodic memory in my organism through the culture I grew up in. Yet the culture I grew up in- like all other cultures- is the heritage and mixture of many cultures. When I practice sound healing I am also connecting to a web beyond borders and cultural codes along with connecting to a family that is beyond time and space that vibrates through the invisible world. The Source energy encompasses all of the above and beyond that can be sung, toned, played or sensed in silence. That is my story and I am going to stick to it for now until I become aware of an even more abundant one!

