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## **Ottoman Music Culture in the Balkans through the Prism of the Travel Writer Evliya Celebi**

Aida Islam<sup>a\*</sup>, Stefanija Leshkova Zelenkovska<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Faculty of Pedagogy "Ss Kliment Ohridski", Cs Cyril an Methodius University, Bulevar 8-mi Septemvri*

<sup>b</sup>*Music Academy, University "Goce Delchev", Krste Misirkov 10-A, 201 Stip 2000, R. Macedonia*

<sup>a</sup>*Email: aidaislam25@gmail.com*

<sup>b</sup>*Email: stefanija.zelenkovska@ugd.edu.mk*

### **Abstract**

This paper reconstruct the picture about the Ottoman music through the prism of descriptions and experiences of Celebi on his stay in several cities in the territory of R. Macedonia in 17<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the data, we covered the institutions, spiritual and educational, in which music activities took place usually. Spiritual music had a ceremonial character and was represented in the mosques and tekkes. The spiritual life in mosques was at a very high level; so, music education had a valuable place in the divine service. The important role that tekkes had in terms of cultural life is confirmed through the travelogues of Celebi, in which information about their activity in all the cities are found. Their role was significant in the development of fine arts, especially poetry and music. Music was an integral part of education in the madrassas through the study of spiritual music forms. Many individuals contributed to the development of spiritual, as well as overall musical culture, and as we learn from the Seyahatname (book of travels) of Celebi, they all had different social activities.

**Keywords:** Ottoman spiritual music; E. Celebi; 17<sup>th</sup> century; Book of travel.

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\* Corresponding author.

## 1. Introduction

Reconstruction of musical life of the Turkish population in Macedonia at the time of Ottoman state is a complex task, above all, because of the scarcity of existing written sources. Thus, we largely had to rely on the data that generally referred to the entire Turkish musical tradition. We applied this approach due to the irrefutable fact that the attention of the Ottoman government, almost in its entirety, was turned toward the European part of the Empire—the Rumelian region, where Macedonia is located.

In this text, we used as a source the travelogues of the famous travel writer Evliya Celebi (E. Çelebi 1611-1682), who spent his life traveling and studying a large part of the Ottoman Empire territory. On his traveling through the Balkans, in addition to Skopje, he visited Bitola, Ohrid, Resen, Prilep, and other populated places, mostly in the eastern part of Macedonia.

The fact is that in the book of travels, we found data that helped us to directly reconstruct the spiritual Ottoman music, and in this article, we focused only on that segment of musical life that is the subject of research. In this sense, we traced the spiritual musical culture through the institutions in which the spiritual services were performed. In the *Seyahatname* of Celebi are noted the data on the number, names, location, appearance, history, as well as the importance of these spiritual objects. These descriptions give us knowledge of the level of representation of spiritual music in that period.

From a methodological point of view, at the realization of this complex subject, we combined the methods, historical and descriptive, supplemented by theoretical analysis to achieve more comprehensive and objective conclusions. In addition to the travelogues of Celebi, we used as sources, books with general historical and professional contents of the spiritual culture and music in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. Spiritual music in the religious and educational institutions

Considering the fact that religion was an integral part of the state and political power in the Ottoman Empire, the forms of spiritual divine service, and thus the spiritual music, had an official status. Though a certain system functioned within the two types of spiritual institutions, mosques and tekkes, the status of the official worship was more valid for the mosques.

The music had a very significant place in the spiritual service in the mosques, and it was used for functional purposes, that is, its primary role was decorating the spiritual poetry [1].

In this religious tradition, only the vocal music was practiced, usually performed by one or more spiritual persons (imams or muezzins), and, sometimes, with the participation of the believers that were present. Muezzins were obliged to attend classes for a period of 6 months, during which they studied the makam melodic modes, and the other musical elements necessary for the performance of the spiritual forms. This is evidenced by the data on the musical education of Celebi, who was the muezzin in the Aya Sophia, and with his beautiful and melodic voice and performance, he attracted the attention of Sultan Murad IV. In the period of 1635, Celebi was engaged in the court service of the sultan, and in 1640, started his travel throughout the Empire [2].

The most significant forms of mosque worship were: ezan, sala, kamet, tesbih, temdzhid, munadzhat, mihrabije, tekbir, shugul, ilahi, quasida, miradzhije, and mevlid. The forms like ezan, sala, and temdzhid were performed on the minaret of the mosque, while the other were performed within the building during the prayers. The most important feature of this spiritual music is that some of this forms are performed by means of improvisation.

Seen from the musical aspect, the tekkes had the role of civil associations for the diffusion of musical knowledge, use of musical instruments, and transmission of musical experience from one generation to another. At the time of Ottoman state, they represented the gathering places of esteemed musicians. A number of eminent musicians who were affirmed as musical theorists and authors of the texts or compositions were in fact members of these spiritual institutions [3]. In many of the dervish orders, the vocal performance is accompanied with the use of the instruments too. Depending on their traditions, the most commonly used were: bendir (kind of def), kudum, cymbals, ney, kemenje, rebab, and others. In addition to the excerpts from the Quran and the prayers, several musical forms were performed, such as the ilahis, qasides, na't, mersije, durak, shugul, and nefes etc. [4].

### ***2.1. Mosques and their significance on the spiritual culture***

In conquering of new territories, the Ottoman Turks built a large number of mosques and tekkes. The basic idea in the creation of these religious institutions was to attract a larger proportion of the population, regardless of religious or ethnic background.

According to the statements on the world traveler Celebi who visited Skopje in 1659/60, in this period existed 120 Islam houses of worship, large and small mosques, masjids, and private worships. However, the common prayer on Fridays (dzuma) was performed only in the 45 mosques [5]. The mosques were built in the urban quarters and the bazaar and were usually named after the founder of the mosque. Mosques that Celebi describes are: the emperor's–Hünkar mosque under the Clock tower, Jahja Pasha mosque (which Celebi compares with the Aya Sophia in Istanbul by the height of the dome and the minaret), Karlizade, Kodja Mustafa, Alaja, and Isa Bey mosque [5:284].

In Bitola, according to Celebi, there were 70 mosques, and the most famous were Isaac Efendi, Mahmud Efendi, Ghazi Haidar Pasha, Haji-Bey mosque, etc.

In the description of Struga, four Muslim places of worship are mentioned, the most famous of which is situated in Ohruzade, located in the bazaar, which, at the same time, had a madrassa [5:557].

In Ohrid, there were three worships in the fortress. Ohruzade or Emperor's Mosque, the gathering place of scholars and dervishes led scientific discussions in different fields. In the census of the sultan's mosques, Celebi emphasizes the Aya Sophia mosque, and he presumes that it was built by the emperor named Ohru, and it is located on the lake shore under the pasha's saray. The town had 17 worships and as many local masjids. At the shore, the most visited was the Haji Qasim mosque, covered with clear blue lead with four-angled dome and minaret, built in old style. The other mosques that are mentioned by Celebi are Sultan Süleyman Han, Haydar Pasha, Haji Hamza and Kuloğlu, built in old style [5:565].

During his stay in Resen, Celebi wrote about Hadji Murat, as well as Ramazan-beys mosque with a stone minaret, which had a mektep in the yard.

In Stip, during that period, existed 24 places of worship, because according to Celebi, the population was very religious, and the people invested great wealth in the construction of mosques. Common prayer on Fridays was performed in the following mosques: Fethija placed under the fortress, Murad Han, the conqueror (known as the Middle-Orta mosque), with a dome covered with pure lead. Here were also located the Hüssam Pasha mosque, the mosque of Lower tekke, Adli efendi, Ahmet Pasha, Shehrekodzije, as well as Kadin-Ane mosque, which was also often visited. Besides mosques, everyday spiritual services were performed in 24 masjids, the most famous of which was Araste, the colorful masjid [5:344].

In the description of the kasabas (towns), Celebi mentions the spiritual objects in Kocani, Radovis, Tikves, Valandovo and Prilep, where he emphasizes Alajbey and Arslan Pasha mosques. In Strumica, the major followers of religion are the Yörüks, who performed the worship in the mosque of Vildan Efendi [5:580].

## **2.2. Educational institutions – madrassas**

In addition to religious objects, spiritual music was preached and studied in the educational institutions called madrassas, located next to the mosques [6].

Most of the forms of spiritual music were studied considering the fact that one of the principal subjects in these institutions was religious education (also were studied the rules of the Arabian language, writing, mathematics, etc.). The main objective of these institutions, which were managed by the muderis teachers, was complying of the students to the tasks that they were expected to perform as religious and government officials, and therefore, a major interest was in the group of subjects concerning the interpretation of the Quran and the Islamic tradition. The significance of the proper performance of the Quran testifies the fact that Celebi studied it 11 years, and he knew to recite it from memory in seven Arabic dialects. As a spiritual teacher and patron of his main profession, Celebi mentions the muezzin Dervish Omer Pisuvaja (Gulseni) as his teacher in music and master of his time [5:24].

According to the descriptions of the hafiz Celebi, the most important madrassas in Skopje in the seventeenth century were Sultan Murad Han, Yahya Pasha, Ishak Pasha, Isa Pasha, Mustafa Pasha, and Karlizade madrassa. In Bitola, in the same period were active nine madrassas, of which the most famous was Dulbend-qadi, as well as Isaac Celebi madrassa, in which were active the muderis teachers Hasan Efendi and Abdul Kerim [5:305, 575]. In Stip existed one madrassa, named Muradije, located in front of the mosque Gazi Murad Hudavendigar, in which the holy tradition was studied with a professor who held public lectures [5:344]. In Ohrid were active two teaching institutes for learned theologians and several madrassas of which the most famous were within the Kodja Sijavush Pasha mosque (where teachers were hired for the interpretation of the Quran) and in the Suleyman Han mosque–tekke. There were also many madrassas within the tekkes [5:566].

Besides the madrassas, there were schools called daru'l-kurra for studying and memorizing of the Quran. They

were not separate buildings under the dome, but were built near the mosques. In these institutions, only the memorizing of the Quran was studied, because the residents otherwise did not pay too much attention to the memorizing of the Holy book. In the seventeenth century, there were nine schools in Skopje of this type. At that time, in Stip, this type of schools existed within the mosques, Husampasha, Kadin-Ane, and the bazaar mosque [5:345].

According to the notes of the travel writer Celebi, in the seventeenth century, in Skopje, existed 70 primary schools (mektebs). They were built next to the mosques, and one of the most famous was the Kodja Mustafa Pasha school [5:285]. These educational institutions were not under the jurisdiction of the state, and therefore, the state had no influence in creating the education policy. Besides the natural, social sciences, and literature, the cathathism (religious education) was one of the leading subjects. Not only religion was studied within this subject, but also some forms of the spiritual Ottoman music.

### **2.3. Significant spiritual figures**

Many educated persons who were spiritual carriers in this sphere of everyday life contributed to the dissemination of spiritual music at that time. In addition to the active working during their life, some of them left behind some spiritual musical forms that were performed during the following centuries. One of the names mentioned in the history of Ottoman music is Niyazi from Skopje, who lived in the sixteenth century. In addition to the spiritual compositions, he has also created secular compositions, which were widespread throughout the Ottoman state and survived many centuries in the musical repertoire [3:16].

In the description of Skopje, Celebi mentions the name of Veysi, the son of Mehmed, known to the world as Veysi Effendi, who had a high position of a Skopje-based qadi (judge). He is the author of 11 literary and poetic works, among which the most famous is dedicated to the prophet Muhammad (a.s.) (*Siyeri Veysi*). From the musical aspect, we observe him as an author of ghazals and qasidas that are integrated into the spiritual music repertoire. Among the most significant names of the spiritual life of Skopje, Celebi mentions the sheikh Lutfulah, an imam in the mosque of Yahya pasha [5:290-292].

According to the perceptions of Celebi, Ohrid was considered to be one of the most important areas in the spiritual sphere. During this period, a couple of scholar figures were sent to the other parts of Macedonia, especially to the western part, to strengthen the spiritual circles in this region [5:568].

In Stip, Celebi mentions Kucuk Emirzade Dzanan Efendi, a prominent member of the dervish order Bayrami, as a well-known sheikh and Turkish mystic writer [5:347].

### **3. Mystic spiritual music in the tekkes**

The tekkes had an important role in the cultural–artistic segment of social life in Macedonia during the period of the Ottoman Empire too. In that period were built 77 tekkes, most of which were located in Skopje (20) and in Stip (7) [5:285, 342].

Their role is especially great in the development of fine arts, above all, poetry and music. In this way, the younger devotees, in addition to the spiritual–ethical elevation, depending on the education of the spiritual leaders, had the opportunity to learn these arts.

Their libraries possessed valuable literary works, mostly poetic creations, and there was a significant interest in ornamentation and painting, and that is obvious from the numerous wall paintings, on the preparation of wood, plaster, or stone, mainly with motifs of the floral world.

Depending on the dervish order, the traditional ritual–*zikr*, which is an ecstatic communal dance and singing, was performed accompanied by musical instruments or the vocal singing. Some of the members of the dervish orders, especially the leaders of rituals–*zikrbashi*, were educated musicians, who, in addition to having a wide repertoire, composed spiritual works, usually *ilahis*.

The use of musical instruments in spiritual circles is testified on the engraving of Paul Rycout (1670), presenting dervishes who play on instruments *ney* and *bendir*. The wind instrument *ney* was typical for the *mevlevi* dervish order, which existed in these territories until the first half of the twentieth century.

From the travel books of *Celebi*, we find out about the activity of several dervish orders on the territory of Macedonia, of which he mentions directly *Halveti*, *Kadiri*, *Mevlevi*, *Nakshibendi*, and *Bayrami*.

The most widespread branch of the dervish order *Halveti* in Macedonia is *Hayati*, whose founder is *Pir Mehmet Hayati* in the late seventeenth century. According to some perceptions, most of the spiritual musical compositions were created exactly by the *Halveti* [3:15]. The use of some musical instruments as *def*, *kudum* and *cymbals*, was usual in that period.

Members of the dervish order *Kadiri* started their activity in Macedonia in the sixteenth century [7]. At the time of the Ottomans, *Kadiri* represented the dervish order that was most widespread after the *Halveti* in Macedonia [8]. Since this dervish order belonged to the higher social classes, it usually existed in the bigger cities in Macedonia.

In the sixteenth century in *Skopje* was founded the *tekke* of the dervish order *Mevlevi* [9,10,11]. The *tekke* of the dervish order *Nakshibendi* was formed in *Skopje* by the *Lütfullah Üskübi*, and it was situated in the foothills of *Vodno*. This is the first *tekke* of the dervish order *Nakshibendi* in these regions. Within the *Isa Bey* mosque was situated another *Nakshibendi tekke*. This *tekke*, named *Hankah* of the *Isa Bey* (the name *hankah* is the synonym for this type of objects), along with the *madrassa*, was founded before 1467 [12].

In the vicinity of *Yahya Pasha's* mosque was built the *tekke* of the dervish order *Sinani*, called the *tekke* of *Iplikci Hasan Efendi* or *Bukagili tekke*. This *tekke* was built around the second half of the sixteenth century. On the left side of the river *Vardar* (today near *MRT*) was located another *tekke* of this dervish order. This *tekke*, founded in the sixteenth century, was called the *tekke* of *Veljudin Vardar*, and it was active until 1912 [13].

The *tekke* of the dervish order *Djelveti* in *Skopje* was founded before 1595/96, and it was named *Hadji Ajshe*

Hatunzaviye (according to the builder of the tekke) or tekke of Ismail Haki [14].

According to Celebi, in Stip were active seven dervish orders. Of all of them, the most famous was the tekke of Bali Efendi from Sofia, who belonged to the Bayrami order. Of the other tekkes, Çelebi mentions Adli Effendi, Emir-Celebi Sultan, Kadin-Anne, the tekke in Gutter-quarter, etc. [5: 345].

#### **4. Conclusion**

Viewed through the prism of the travel writer Evliya Celebi, it can be concluded that spiritual Ottoman music was present on the territory of Macedonia in the seventeenth century in everyday life of the Turkish population. This is evidenced by his descriptions of the numerous spiritual buildings, mosques, and tekkes, in which the divine services were performed and where music had a central place. In this sense, Celebi emphasizes the need for higher musical education that was an integral part of the educational institutions. The spiritual persons educated in madrassas and religious schools in these regions were employed in the cities throughout the empire. Many educated persons contributed in the dissemination of spiritual music of that time, and they were spiritual carriers in this sphere of everyday life. In addition to being very active throughout their life, some of them left behind some spiritual musical forms that were performed during the following centuries.

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