

Therapeutic Dimensions of Music In Islamic Culture, in Koen, Benjamin, D. ed.  
*The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford  
University Press, 2008 (:361-392)  
PAGINATION APPROXIMATIVE.  
manque 2 footnotes, restent qq coquilles sur cet exemplaire  
POUR DES CITATIONS PRECISES, CF. LA VERSION PUBLIÉE

## **Chapter 15**

### **Therapeutic Dimensions of Music in Islamic Culture**

Jean During

(translated from the French by Guillaume Renaud)

#### **Prelude**

This chapter is primarily concerned with ancient notions and conceptualizations about music's potential power to promote health, facilitate healing, and prevent illness; and some contemporary theories and practices that relate to the ideas presented. Broadly, the chapter considers four areas or themes with respect to music and healing, and allows these themes to interweave throughout—informing, critically questioning, and in the end, providing some insight into music's untapped potential to benefit people. Specifically, the areas under consideration are: contemporary reports regarding experiences of musical healing; historical anecdotes of the same, drawn from ancient treatises of the Middle East; certain contemporary traditional practices, as well as related scientific experimentation and theories; and a more focused investigation of the practices of the Baluchi healing rituals known as *guâti* or *damali*.

## Experiences, Claims, and Possibilities

During the more than fifteen years spent in Iran and Central Asia, and the many more years spent engaging the cultures of this region, I have always been interested in the relationship between culturally formed musical therapeutics and how such practices can be understood cross-culturally. For example, in all my work and experience in that region, the musical therapeutics or healings that I have witnessed or learned about have little to do with what is known as the western academic discipline of “music therapy.” There are of course, many other disciplines and approaches to engaging music’s potential power to effect positive change, create health, or even bring about the experience of healing. To begin a dialogic interaction across time and cultures, I will draw on some the anecdotes mentioned to me in the course of my work, or which can be found in certain ancient or obscure documents, and provide a sketch of some key points.

1. One of my teachers of Persian music, N. A. Borumand (d.1976), who had studied medicine, tells that one day, he and the famous *santur* (cymbalum) player Habib Somâ’i paid a visit to a friend who suffered from hypertension. When they arrived, he checked his friend’s blood pressure and noticed its high level. After Somâ’i had enchanted the group with his music, the host announced he was feeling much better, and Borumand checked his pressure once more to see that it was back to normal. He did not have the opportunity to extend the study of this phenomenon, which he believes with certainty to be the result of the music performed.

Since that time, a vast literature has emerged consisting of ethnographic and scientific studies showing the physiological, psychological, and emotional effects of music and its potential is well established. What is not well understood, however, is the specificity with which music effects change, the pathways wherein it operates, and perhaps most importantly, as this volume highlights, the unique role that culture plays in musical efficacy.

2. Mohamad Rezâ Shajariân (b.1940), the most famous Iranian singer, and one of the most important with respect to his vocal mastery and his role in preserving classical Iranian music, relates that once when he was struck by an unbearable migraine, he visited Hasan Kasâi’s brother, a not well-known but excellent traditional singer. After he had listened with delight to his performance of the Abu Atâ mode, he noticed that his headache had disappeared.

In these two cases, the action is what we might call involuntary—that is, music caused a drop of blood pressure or a balancing effect, and also relieved the pain of a debilitating migraine through the act or experience of listening. It should also note that the audience was particularly receptive to and familiar with the nuances

in sound and cultural meaning associated with this laden form of expressive culture in the classical Iranian music.

3. Hâtam Asgari (b.1933), a contemporary master of Iranian singing states:

The first time I ever did music therapy, it was with a student who had a kind of epileptic fit during one lesson. She felt very embarrassed by what had just happened and she said that it happened quite often. When I told my spiritual master about it, he asked to meet her. I took her to his home and he questioned her, then he told me to cure her myself. I started working with her and her health improved. I felt her pulse and started singing, watching the changes in her pulse and her temperature. When I noticed that a specific tune warmed her body, which meant that it appealed to her, I worked on this tune while concentrating on her. The Ancients also used to do this.<sup>1</sup>

4. The famous Uzbek lutenist Turgun Alimatov (b.1922) says that sometimes he cures his close relatives by playing for them the *dotâr*, a lute with two silk strings whose sound is soft and intense. His method simply consists in feeling the patient's state of health so he can be in harmony with him, then in choosing the proper musical pieces, which have specific rhythms, modes, and emotional associations. He always notices an improvement but he doesn't seem to be able to tell more, his approach being purely intuitive.

A degree of this highly personal association to musical affect and in turn the ability to effect change in one's state of health can be seen as a typical if not universal among musicians—most of whom regularly experience the effects of music. Indeed, music is an affective and effective art. Better understanding its potential, so a greater degree of what seems to be part and parcel of the musical dimension and experience (i.e. affect and effect) perhaps is best viewed as endeavouring to extend what is commonplace for the individual, albeit most often in limited degrees, to a more universal conceptualization of its elusive systems. In a well-known historical example of this point (i.e., a musician's ability to extend the personal experience of musical affect to effecting change in another person), 'Ali Akbar Farahâni, the greatest master of the 19th century Persian music (d.1855), when he learnt that one of his friends had contracted typhoid fever, went to stay with him and played the *târ* (another kind of long-necked lute) until his fever came down<sup>2</sup>.

5. The Turkmen use the *dotâr* to play a specific piece composed to relieve people suffering from measles (*qyzylak*), and it seems that this instrument is also used to calm delirious patients. While I do not have any detailed information on these uses, it seems that there is a well-established method between the music and the illness—that is, it is not a matter of the musician trusting the intuition, but a specific relationship—this should be explored in future research.

It is also worth highlighting the regular employment of the two-stringed *dotâr* and *tanbur* for healing in this broad cultural region. Two points underscore

the impact of these lutes, namely, their unique timbre and role in creating rhythm and groove. On the one hand, in the context of Baluchis' trance rituals, it has a significant part to play for the patient through the production of a rhythmical drone which is powerful if we consider its volume and subtle if we consider its musical groove and the role that plays in the factors of trance and ultimately, healing.

In addition, in certain practices in Central Asia, the vibrations from these lutes are sometimes transmitted "straight to the head" of the listener, which is done by the listener biting the end of the instrument's neck. The Kurdish master of *tanbur*<sup>3</sup>, Ostâd Elahi, occasionally cured some of his relatives suffering from cold with this method.

6. Alfred Tomatis (1920-2001) is world-famous for his works undertaken nearly 50 years ago on the psycho-acoustic impact of musical and articulated sounds on the human brain, mind and behaviour<sup>4</sup>. The recordings proposed by this therapeutic method rework the spectral components of the sound to highlight certain frequencies, which make it quite different than usual musical standards, making it a kind of synthesized form unlike its original instrumental counterpart. Recently, some of his emulators studied the psychological and physiological virtues of Ostad Elahi's music,<sup>5</sup> which, according to them, is exceptionally rich in high frequencies (often above 10,000 Hz). These frequencies are claimed to be active on some cognitive and emotional functions such as the capacities of concentration, memorization, the control of impulsivity, the neurological activity and function during sleep and the diurnal biological rhythms. They also mention that rhythmic variations and the richness of instrumental technique are both essential factors to achieve such an effect while listening steadily to this music. I devoted many papers to the effect of this music, which holds a special place in the history of Persian music—it is, at once, essentially spiritual and mystical, while also being traditional and utterly original. Nevertheless, this master has never made the most of these therapeutics applications<sup>6</sup>.

7. Lastly, some thirty years ago (and perhaps still today), the Arabo-Andalusian Orchestra of Fez used to perform once a week for mentally ill people—this had a pronounced effect of alleviating their anguish and improving their condition. The great Muslim hospitals of the past often had a music hall for alienates on the top floor. As far as I know, this tradition remains only in Fez. However, an example of this music was relayed to me concerning one of the last great master musicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Abdul Qâdir Quraysh. One day he fell seriously ill and was taken to hospital, whereupon he asked for a musician who could play the Andalusian music for him. As he was regaining strength, the doctor asked a full orchestra to perform for his patient every Friday the classical piece "By my Lord who relieved Job's pain", in the mode 'Irâq al-'arabî. The master recovered and lived eight more years. 'Abdul Qâdir Quraysh firmly

believed in the healing virtues of Andalusian music and he taught the science of music in line with the theory of traditional Islamic medicine<sup>7</sup>.

This example, like numbers 1 and 2 above, builds upon the notion that certain modes evoke specific states, which is well known concept in the Middle East and India. There are often a host of components related to the musical mode or piece that are further thought to promote or inhibit efficacy. In one related experience that I had, there was a notion of the relation between the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the twelve Persian modes (*dastgâh* and *âvâz*)<sup>8</sup>. I once improvised on the lute for a listener in the mode corresponding to his astrological sign. After a few minutes, he suddenly started shivering and he kept on for a few minutes after the music had ended. Trembling is usually the first sign of going into a trance, but in this example, this seems more linked to a profound emotion. This is another notion that would benefit from systematic research.

### **Interpersonal and Objective Approaches**

The first observation is that in all these examples, the relation between the musician and the patient is direct, personal, *presential*, and usually full of affect. There are no recordings, amplifications, or any concert conditions, all of which tend to create distance and an impersonal atmosphere of experience. Most often, there is also no need for singing—the instrument speaks by itself as if its sound or perhaps its timbre was endowed with some special communicative property. Perhaps the human voice is too direct and fraught with subjectivity, which might be perceived as a violation of privacy, whereas the instrument's sound remains neutral and acts as a buffer between the patient and the therapist—in effect, further removing the therapist or musician from the equation by focusing on the more abstract and perhaps the more effective sound of the instrument. There are of course, many instances where the voice is used—for example there is singing during the *nuba*, but mainly in chorus.

The case of the Arabo-Andalusian *nuba* is different, comprising another approach: a full orchestra, with choir and various instruments, performs for a group of alienates. This practice rests on an ancient lost tradition, where the different musical modes and rhythms serve as a basis of melodies and possess specific effects on some mood or other aspect of one's state of being. While attendees at the legendary Fez gatherings do not receive a "specific treatment," as the performance is collective, each might receive a specific effect and each person's relationship to the music is in part created within the self. In a contrary example, master al-Quraysh's case falls within personalized and specific treatments. Being an expert in the theory of moods, he himself chose the song that suited his condition, and which conveyed another level of affect through the devotional dimension of the lyrics.

Regarding Alfred Tomatis' reasoning, it is radically different from those previously mentioned, and rests upon a particularly "western"<sup>9</sup> casting of the

notion of *effect produced by sounds*, which risks reducing a musical event to its mere acoustic substance. Naturally, one cannot deny that timbre, pitches, rhythms, and musical form are efficient causes which deserve careful study; yet, it is extremely limited and problematic to envisage music simply as the play sonic components that can affect sensations and bring about more than a sensory or intellectual satisfaction, which is neither the end of the music nor a sufficient way of recovering. Nevertheless, in the “West,” it is this approach that has dominated centuries of speculations about the issue of the power of music. We shall give two examples here.

### **The myth of the power of sound: from Pythagoras to Gurjieff**

In Western culture, the idea of the natural power of sounds on the body or the spirit can be traced back to the Pythagoreans. One ancient myth tells of a man struck by insanity after he had heard one tune; he was then brought to Pythagoras. The master prescribed that the same tune be played once more, which resulted in the man recovering his reason.<sup>10</sup> Musical Pythagorism had its hours of glory during Italian Renaissance with Gnostics such as Marcile Ficino (d.1499), and later with the French and Fabre d’Olivet (d.1824). Europeans of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed that the “musical secrets of the Greeks” had been handed to Eastern people and kept by them, particularly by the Ottomans Turks.

Nowadays, the concern of many western musicians and musicologists to define and restore the accurate intervals of either Renaissance, Arabic, or Indian music, can be considered as a Pythagorean legacy. Generally, this originates in the idea that “right intervals” lead to specific modes or moods. Among them was a pioneer with radical positions, Alain Daniélou (d.1994), who adopted the Indian music theory concept by which each degree (*shruti*) of a musical scale has its own expressive content and arouses a specific emotional reaction, regardless of any cultural conditioning. During one conversation, I objected to Alain Daniélou that Indian singers were not more concerned by pitch precision than Westerners or others. In Arabic and Central Asian music(s), the issue of intervals is not the main concern for musicians, especially for singers who perform them intuitively and have no means to measure them, unlike lutenists. Moreover, analysis proves that their intervals fluctuate a great deal, and therefore, they cannot produce the ideal emotional effect.

A.Daniélou reversed his argumentation saying “perhaps, but when they get into the right mood, they find the proper intervals naturally and stick to them.” I heard a similar argument in Iran—that is, “a good inspiration helps the flute or fiddle player to perform the correct intervals.” In any case, the causal chain: right intervals and proper modes inducing specific moods, is not a one-way relation but a circular one. A shift in the causal relation can be found among some Sufis who assert, in opposition to what is usually thought, that ecstasy is not induced by

music and dance, but ecstasy incites one to dance and transforms the experience it into a spiritual moment.<sup>11</sup>

In modern times, the issue of the esoteric power of scales and timbre on the body was revived by Georges I. Gurjieff (d.1949), the Armenian magus whose ideas are widely held even outside his supporters' circles. The cult film devoted to him by Peter Brook (*Meetings with Remarkable Men*) begins with the absolutely whimsical reconstitution of a minstrel contest in Central Asia, inspired by some literary evocations left by Gurjieff. The winner is the *bard* whose voice causes the mountain to vibrate, even "sing," and to whom its rocks answer. The voice acts directly on minerals. Naturally, nothing similar has ever existed in the Caucasus or anywhere else, although Turkish minstrels' jousts and contests are common. It is wiser to confine ourselves to a metaphorical interpretation: the symbiotic relationship between singing and nature, in particular the mountain, refers to the personal experience Central Asian singers often talk about: "Singing loves mountain."

More original is Gurjieff's concept of "objective music" which he developed after an evening spent with some "truth seekers" from the West, and some Gnostics from Central Asia who were members of a secret brotherhood above denominations.<sup>12</sup> It would be futile to seek their hermitage or any signs of them elsewhere: scattered facts were used to construct a myth whose depth I will not deny. According to Gurdjieff,<sup>13</sup> these initiates hold the secret of musical art invented by Pythagoras and his peers to lift up mankind's consciousness. They perpetuate music and dances whose single characteristic is to exert the strictly same emotional and spiritual effect on all listeners. Gurjieff believes that none of the music known can reach objectivity because its effects are inaccurate and depend on each listener's appreciation: one melody may delight or excite someone, stimulate or annoy another one.

If we consider the literary context of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, the discovery of "objective music" seems to refer to a real and deep experience lived by the narrator and shared by his companions. Gurjieff was in contact with musical and choreographic atmospheres of Central Asia before he developed his famous esoteric dance movements.<sup>14</sup> A clue of these dances can be seen at the end of Peter Brook's film. He also left many melodies or Caucasians threnodies supposed to reflect some of this "objectivity". These recordings were kept by followers for a long time until they were commercialised in the eighties, at the same time as the third and last book of the author. These monotonous chants will hardly convince eastern music lovers, in part because of the piano arrangement of his disciple, de Hartman.<sup>15</sup>

The account of Gurjieff's meeting with a dervish, Asvat Trouv, in a cave of Turkestan is more fantastic but less credible.<sup>16</sup> He is astounded to discover there a real laboratory equipped with countless vibrometers thanks to which the dervish experiments on the effect of acoustic, and incidentally luminous vibrations on plants, animals and men. First he demonstrates the superiority of the vibrations of strings as opposed to those produced by wind instruments: one melody of five

notes played on wind instruments has no effect on a potted plant whereas the same melody played a few minutes on the piano will totally dry the plant out. Metallic or goat gut strings have very interesting properties and produce “creative vibrations” different than “inertial vibrations” sent out by wind instruments. After having used a cymbalo and an instrument with a single string, the dervish was able to get a piano brought to his retreat in High Boukhara mountains.<sup>17</sup>

Asvat Trouv then submits to Gurdjieff and his fellow traveller one of his experiments on the power of sound which he had developed over the years: he stubbornly repeats a sequence of notes on the piano which he had tuned in one of his secret ways, until Gurdjieff's friend starts feeling faint before being in pain. The dervish stops immediately and notices that the refrain, as he had expected, has caused the apparition of a boil on the thigh. After he had reassured the patient, he sits down at the piano again and plays another sequence of notes, which erases all traces of the boil. Having reached the end of his demonstration, he expresses his amazement to Gurdjieff who has no reaction to the pathogenic tune. The latter, made confident by Asvat Trouv's high knowledge, would like to explain to him that his level of personal development places him above these contingencies, like the dervish is. Yet he says nothing because of the presence of his companion.

My aim is simply to recall with these references the continuity of the myth of the power of sounds in Western culture, which echoes certain ancient eastern doctrines. These doctrines were seldom investigated and validated, but were nevertheless legitimated on the one hand by the great receptivity of listeners of many learned and popular traditions of these cultural areas, on the other hand by the existence of trance rituals in which the music often plays a central role. Although we must consider this myth objectively, there is no smoke without fire, and we might consider that there must be some wisdom or truth behind this myth. This is precisely what I shall underline by passing from myth to science and experimentation.

### **First Steps Towards a Scientific Approach**

During the 1970's, much experimentation proved that plants react to sounds and many research programs described successfully the effects of sounds on plants growth.<sup>18</sup> Briefly, plants develop because of photosynthesis realized under sunlight, which means that they are affected by some registers of the electromagnetic spectrum. Vibrations also belong to this spectrum, thus there is nothing surprising about the idea of an influence of sounds on plants growth. Different music and noise (voice included) were tested with this intention. In spite of results, the phenomenon remained unexplained. These experimentations fed “non-scientific” debates until Joel Sternheimer, a French physicist and musician, discovered the mechanism by which plants respond to the stimulation of sound waves.

The development of a protein from its constituent amino-acids produces quantum vibrations on a molecular level. Sternheimer's reasoning consists in turning these vibrations into musical frequencies to derive the melody created by amino-acids when they attach to the protein chain. Each melody is composed of about ten to a hundred notes or more. He proved that the diffusion of proper notes stimulates the synthesis of particular proteins, in such a way that a plant can increase its height, resistance to dryness, parasites or other biofactors. Though his works were recognized by the Academy of Sciences, the highest scientific institution in France, they are still not integrated in the official academic structures and kept semi confidential within the private sphere.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this is because upon critically considering the methods, techniques, applications, and claims, several problems seem to arise, which relate to a Pythagorean approach and conceptualization. For example, he postulates that relations and analogies take place between microcosm and macrocosm (or mesocosm). This is fine in some situations, but in the context of so-called objective experimentation, certain rigors must be observed. There is a chasm between the quantum vibration of one cell and a sequence of notes broadcast over a radio cassette player. According to him, when the note sequence (or the melody) is reversely picked off, the production of protein is inhibited. This reminds of the Arabic theory which states that a healthy person should listen to the musical mode corresponding to his mood, whereas a sick person should listen to the contrary mode in order to restore the humours balance.

Another thorny point concerns the technique: if it works on simple organisms such as tomatoes, the scholar himself acknowledges that experimentations on humans might be risky because of human complexity. Moreover, even if he maintains that sounds corresponding to the quantum vibration of a particular protein can be detected in some famous tunes, we are still a long way from a music-therapeutic field in the sense of the use of the appropriate modes, melodies and rhythms to induce states of consciousness or to heal. Indeed, the series of notes discovered to induce a specific biological process are not melodic but best defined as proto-music. Furthermore, the rhythmic and dynamic component is lacking. Sternheimer leaves it to his intuition as a musician, in spite of its essential part in the theories on the effect of music. In his Pythagorean approach, he turns vibrations into pitches and notes, without being able to read the rhythmic side sufficiently, which he himself admits. Notwithstanding the problems sketched out here, there is admittedly an innovative framework of considerations that merits further research. In brief, what must be maintained in such work is a clear separation between theory, method, hypotheses, the actual experimentation, and specific results on the one hand, and interpretation, discussion, and extended thoughts and postulates on the other.

## The Contribution of Ethnomusicology

In spite of these reserves, ethnomusicologists will not fail to notice in the physician's discoveries a confirmation of the validity of many practices they have observed and experienced, and which are the subject of over a century of anthropological and ethnomusicological research. We cannot deny that harmonious music has a stimulating effect on plant growth or on cow milk production; on human cognition and consciousness, physical, psychological, and emotional states; and conversely, dissonances and cacophonies seems to have negative effects. The aim of some tunes is to force domestic animals to do things against their instinct. For example, it is well known that shepherds from Central Asia and Siberia have songs of thanks to which an ewe accepts an orphan lamb. Another well known example are the camel driver's songs, their function is precise and their efficacy widely attested. My colleague Vincent Dehoux witnessed an exceptional ritual in Central Africa: the performance of musical pieces that attract "the river denizens" (inhabitants), namely hippopotamuses. Ancient Persian and Arabic musical treatises often begin by legitimating musical art because of its effect on camels, cervid, and new-borns. Indeed, certain sounds (musical or not), often in unexpected ways, can be seen to exert a unique influence on living beings, independently of any musical listening going through human perceptive and affective channels. This idea is stressed by Pythagorean myths revived by Gurjieff, illustrated by Sternheimer's works and, on a psychological level, those of Tomatis and his proponents.

Apart from the effect on living beings, there are songs to call the rain, the truth of which was acknowledged by Avicenna who described their mechanism (at least the devotional part of them), in spite of his scepticism regarding the effect of music on humours. Such songs are still in practice in Uzbekistan where they are dedicated to *Sus Khâtun*, a feminine figure. It is said that the Persian saint Moshtâq 'Ali Shâh (end of the 18th century) ended a tragic drought by playing the *setâr* all night long on the roof of his own house in Kermân.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, among the multiple uses of sacred words for a definite healing purpose, there is, in the Middle East and Central Asia, the use of a type of mysticism, which is based on the Quran, the power of words and letters, and often uses repetition. Uzbeki exorcism techniques also involve repetitive formulas. If they are shamans, they utter long invocations to guardian spirits with simple melodies and rhythms, softly and insistently droned out, almost hypnotically. If they are religious people, they strongly declaim Quranic verses with conviction (for example *Ya Sin Surat*, verse of the Throne) so that the patient ends up tossing restlessly until his demon gives up and leaves him.<sup>21</sup>

In these examples, the tone of sacred words is supposed to be effective, as the patient barely understands their meaning. Perhaps most typical is the use of a brief and simple formula, a *zîkr* (*mantra* in India), that the novice Sufi initiate must repeat aloud or mentally in order to operate an inner transformation. The formula is given by a master who chooses it according to the needs and capacities

of his disciple, just like a doctor who prescribes a remedy. Other Quranic formulas dissipate panic and trauma, which is often the cause of pathologies, which come within the shamanic framework for cure. In this context, Sternheimer's discovery sheds a new light on curative musical practices implying trance or not. It prompts us to risk a radical reversal of perspective: after all, there is no evidence that in these rituals, trance is as important as it seems. It could function as a placebo. From Sternheimer's view, music acts on the subtle body's chemistry as proteinic motifs. This would explain the resolutely repetitive form of most of curative trance repertoires (repetition which does not exclude, in some cases, a remarkable work on variations as in the *gnawa* anthems or Baluchi's *guâti damali* music). The explanation of Baluchi trance music's powerful effect, which is typically sequential, may lie in the fact that it contains among its tunes scattered series of sounds whose recurrence would stimulate cerebral neurotransmitters or would free enzymes. The Nestinari can walk on carpets of embers during Saint Constantine Day thanks to the effect of the brief melody which is relentlessly played all day long on the viola *lyra*.<sup>22</sup>

Sternheimer, who is also a musician, claims that receptive subjects can feel the appropriateness of a proteinic formula to a definite purpose. There again, the analogy with Baluchi's rituals is tempting: the patient *guati* indicates which melody among those played suits him, then he attests its efficiency by going into trance or simply by singing. As for the shaman, he generally asks his favourite melody to be played, in particular to induce trance or sometimes to maintain or intensify his state.

All these examples corroborate Sternheimer's discoveries except that here, it is a matter of music, which is far from being the case of previous examples. It would not be surprising that a music loving subject ends up neutralizing pitch sequences' "objective effects" only by a contrary reaction based in a differing aesthetic, in the same way as one rejects a musical form which he's not used to. Conversely, in music-therapeutic traditions, "beautiful melodies" affect the soul before the body. Of course, pharmacy must not be mistaken with cookery and the objective of medicines is not to be tasty. Music as food for the soul (following Sufis' formula) is one thing, sound sequences intended for endocrinal stimulations are something else. While there may indeed be a relationship between two such seemingly opposed conceptual fields, we have yet to discover such a relationship and these fields have not yet merged together. Nonetheless, traditional medicines lay stress on prophylactic virtues of healthy and balanced diet; and, if music is a food for the soul, it must have some positive effects on health. Master Hâtam Asgari has no doubt about it: "This music extends life: Âqâ, Ziâ lived 108 years; his father, lived 105 years, and Nakis lived 104 years. If you want to keep in good health, you must sing."<sup>23</sup> Let us leave a door open, waiting for new research, which will have everything to gain from ethnomusicological perspective. To sum up previous pages, while there are clues of how music can have a direct effect on the body, there still remains a lack of convincing evidence to show the exact

mode of operation in most cases, and recourse is often sought in an esoteric approach, even when researches are sophisticated (like the two mentioned above).

### **From Emotion to States of Altered Consciousness**

For the moment, we shall not touch for the moment this question through biologic, neuronal or any other kind of “mechanic” and we shall stick to the gathering of rare facts, which could inform or perhaps clarify these aspects. The issue of therapeutic power of music goes beyond the body and through emotion, symbolic system, representations, conditioning, context, in short, through culture. Again, here the contribution of medical and cognitive ethnomusicology is more suited than the one of musicology and even conventional music therapy, since therapeutic applications and interpretations are so rich and extensive in traditional musics, which are more holistic in their functioning.

I shall confine myself to what I know, but it is certain that many cultures developed just as interesting of views and practices as those of ancient Muslim theoreticians. According to them, music can exert its influence on: lifeless things and natural phenomena—plants, animals, humans, and even at a “pre-intellectual” level as in the case of new-borns. I have given some examples of these above.

The ancient Greeks, and then the early Muslim scientists, purported the role of the humours on health—investigating the four material components and the means by which they can become imbalanced and balanced, thereby creating illness or health. Following in this track, the selective effect of music on humours and dispositions, which is much subtler, found its way into the medical and other philosophical discourses. At this level, the action of music is not strictly mechanistic anymore, though it is eventually exerted on this chemistry of the body which ancient medicine formalized in the system of temperaments. Melodies and rhythms are also classified according to their hot, cold, dry or damp nature. Tunes corresponding to their disposition must be played to healthy persons.<sup>24</sup> This seems in line with the premise “like cures like” (see Sankaran this volume), inasmuch as a homeopathic constitutional remedy aims to engage the fundamental energy of an individual to bring about health. It is interesting, however, that the therapeutic applications of music in the Middle East developed to *proceed in a reverse way*: a disease comes from an excess of one element on another, thus tunes corresponding to the opposite temperament will be played in order to restore the balance. This subject is beyond the scope of this essay; but it should be mentioned that the role of music to engage or engender a healing response in a similar or contrary manner is complex—what might seem to be a reverse or allopathic effect at one level, might turn out to be a similar or homeopathic effect at a deeper level, and vice versa. To unpack the mode of operation and effect from the apparent to the actual will require a focused research program on this question. What might appear is that different principles

and systems of treatment or more or less effective at different levels of a person's being ranging from the macro to the micro; and that such dynamics can even vary between individuals.

With respect to the humours, what should be emphasized here is that in the ancient's views, music does not act directly on physical nature; a medieval Arab author clearly states this: "The influence of a mode is not due to the fact that, for example, it is hot and dry – this the exclusive privilege of bodies (not of modes which are immaterial) –it is due instead to the humour aroused". Again in the ancient's view, this influence is inscribed in a much wider conceptual frame and belief, notably linked to the stars and celestial spheres. The author specifies that: "The modes exert this type of influence thanks to their attribution to the stars, for the stars conceal the character which governs this influence"<sup>25</sup> (Abou Mraad, 1989,127-8). Let us remember that in this system, the stars modulate man's moods and influence their destiny—these are Pythagorean theories, which are widespread among Muslim scholars historically. Additionally, there is an intrinsic analogy between temperament and music: "Any living creature's disposition is composed of sounds and melodies harmoniously mixed together".

None of this clarifies the music-therapeutic process, but it tends to underline its complexity. In spite of their will to systematize and to classify, it is questionable that the ancients had developed proper music-therapeutic techniques. If they had, we would find other traces than those found in Morocco. My feeling is rather that, in general, music largely acted in a prophylactic way on society, as a so-called soft medicine, more akin to diet and nutrition, which, by no means I intend to imply that music or nutrition cannot heal or cure in their own right and should be regarded only as preventive. Their preventive capacity is well established and perhaps we simply have not learned enough about their curing capacity. Similarly, we would do well to remain in a posture of learning and to view the science of medicine in a state of infancy (or perhaps childhood)—the explosion of medical and scientific knowledge over the last few decades is nothing short of astounding and unimaginable when viewed from lens of the past, further marking our current state of knowledge as quite limited when we look toward the future. From all the cases quoted above, we shall infer two simple principles.

1) First of all, the action of music on the body *is inseparable from emotion*. As a matter of fact, when music is concerned, this action is the one that is always put forward. Our Arab author, when he talks about the effect on the body, cannot help referring to emotions: "melodic types exert a tremendous influence on human body such as liveliness, tears, happiness, sadness, bravery and sleepiness".

Bodies and emotions compose an *interlinked system* (see West and Ironson this volume). To give an account of it, we have to *give up the Newtonian physics principle of causality*: no element can be considered as the "cause" of the others; each one of them refers to the totality. What causes emotion in music? Is it the intelligible harmony of the form, the sensitive splendour of sound or the contagion of emotions? It is difficult to answer this question according to the law of excluded middle. The Ancients knew it well, that is why they always transcend

the order of natural causes. According to Fârâbî, perfect music has to combine three elements: pleasure, imagination and emotion.

2) If we refer to today's practices, a striking point is the personal relation between the musician and the "musicized" listener or patient. In all the examples, at least two persons are present, face-to-face. A traditional musician must have psychological talents, and as it is written in a Sanskrit treatise, be gifted for "the perception of other's mind".<sup>26</sup> So music is not *preformed* but it is *performed* for the patients, adapted to their states and it follows its evolution. Somehow, the patient has a hold on music and is not simply under its influence. Some musicians and practitioners recommend to start the healing process by getting the rhythm of the melody to coincide with the patient's pulse. Finally, the relational aspect (i.e., the family or collective dimension) can play a part in efficacy where the patient is psychologically, emotionally, or spiritually carried away by the energy and empathy of the entire group.

Traditional approaches to music and healing thus teach us something about the conditions necessary for an efficient music-therapy. By definition, the field of art, and especially music, liaises between the different dimensions of being human. The quality of sounds, timbers or rhythms is certainly important, but the study of the effect of music should consider this phenomenon in a holistic way, as a system. This approach is especially relevant regarding healing rituals that employ music.

### **Ritualizing the Effect of Music: From Presence to Possession**

Traditions agree on the fact that singing, dance and rhythm have preventive virtues, they contribute to wellbeing and relief from stress. Classical Sufism, whose practices use music as a path towards ecstasy, is aware of these contingent aspects.<sup>27</sup> In addition to this, whatever part music has—central or marginal, and whatever its complexity level is—from shamanic hymns of Central Asia marked by a simple beat on the tambourine, to Baluchi's or Ganawas' melodies, which require a professional qualification, its actions effect transformations of particular states of consciousness, about which the discourse often hastily reduces to the notion of "trance," and which are subsequently confined to explicit symbolic representations.

There is scarcely any therapy using music that does not induce some modified state of consciousness in the patient, officiant, and other participants. This state is generally not considered as a result of the effect of music on the subject, but rather as the effect on a spirit, which then gets in touch with the subject or the people present, in the mode of what is most often called *possession* or *presence*. The healing process proceeds in this ambiguous relation between the subject and the spirit. In many traditional cultures, this process can lead to the formation of a secret society or group, a manner to venerate spirits, which can have therapeutic, prophylactic or propitiatory effects.

Despite the theological chasms between different groups' belief systems and practices, with respect to the emotional and curative effects, admittedly music has quite a similar role to play;<sup>28</sup> and it is perhaps for this reason, at least in part, why a person from one culture and religious background can be deeply moved by a devotional or ritual music from a vastly different culture and religious system. A characteristic practice of many groups of dervishes, Sufis, and other Muslim mystics, implements singing often accompanied by drums and above all, litanies to which rhythm is given according to cycles of respiration (*zikr*) in order to reach modified states of consciousness where transcendence is experienced.

Until the 13th century, Sufis restricted themselves to the listening (*samâ'*) of singings in a more or less ritualized context. An examination of ancient sources suggests that singing and words were more important than instruments in the emotional effect of *samâ'*. Still, nowadays, solely singing (even without drum) is much more common in Sufi congregations than purely instrumental music. Among the justifications of *samâ'*, ancient treatises put forward its psychophysical and even therapeutic virtues. Abu Nasr Sarrâj is the first Sufi to indicate this: "The subtleties inside sounds calm the child in his cradle. Many ill people were cured by *samâ'*"<sup>29</sup> (*Lumâ'*, 1914, 269). Al-Bokhâri (XIth century) underlines in a similar expression that "many mentally ill people (*divânegân*) were cured by *samâ'* and recovered their reason" (:V, 198)<sup>30</sup>. Music as a cause of strong reactions of emotional and, sometimes, physical order (dance or agitation) was not only a devotional practice. Its purpose was to give some strength and ardour to the weakened dervishes stricken by the constriction caused by the rigours of asceticism. Ruzbehân Baqli, the saint of Shiraz (13th century), reverses this outline while relying on this tradition, he distinguishes two levels of audition (*samâ'*): that of ordinary people; and that of initiates. "When *samâ'* comes from below, the sick person is cured but when it comes from a high rank, it makes the healthy body ill."<sup>31</sup> So this case appears to be a mystic suffering.

Regarding *samâ'*, immanent and transcendent levels connect to each other in a manner which scrambles any positivist approach. During devotional rituals of certain spiritual or Sufis groups,<sup>32</sup> it happens that the whole congregation concentrates, with the help of sacred hymns, in order to cure the patient. In general, the latter is *not present*, so that this case is beyond the epistemological framework of music-therapy itself. Nevertheless, this practice must be brought up because of its common variations in the Muslim world where the patient, this time, *is present*.

These are not devotional sessions likely to lure a *Presence* (angels, saints, some divine) but healing rituals in which trance and its directing in the possession mode share a central and intersecting *place* along with music. The *presence* belongs to the register of religions with monist tendencies and the *possession* belongs to paganism and animism, but this theoretical and heuristic distinction is questioned by numerous practices in which the animist component hides itself under the veil of revealed religion. This is the case, among others, of the *zâr* in the Gulf of Persia and Western Africa coasts, of Baluchs' *guâti damâli* or of shamanism of central

Asia (*baxshichiliq*).<sup>33</sup> This is not to a revealed or scriptural religion itself per se, but to its cultural formulation at the level of diverse practices, which vary across cultures and from their scriptural sources.

### **Passing through states of modified consciousness**

Let us summarize the common points of these practices:

1) The patient suffers physical or psychological pain, *the cure is obtained when the patient goes into a trance* or in some particular state. It sometimes happens that only the officiant (let us say the shaman) goes into a trance. In that case, we cannot say that music acts on the patient, for it is supposed to be intended for the one who has to go into trance, or for the trancer's spirit (*jinn, guât, pari*, etc.) which is really the same. However, it is conceivable that patients, even passive, feel better after having listened to music for hours, without forgetting the specialized and often multimodal treatments (perfumes, massages, herbs, foods, etc.), which were given to them in a ritual context.

2) There is no question in these rituals of the *direct effect* of music on the body. Further, it is widely known that in many cultures music is the language used to communicate with the spiritual realm. The therapeutic process includes the follows: specialized music with its culturally defined component parts (to which are added offerings, sacrifice, perfumes, fumigations, communal meal), certain participants (shaman, patient, assistant) who bring down the spiritual forces (spirits, Ancients' souls, saints or their attendant, also known as *muwakkal*), whom they in get in contact with, set the stage for the experience of healing.

The effect of the music aims these spiritual forces or entities (and in certain situations, songs and invocations) compels them to manifest themselves. Baluchis clearly say that the tunes they play during these sort of sessions, known as *guâti-damâli*, are intended either for a *jinn* or a *guât* ("wind"), which is the source of the patient's illness. Here, music finds its nearly universal expression as "the language of spirits". The shaman (*khalife*) is none other than a former patient who pacified his own "spirit(s)". When the entity appears, the officiate is not the same anymore, the shaman goes to another level (or plane) where contact is made with these forces; if the shaman succeeds in dominating them, will then obtain from them the cure of the patient.

Generally, the patient is also seized (inhabited or transported) by these forces; and it is by the descent of such forces through the means of music that leads to the recovery of health. In brief, some of these forces affect the *corpus* (sensorial or motor stimulation) aspect, while others the *spiritus* (affects, imagination), which is sometime called transpersonal level (or the symbolic and/or religious level). It is finally necessary to take into account the part of the *socius*, that is to say the "social me" which is strongly urged on by the presence of

the family and the relatives who attend a ritual, which is often quite expensive for them.

According to the guardians of these traditions, stages in the ritual healing process can be described as follows (see figure 1):

music is dedicated to spirits ⇒ attraction of supernatural forces ⇒ patient's reaction in emotion, motion and modified states consciousness ⇒ evacuation of the forces ⇒ return to normal state, and eventually cure

### **15.1 stages in the ritual healing process**

A neutral point of view would rather consist in considering that music exerts a powerful effect on the shaman or the patient and that the trance or the excitation provoked is interpreted as the descent of one spirit or the release of the forces hidden inside the individual. For some followers of these traditions, this interpretation is only valid in certain cases. Indeed, the patient or the shaman *does not react to any music*, instrument, rhythm, poem and melody. Not only the shamanic tunes are conceived for a specific effect but on top of that, each subject has his own taste and habits. Therefore, another scheme can be proposed in figure 15.2

Some healers believe that in certain circumstances, the “spirit” or at least a category of spirits, is nothing else than the restlessness of the patient's impulses<sup>34</sup> released by music. From this perspective, the spirit does not exist as a separate entity, and consequently the symbolic dimension is very weak.

music is performed ⇒ specific outcome of emotion, motion, and modified states of consciousness ⇒ symbolization (intervention of spirits, saints) ⇒ return to normal state, and eventually cure

### **15.2 alternative process in ritual healing**

## **The issue of the “power” of music**

To return to the music-therapeutic aspect, I shall underline some other points:

a) Once more, there is no recipe—that is, in most cases, there is no melody *per se* that possesses the virtue of convening spirits, nor to induce trance without preliminary conditions<sup>35</sup>. The presumption that the rhythm of drum carries such an effect is fully refuted by many concrete examples: for example, there are Baluchi therapeutic rituals *do not employ the drum* and even singing can be secondary there; most of the time we deal with a purely instrumental music of great quality and depth that is centered on a type of regional *sorud* or *kamânche* (spike fiddle).

b) If there is no specific recipe per se, therefore there is no theory. In Baluchi curative trance rituals, the music-therapeutic action is completely *empirical*. The musicians who are true professionals play different musical pieces in turn until they notice that the officiate and/or the patient show symptoms of trance. Once settled in that state and in order to maintain the trance, it is generally enough to string tunes together in the same rhythm. In general, Baluchis establish almost no relation between melodies, spirits and pathology. The absence of nosology does not prevent music to have a powerful effect; and certain confidences from the experiences of participants attest to this power.

In cases that have been reported to me where a person's consciousness is transformed into a distinctly modified state, certain experts posit that such an effect is caused by the ebullition (*jush*) of enthusiasm (*'eshq*), not the possession by a spirit. Yet the border between these two phenomena is not that clear. For the Baluchis, there is a category of light spirits (*shidi*) who incite particularly young people and women to free themselves through corporal reactions to music, such as restlessness and dance; these spirits do not provoke pathologies, nor the ambiances of techno parties (rave). On another hand, the deprivation of music and of the physical and emotional release, which it causes, seems to leave the way open for depression, stress and illness. A Baluchi shaman and musician makes this global statement about the effect of music and its deprivation:

Those who have sorrow, music puts new life in them, their soul regenerates and they forget their sadness. In the past, thanks to celebrations, dances and music, people were not [so] affected by sorrow and worries. But nowadays, they are affected because we only listen to music once or twice in a year, for a wedding. They worry because they have too much money or debts, then gradually, sickness comes.<sup>36</sup>

What he means by sickness is akin to the notion of "the dark shadow of an evil spirit hovering above him". Music deficiency can thus lead to pathology which requires treatment of "special" music in high doses.

### **A case study: the Baluchi fiddle (*sorud*)**

Before going into the issue of the effects of this music, I wish first to introduce the context in which it is played. The *guâti* ritual (also called *damâli*, *qalandari*, *shiki* or *jenni*) is very common throughout south Baluchistan. While it can be practiced as a devotional act, its main purpose is to cure of a patient that is believed to suffer from evil spirits' influence. Musicians (*sorud* viola accompanied with (by) a rhythmic lute, the *tanbura*) play different musical pieces in turn until they notice that the officiate and/or the patient shows symptoms of trance. Once settled in that state and in order to maintain the trance, it is generally enough to string tunes together in the same rhythm. The patient's trance is activated and

directed by the shaman or *khalife* (or *guâti mât*, both male and female) who also goes in a trance through the effect of one or several favourite melodies. In this state, patients dance and get restless for one or a few hours until they collapse exhausted. After several night sessions of this sort, the evil spirit is dismissed at least for one or two years, and the patients recover their health. Each shaman has unique methods, but in any case, this aspect of the instrumental music is the most common and important one.

*The kinetic or hypnotic effect*

Apart from this therapeutic scope, I noted several times the psychophysical effects due to the music played in contexts totally lacking the ritual dimension with its component parts and specialized cultural elements. The effect, which could be qualified as obsession and in some cases, excitation, worked on subjects of various ethnic origins, children as well as adults originating from other cultures. I shall mention a few examples here.

When I asked my two boys (three and six years old) to listen to my recordings of *guâti* sessions, they started dancing straightaway in a similar way to as a possessed one. This lasted ten minutes until I stopped the tape player, a little worried about their state. Fortunately, they were only pretending. Another time, I was tuning my Baluchi viola when a three-year-old child opened the door halfway to the room I was in. I plucked one string, and then, attracted by the sound, he immediately came near me. Without saying anything, I started playing energetically a trance melody and at this very moment, he started spinning round and round, just like a top.

In another instance, I was invited to play *sorud* in a cultural circle of Baluchi people living in Norway, along with a musician who accompanied me with his *tamburag*, a rhythmical lute. Interestingly, they did not know well this feature of their culture, so I gave them some explanations about it and a demonstration. One minute after I started playing, a four-year-old boy got up from his chair, came up close to the instrument and began to dance. The audience understood this as a demonstration of my earlier words; he danced all evening long, smiling as if he were carried away by a light trance. After a short pause, I shifted my orientation and announced my intention of playing “serious and special melodies,” of course with a purely aesthetic intention as neither an ill person nor shaman were there. After a while, a twelve-year-old girl sitting among the audience started showing disturbing signs: fixed stare, prostrated attitude, and obsession. According to the technical language of Baluchi shamanism, she was “filling herself”, namely the *jinn* slipped into her. There were no sign of trance here. Her parents surrounded her, drove her attention away, shook her up and finally made her come round.

In these three examples, the interesting point is that none of the children knew this music or had been culturally conditioned. Those living in Norway had grown up among the children of that country, but it could be supposed that

something in the behavior of their relatives or family lifted the inhibition on reacting to the call of music and rhythm. This something could be the fact of having seen adults and elders dance or express their emotion in non-ritual situations, which might share some aspects in movement and cultural expression, but it could be much subtler. This issue would require specific research, underlining the importance of studying the cultural, psychological, and emotional conditioning to which children are exposed. Also key, apart from some exceptions, is that the close family of people sensitive to possession often includes someone who shares this aptitude. It is the same among the shaman of Central Asia (*bakhshi*). So, while the hereditary factor or the family environment is very important in some cases, there is also, undoubtedly, music that has a transcultural impact.

On another occasion, an Uzbek musician asked me to play the Baluchi *sorud* for him. I proposed that he beat the rhythm on the *tanburag*, which should have been an easy task for a *dotâr* player like him. He almost kept normally a unique three-beat type of rhythm; but at one point, his eyes rolled back and only their whites could then be seen—continuing, he tried very hard to fill his role. When we stopped after eight to ten minutes, he explained that he had been completely destabilized by this music and that he had to resist in order to remain in a normal state of consciousness. He had never experienced anything like this and he has been convinced ever since that Baluchi music has specific properties which he must beware of and respect.

The interesting point about this case is that the subject's familiar music, like his culture, is far from the Baluchi's one, and nevertheless it is likely that the first signs he showed could have led him to trance or a similar state in a ritual context. If it had been so, it would have been a very rare case of trance since he is a person belonging to the cultural category of intellectuals, who usually trust the principles of reason and are not open to such possibilities as he experienced and thus remains unaffected.

Based on my experiences of having often played the *sorud guâti-qalandri* in Europe and elsewhere, in ideal conditions, and for a well-informed audience and familiar with all sorts of meditative practices, as well as traditional and new psycho-spiritual techniques; and having played with Baluchi musicians in these same conditions, and beyond this, having given them the opportunity to play for the same type of audience in their familiar conditions, I can make the following statement: each time, listeners admitted that they had nearly let go, almost allowing themselves to be “zapped” into another channel of consciousness; that the “*kundalini* came up” through the *charkas*; or some other formulas expressing the same sensation and experience. Yet none of them fully went to “the other side”. They were at most, deeply moved, they cried, danced or become a bit restless. The only case that stands out in my opinion is the following one: a young American behaved as a *guâti* possessed during one private concert given in New York by a Baluchi band led by a woman singer, who was also *guâti* and, in a way, acted as a *khalife*. However, there is a key cultural consideration here, since, as I

latter learned, the subject had been initiated to Sufism, to the *zikr* practice and consequently, he was immersed in a cultural sphere that could facilitate his experience. Yet, he never went to the end of his trance, that is to say to the point where one collapses, having become “full” (*sir*).

On an other occasion, it happened that I was able to play these melodies in an informal context for the Gnawas of Morocco, who started dancing straight away and behaved similarly to Baluchi *guâti*. Without fully going into a trance, they latter stated that this music was just like theirs.

From my experience in these areas, I draw the following conclusion: those who have adopted a modern “western” way of life, where a lack of psychological flexibility and a predominantly material orientation to life and *being* foregrounds experience and possibilities—those cannot go in a trance. They can be shattered, moved, illuminated, deeply marked, physically touched, even cured from an illness or a psychic node, still their experience is far from corresponding to what is usually meant by possession or trance—namely, restlessness preceded by trembling and followed by insensitivity, memory loss or many other related phenomena. This does not exclude the possibility that after long conditioning or an initiation might open the doors of these states of consciousness to anyone, regardless of culture and background. Indeed, I met a Swedish woman who, after she got married to a Moroccan and settled in his country, had the same emotional and kinetic behaviors as Moroccan women during sessions of Qâderi or ‘Aisawa type. As a consequence, these women considered her as one of them. Let us remind the proverb: “the one who does not know the *tarab* (musical ecstasy), he does not belong to Arab people.”

#### *The “power” of music.*

I often had the occasion to notice the effect of the *guâti-qalandari* music on people who listened to it for the first time. This effect works in both ways as one can sometimes meet people who are allergic to this music. The most receptive are the listeners initiated to yoga, Sufism, psychotherapies, new age practices, those who direct their intention and their listening in the way indicated by this music. Regarding passive listeners, the mechanism is not guaranteed—sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. The factors that are key in this process follow Sufi commentary on the mystical performances of *samâ’*: these are the moment (*zamân*), the place (*makân*) and the participants (*akhwân*, the brothers). The music in itself is not taken into account and it is not a matter of “musicians” and “musicised”. Though musicians’ parts are naturally centrally important, they are often simply included with the participants. The main thing is the listeners’ disposition, which in the case of *samâ’* (as in many musical and collective practices) hinges upon intention and union with the divine.

In modern times, the issue of the power of music uniquely draws from resources in anthropology and neurosciences. The fact that the widely diverse forms of music are used throughout the world to induce states of modified consciousness or trance leads to the conclusion that there are no melodies,

rhythms, intervals, timbres or forms that have intrinsic properties to create such states. Gilbert Rouget supported this position with convincing arguments and facts.<sup>37</sup> However, if we refrain from comparing data taken from different cultures, as he did, and instead focus on a particular one, we notice that the repertoires that are intended to alter consciousness clearly differentiate themselves from those intended for pleasure. It is perhaps within this difference, within one cultural setting, where the “magical” effect of music can be discerned. Experienced musicians frequently detect such an effect—a special and often ineffable quality in certain tunes, or in the way in which they are played, even when they come from another culture, which suggests the presence of this unique power of music (e.g., the Gnawas who immediately understood the nature of *qalandari* music). This specific effect only partly depends on interpretive skill of the musician (i.e., a narrow margin of variability where the performer’s expertise operates). In many traditions, the performer himself must have experienced these states, if he has not, he cannot feel what music is meant to communicate. An essential point here is the intensity of the performance: performers have to be more concentrated and to invest themselves more than for common melodies. In some cases, the same tune can be played to give pleasure or to provoke certain states that get jumbled into the term “trance”. In such a case, the interpretation will change accordingly. In Baluchistan, the *guâti-damali* viola players are clearly distinguished from those who devote themselves to age-old repertoires. The first often have less technique, less precision, and have no access to the most sophisticated repertory; they are frequently known as “amateurs” (*shawqi*) who cannot claim to have their roots in a lineage (*haft posht*: seven ancestrals) of professional musicians and who, as a consequence, have a very personal and “non-academic” style. Nevertheless, they have capacities to invest themselves totally in the ritual performance, which is not always the case of great masters of art music born in professional families. The shades of meaning between these qualifications can be noticed among the Sufis singers from Egypt, whom are asked to perform, often with less technique but more ardently than classical singers.<sup>38</sup>

Beyond the intentionality, which offers strength and intensity to the interpretation, some facts suggest that some elaborated musical forms, which require specific competence, have an aptitude for launching emotional, aesthetical, ecstatic, or other kind of states, whose nature is radically different from the effect sought-after by typical artistic or popular music.

Some examples of the kinetic and perturbing effect of some Baluchi melodies were previously given, these two factors fall into the device of induction of states of modified consciousness. We shall now look at the emotional and spiritual register of music’s impact, which is often traditionally expressed as “the effect on the soul,”

#### *The aesthetic and spiritual effects*

The Baluchi tunes, which we are referring to, are on no account an imitation or a stylization of other distinctive forms expressive of human “passions” and affects,

which are found elsewhere in the region, and in that sense, they are not in the least “expressive”.<sup>39</sup> Yet I often saw people shedding tears when they listened to this music for the first time, which was puzzling because it in no way depended on the context. The following anecdote reveals in all its purity the emotional potential of Baluchi melodies performed by the masters of this art.

I was recording music in a village of Baluchistan, near Karachi. In the middle of the afternoon, I asked someone to fetch Yâru<sup>40</sup>, the old fiddle player who lived nearby and whom I had recorded a few years before in a devotional trance session, which was without a therapeutic aim. He settled down in one corner of the cabin with his accompanist on the rhythmic lute *tanburag*. We had played music all day long, so no one wanted to listen to any more music, and neither did I. Yâru had lost his sight in old age, and he did not mind if anyone listened to him or not, it always seemed that he only played for himself. In opposition to *guâti* musicians who turn towards the outside in order to respond to the request from shaman and patients in trance, he only follows his own inspiration; and each time he plays a well-known melody, it inevitably seems that he reinvents it in his own manner. This day, he played a recurring melody that I had heard (and played) hundreds of times, but he played it in his own and inimitable style, working it over, making variations out of it, massaging and distorting it calmly over long minutes.

I was sitting in another corner, far from him, and I put my earphones to listen to him better. Suddenly, I was not able to fight it, my eyes were soon filled with tears hidden by my sunglasses, and I gave myself up to a feeling of happiness and wonder marked with a deep nostalgia. He was playing trance music, but what I was actually feeling was an ecstasy before something, which was too beautiful, too big and happening just in front of me. I marvelled before a sense of pure creation coupled with a feeling of humility in the presence of something that is beyond us. Nobody was really listening, and nobody noticed my state. After some tunes, the session ended and when I went outside the cabin; I went to my friend ‘Abdoraḥmân who was sitting in the threshold (he is a very gifted musician who played with the best Baluchi masters in all contexts; and in particular, certain Sufi trance-healing rituals.) His dark expression struck me, I asked him if everything was fine. He then answered in a hesitant voice: “I don’t know what happened, this music has never produced in my whole life such an effect on me”. He too had totally been shaken and he had wept without being noticed by the others.

One week later, I went back to the village with a French musician who was visiting. I told him about Yâru and he wished to meet him. This time, I took precautions and I kept my distance, listening absent-mindedly, just like the people who were there. On the other side, my friend opened widely his ears and after a few minutes, he completely turned into jelly. One hour after this experience, as he was taking Yâru’s leave, he was not able to hold back the memory of his emotion, and he wept in his arms like a child. Similarly to ‘Abdoraḥmân, this musician did not belong to the romantic or sentimental type.

Later I hinted at these experiences during one conversation with a Sufi master belonging to different tradition and culture. He explained that an authentic traditional melody possesses a sort of “guardian” in the other world. When the performer is a good and unselfish person, this guardian sends the spiritual effects of the creators (or inspirers) of these melodies. This explanation is all the more relevant since these melodies are devoted to saints or inspired by them. In this system, when the Shahbâz La’l Qalandar melody is played “with a pure heart”, these guardians send in the performance something of the charismatic saint’s presence, and the attentive listener can feel all its beneficial effects. Moreover, knowing nothing of the musician, he claimed that the performer was a pure and pious person, and that it was the reason why guardians inspired the tunes he played with their effect. It just so happened that it was precisely the case with Yâru, which is quite rare among Baluchi masters. Finally, as he himself stated without any bitterness, his family does not look after him, nothing holds him back down here, and he quietly waits for his last day.

### **Towards an interpretation: the feeling of creature in front of pure creation**

Since my first contacts with this music, I tried to understand how it exerted its fascination on listeners. It is mainly a question of the production in a linear music of different virtual planes of sounds, thanks to the ornamentation on the *sorud* and to the rhythmic ambiguousness increased by the drone of the *tanburag*. The fact that one cannot discern what the rhythmic organisation is would lead to a “double bind” in front of which the intellect lets go to zap to others levels of consciousness.<sup>41</sup> I shall confine myself here to this comment, but is possible, as for the hermeneutic of holy texts, to multiply various approaches without exhausting this issue and without contradiction. The heart of the matter is that the “explanations” of the mystery of these special melodies apply as well to Baluchi profane songs which aim at nothing but aesthetical rapture. In both cases, the best musicians are those who succeed in forcing these recurring melodies out of the banality bred by repetitiveness. There is a fundamental difference between these two types of performance: profane melodies are songs whose length is restricted because of a text which has to be expressed, whereas *guâti-damali* tunes extend over *length* without restraints imposed by the text, as most often, one does not sing and if one does, he only sings a refrain (similar to a *zeker*). This independency towards lyrics allows a greater freedom in the interpretation and in the creation of variations, in addition to the subtleties of rhythm and ornamentation.

The above-mentioned experiences do not necessarily fall within states of modified consciousness as I have aimed to describe them, but rather they stand at the top of the emotional ladder, along with its physiological effects: relaxation, tears, gooseflesh, etc. First of all, let us consider this phenomenon in a

phenomenological way. Yâru's music is magical because, while engendering a sense of obsession or compulsion owing to its repetitiveness, it does not arouse boredom which could be created by repetition. Instead, one can taste the essence of repetition every time with a more intense delectation—the simplest musical substance is savoured: a few-note motif with a short rhythm, structured in question/answer form. The fact that so much pleasure is felt while listening to such a seemingly simple thing is a *paradox*, which forces the spirit to go to another mental plane. This may be one of the secrets of the effect of this music, which was created for specific states, even if it is also played to arouse aesthetic pleasure.

Further along this line of thinking, according to Rudolf Otto, the first pillar of the sacred experience is the “feeling of creature”, in which humans grasp a sense of our smallness and we welcome our subordination to the infinite power that gave us life. In an appropriate context and with some predisposition from the listener, music is liable to arouse this feeling. Of course, there are other paths and other forms of experiencing the sacred, but this one *develops itself in the apprehension about the creative act*, and is shared across religious traditions. The matter for the artist is then to convey the creative act with force and clarity, to manifest the creation process in the “real time” present during performance. But creating from nothing, without any reference, without a known or detectable basis does not allow one to fully *reveal* the creative act, and amounts to delivering something unknown and completely new, and is therefore, something difficult to agree with, especially when the creation *process* would remain veiled. To manifest this process, we have to start with what we know and produce something new and unexpected out of it. For Yaru, the known and starting point is the seemingly insignificant refrain. Of course when this creative act implies improvisation, the wonder is bigger than when a pre-composed work is listened to. This is the highest aesthetic rapture, which can easily be considered as a sacred experience if one judges what musicians from all traditions have stated regarding this subject. Furthermore, in a spiritual environment where music is hallowed, the creative process will naturally be understood as the reflection of the divine creative act. During the interaction between the hermeneutic and the affects aroused by melody and rhythm, the listener will be rescued from his “ignorance of himself” (*gheflat*) as the wise men say, and to realize his nothingness in front of the Other, namely his status as a creature in front of the Creator, which is the first step (always done again and again) in the path to spiritual knowledge. A person familiar with the musical sessions of the famous Sufi master Nur Ali Elahi declared: “his lute (*tanbur*) makes me feel God's greatness and my own smallness.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Return to reality in Baluchistan**

After these interpretative digressions, let us come back to descriptions of concrete facts which can be added to the therapeutic techniques file. These anecdotes were collected near the Karachi master Karimbaksh Nuri, who had witnessed or

directed *guâti* sessions since his childhood, and who is one authority and a reference among all those who represent the Baluchi musical art. Drawing on fifty years of experience with different *khalife*, Karimbakhsh declares: “These times are over, there are no more great *khalife*. People only want money. If someone comes to a *khalife* complaining about his headaches, he answers him: ‘you have been bewitched, give me ten thousand rupees and I will free you from your spell’. He hides stones in his sleeves and pretends to extract them from the patient’s stomach. I have seen this with my own eyes”. Karimbakhsh even composed songs to denounce fake *khalife*, which did not stop him from playing for their sessions. But apart from many other quacks, or *khalife* deprived of convincing power, he met very strong ones, whom he speaks of with great respect. Here are a few anecdotes that he told during the 1990s.

1. “There was a young girl whose legs were paralysed. Her father brought her to a shaman and asked him to cure her, because no one wanted to marry her. He gave him money and every evening, I played *sorud* for the *khalife* in the father’s presence. The girl went in trance but she remained paralysed. After six months, the father came back to complain to the *khalife*: “I have given you money to cure her and she is still in the same condition”. The *khalife* answered: “your daughter is *guâti*; pay once again and we will do a session for her”. He did so and this time, she was cured from paralysis. Later, she got married and gave birth to one child, but she died young.”

2. In a desert countryside of Karachi area was a young man who had fallen ill, who did not eat nor speak anymore. A *khalife* fetched me so that we could go together to play in a *damal* organized for the sick person. When I saw him, young and handsome, I felt pity for him. His parents told me that he had not eaten nor drank for three days. I played *sorud* and the *khalife* went in trance. The young man did not go in trance but when the session ended, he asked for bread and water. The *khalife* told the father: “if in ten days, he feels a little better, come back to see me”. As for me, I returned to Karachi. After three days, the father told the *khalife*: “if my son feels better, I shall bring a goat as an offering”. Three days later, the father came back and in his happiness, he clasped me in his arms for his son was cured. He asked me to come and play as an offering to thank God. I went back to his place by taxi and camel. Everybody sat in the house with the young man totally healed. I gave thanks to God, and in the evening we played music. I spent the night there, in a corner. The following day, I desired to play for myself: I settled myself down in the desert, isolated, and I played very well. The father came to meet me again and told me: “play, Karimbakhsh, for my son is alive” and he danced for joy.”

3. There was a sick woman in Malir, in Karachi countryside. She could do absolutely nothing. Someone fetched me in order to play with a man who was a *khalife*. He went in trance and “saw” the sick woman. He had a word in my ears:

“she will still be alive in two days, but the third one, she will be dead”. To the patient’s family, he declared: “if she is alive in ten days time, I shall do a session; I can do no more”. The third day, she died.”

Some *khalife* have powers that transcend those of healing or visualizing the sickness. Strangely there again, the purpose of music is to make the subject go from one state of consciousness to another, where special gifts can be received.

“In 1952, two people came to me because someone had stolen one thousand rupees in their house and they knew a shaman capable of unmasking the thief. I went to their place. There was a man sitting there who waved at me and asked me to play *sorud* for Saint Shabâz Qalandar’s spirit. I played and after a little while, he went in a trance and his spirits gave him the name and the indications concerning the guilty person. Then he told the master of the house: “first swear that you shall not harm the thief”. The man swore not to harm him. Then he spoke again to the master of the house: “do you have a brother? – Yes, he answered. Is he called, let’s say, Gol Mohammad? –Indeed. Make him come here”. He was brought to the *khalife* who declared: “you stole the money with an accomplice”. The thief denied energetically. The *khalife* threatened him: “if you lie, I promise you by my magic, the earth will swallow you. Look: one of you, take this ten rupee note and bury it underground. I shall go in trance, and if I do not find where you buried this note, then cut my head. I take an oath”. So the thief became scared and confessed his crime.

The *khalife* left and I never knew where he came from or where he was going to. He possessed one *jinn* who kept him informed of those things. People like him have worked, to gain such powers. It is the same for everything, one has to work. “Real *khalife* of old used to do extraordinary things. One evening I played in a *damal*, and as the blessed meal was prepared, people noticed there was no sugar. So the *khalife* made them roll a tablecloth out and suddenly, pieces of sugar (*qand*) fell from the sky. There was as much sugar as we needed. I ate some of it. Once everyone had eaten, the *khalife* addressed to the sky saying: “take all which is left back” and everything disappeared. Someone had taken some of it, wrapping it up in a handkerchief in order to keep it, but when he opened it some time later, nothing was left in it.”

Once the reality of the mysterious forces implied by music and trance is stated, Karimbaksh radically questions not only most shamans’ sincerity, but also the authenticity of trance.

Most of the *guâti* are not really possessed, maybe one per cent of them really have a *jinn* (or *guât*). Their trance is simply excitation (*showq*). There was one *khalife*, a real one, when he was in trance, he danced after he had stuck two knives in his stomach. During a session in which I was playing, as two women were already totally in trance, the *khalife* went in turn in trance and took his two big knives out, one in each hand in order to stick them in his stomach. No sooner had he raised his arms up that the women ran away frightened. They were not possessed at all.”

A young Baluch testifies that:

“There are fake *guâtis* (*qollâbi*). On evening session, several young women got drunk at the same moment. My mother was sitting; suddenly she jumped shouting *hu!* All the women sat immediately down, quietly. (They had been scared by my mother who was a real *guâti*). She only was drunk (*mast*).”

Against the practices of some *khalife*, ‘Abdoramân Surizehi, Karimbaksh’s gifted disciple, puts forward the arguments of a hardened sceptic:

“Practices of the *guâti* type are widely found in the third world. Out of one hundred *guâtis*, there is only one man, not more <sup>43</sup>. The reason is that woman is here like in a cage: she suffers pressure from her father, her brothers and her husband; she becomes neurotic (*rawâni*) and she ends sick. None of this falls within mullahs’ exorcisms or doctors’ art. Personally, I do not believe in *jinns* as invisible creatures who spy on humans and get in them to make them ill. The truth is that women can do nothing in this society and that they have psychic problems...I do not believe that *khalife* deal with jinns. It is true that some of them are sincere and have faith in it, but in my opinion, *it is music which leads them in these states of trance*, not jinns.”  
“My father and I, as musicians, were involved in these matters. What is existing exists, but it is necessary to tell the truth so that people do not get fooled. This is how it happens: in an environment in which one believes in spirits (*guât*), someone falls ill; the neighbours come to visit him and they all say: he has a *guât!* So the poor sick person is sure that he has a *guât*, and he tells himself that if he goes in trance, the *officiant* will leave. A proverb says: “if there are many midwives, the baby’s head will be crooked”. The sick person is convinced that he must go in trance, he believes it, and if he is lucky enough, it works. I saw one *khalife* coming near one patient and threatening her with his stick saying: “go in trance, or I beat you!” Of course she started dancing and everybody was sure that she had gone in trance.”

“Moreover I am quite sure that *khalife* play an efficient part. Among them, some know well the remedies and prepare them themselves. In the middle of the session, or afterwards, they give a medicine to the patient. As it is really efficient and he has done a favour, people have faith in him. In the end, there is no harm in what they do. First of all, one has to work, and then it does service to people. As the proverb tells, “only a wise man such as Loqmân can dissipate illusions”. People convince themselves that they are bewitched, so one needs a remedy”.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

In spite of all reservations which can be issue on the effect of sounds on the organism, in spite of the difficulty in isolating this effect among the other parameters involved in the reception of music, all the data we can collect from the Inner Asian cultures (which in the past claimed such an efficiency) could manage neither to show, nor either to refute the effectiveness of music at its purely acoustical level.

Neurosciences researches on the mechanisms of perception and the zones of the brain stimulated by music are only at their beginning but provide an idea of the complexity and the singularity of musical reception. Maybe they will eventually succeed to shed a light on the system of correspondence of the ancient Muslims scholars between modes, rhythms, moods and constitutions.

At any rate the ethnomusicological and anthropological approaches are less considering traditional musics *per se* than as a mode of communication which shapes interpersonal and empathic relations within the narrow circle of « societies of proximity ».

In all the examples given above, either pleading for a *sui generis* power of the sounds or for their action in a symbolic system, music comes as an event in which the actors, the frame and the context are a condition of success. In a ritual frame with therapeutics aims, the attention carried to these components is perhaps sharper, but most often, in the conditions of a "normal" performance, it does not seem basically different.

Should it be collective profane as well as religious singing (the Barbarian *ahwash*, the Sardinian *Cante di Passione*) or learned instrumental performances (from India, Iran or else), the quality of the musicians as well as the listeners' personal investing determines almost as much the success of the event, even if the concern seems to be predominantly esthetic.

These forms of performances too have cathartic and prophylactic virtues both at personal and collective level.

So scrutinizing the probable existence and specificities of therapeutics uses of music, would lead us to an interesting reversal of perspective and to wonder under which conditions of musical practices can be deprived of their dimension of « food » or « medicine » of the soul.<sup>45</sup>

## NOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> Personal comment. Moreover, this master underlines the virtues of singing to cure psychological disorders, question which is not dealt with here. See my article "La voix des esprits et la face cachée de la musique. Le parcours du maître Hâtam 'Asgari", in M.A. Amir Moezzi, édit. *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam - Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels*, Louvain - Paris, Peeters et Bibliothèque de l'EPHE, 1997 (:335- 373).

<sup>2</sup> Caron, N. and Safvate, D., *Iran. Les Traditions Musicales*, Paris, Buchet-Chastel, 1966.

---

<sup>3</sup> A lute with two thin steel strings whose high-pitched note is doubled. It belongs to the family of dotârs and it is plucked with all the right-hand fingers.

<sup>4</sup> See his web site [www.tomatis-paris.com](http://www.tomatis-paris.com) et [www.tomatis-group.com](http://www.tomatis-group.com)

<sup>5</sup> *Music for the mind. Achieving higher intelligence thanks to active listening*. New York, 2003, Advanced Brain Technologies and The Nour Foundation.

<sup>6</sup> *L'âme des sons. L'art unique d'Ostad Elâhi (1895-1974)*, Editions du Relié, Gordes, 2001. Trad. anglaise, *The spirit of Sounds*, Rosemont, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> I owe this information to William Summits, a young ethnomusicologist expert in traditions from Morocco and Central Asia

<sup>8</sup> The symbolic number of 12 modes was laid down eight centuries ago and it is still found in some interior Asia traditions. It reflects the division of the sky in twelve Zodiacal signs, so that each mode corresponds to a sign. With the decline of Iranian astrology, these relations were forgotten. The distribution of Persian modes in 12 different types, revived at the end of the XIX th. century, is neither functional nor realistic: we could as well count 14, 16 or 17 of them. However, I believe in its typological value and in that sense, there are necessarily significant correspondences between the 12 astrological types and the 12 actual Persian modes.

<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, “western” refers to its typical use as the traditions of thought and practice developed in Europe and America, which do not account for Native American cultures, which also fit into the so-called “western” geographic region, but which are most often unmentioned.

<sup>10</sup> See Sankaran, this volume.

<sup>11</sup> The first to come who starts to dance does not automatically experience ecstasy. Dance is the result of the inner state of the soul; it is not the inner state which is the result of dance. To talk about this reversal of things (55) is a matter of “real men”. (Translation by Henry Corbin, *L'Archange Empourpré*, Paris. 1976 (: 406)).

<sup>12</sup> He describes his experience and its context in his autobiography *Rencontre avec des hommes remarquables*, Paris, 1979, Stock.

<sup>13</sup> *Beelzebub's tales to his grandson*, 1992 Arkana

<sup>14</sup> Gurdjieff's dance movements do not look like anything known and are supposed to activate the mind. Curiously, around the same time period, Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian Gnostic whose ideas are still in fashion, developed a kind of spiritual dance, symbolic but very classical in the end, called eurythmy. These two very different styles have followers as ever.

<sup>15</sup> G.I. Gurdjieff / Thomas de Hartmann : *Œuvres pour piano*, interprétées par Alain Kremski, éd. Naïve. 12 vol.

<sup>16</sup> G.I. Gurdjieff, *Récit de Belzébuth à son petit fils*, Paris, Stock, 1979, vol III., chap. 2 : 62 s. Assvatz Trouv is not a Central Asian name, yet Asvat is Turcized plural of Arabic *sawt*, *aswât*, which means “the sounds”; as for Trouv, I cannot find another etymology than the French “to find”, which would imply “the discoverer of sound”. The dervish who follows Gurdjieff in this trip is called Bogaeddin, a Russified form of Bahâ'uddin.

<sup>17</sup> This région to the south of the Boukhara province, in today's Tajikistan.

<sup>18</sup> See for example: Katherine Creath, and Gary E. Schwartz, Measuring Effects of Music, Noise, and Healing Energy Using a Seed Germination Bioassay, (*The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 2004), 10(1): 113-122.

<sup>19</sup> Oppenheimer's student and doctor in theoretical physic, he independently led his researches wit his personal funds, a little bit like alchemists from ancient times. For more information, see: [www.terre-du-ciel.fr/proteodies.htm](http://www.terre-du-ciel.fr/proteodies.htm); <http://www.members.aol.com/jmsternhei/>.

<sup>20</sup> Caron et Safvate, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. our description in J. During and S. Khudoberdiev, *La voix du chamane. Etude sur les baxshi du Tadjikistan*, Paris, 2007, Collection Centre-Asie, Ifeac-l'Harmattan (2nd part, chap. II).

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see the website : [www.anagnosis.gr](http://www.anagnosis.gr)

---

<sup>23</sup> Taken from the article quoted in footnote 1. Let us also mention, confining ourselves to Iranian singers, Eqbâl Soltân Azar who lived 105 years (1866-1971), Abdollâh Davâmi (89 years old) and Hâjji Aqâ Mohammad Irâni who lived more than a 100 years.

<sup>24</sup> Treatises from the 17th century teach us for example that such mode is to be played for short men whose complexion is yellow, another one is meant for people with large teeth, another one for scholars or elders, etc... In spite of their occasionally whimsical aspect, one could think that these elements belong to a science lost with the passing centuries.

<sup>25</sup> Abou Mraad, Nidaa, *Musicothérapie chez les Arabes au Moyen-Âge*, (thesis for a doctorate in medicine), Paris, 1989. Cf. German translation of this treatise accompanied with comments : Neubauer, E., *Arabische Anleitungen für Musiktherapie*, Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, Band 6, 1990 (: 227-272).

<sup>26</sup> *Sangîtarat nakâra*, cit. M.Boyce, The Parthian *gôsân* and Iranian Minstrel tradition, J.R.A.S. (:10-45), 1957 (:19).

<sup>27</sup> “The youth’s soul is not free from passions; they dominate and extend their empire on all limbs. If they clap their hands, desires of their hands free themselves, if they stamp their feet, their feet’s passions diminish. So their limbs’ passions die down, and they succeed in preventing themselves from committing an important misdeed. It is better to free the passions during the *samâ’* than to commit a deadly sin.” Âchenâ, Mohamad, *Les Etapes Spirituelles du Sheykh Abu Sa’id*. (Translation by Ibn Monavvar *Asrâr al-towhid*), Paris, 1974 (:223).

<sup>28</sup> I expounded this similarity in my article : « Du *samâ’* soufi aux pratiques chamaniques. Nature et valeur d’une expérience », *Cahiers des Musiques Traditionnelles*, XIX, 2006, (:79-92).

<sup>29</sup> Sarrâj Tusi, Abu Nasr, *Kitâb al-luma’ fî’l-tasawwuf*, Gibb Memorial Series XXII, ed. R.A.Nicholson, Leiden, London, 1914. (:269).

<sup>30</sup> Bokhâri Mostameli, *Kholâse-ye Shahr-e Ta’arof*; ed. Ah.’A. Rajâ’i, Teheran, 1349/1971.

<sup>31</sup> Ruzbehân, *Sharh-e shathiyyât*, ed. H.Corbin, Téhéran-Paris, 1966, (:167).

<sup>32</sup> I frequented these groups in Iran, but this practice is probably widespread in these environments.

<sup>33</sup> About the possible effect of Uzbek and Tajik shamanic singing on healing process, consult our interpretation in J.During, *La Voix du chamane. Etude sur les baxshi du Tadjikistan*, in collaboration with Sultonali Khudobediev, collection Centre-Asie, Ifeac-l’Harmattan, Paris, 2007 (:214-6).

<sup>34</sup> This is the opinion of the most respected among Baluchis *khalife* of Karachi. They clearly distinguish the spirits who are not very dangerous, who lead light sessions which are close to an entertainment (associated to the profane ritual *lewa*), from the harmful spirits.

<sup>35</sup> During their public concerts, genuine Gnawa musicians refrain from playing melodies fundamentally dedicated to spirits, they content themselves of an associated repertory. It is said that they fear a spirit’s apparition, but it may also be a matter of preserving these tunes from profanation or to avoid “weakening” them by playing them in the wrong context or overplaying them.

<sup>36</sup> Bahrâm Surizehi, perso. com., Sarâvân, 1979.

<sup>37</sup> *La Musique et la transe. Esquisse d’une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession*, Paris, Gallimard, 1980, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. extended, 1990.

<sup>38</sup> M. Frishkopf, « La Voix du poète ; *tarab* et poésie dans le chant mystique soufi », *Anthropologie de l’Egypte* 25/1, 1996, (86-117).

<sup>39</sup> There is indeed a special style laden with pathos and nostalgia, the *zahirig*, term which could be translated as “presentification”, in the sense of the evocation of the loved-one during separation. This melismatic style, with unmeasured rhythm, belongs to the artistic and epic field and it never occurs during *guâti-damali* rituals.

---

<sup>40</sup> Yâr Mohammad Maliri, called Yâru. One can listen to him in three long pieces from the CD : *The Mystic fiddle of the proto-gypsies*, (CD : Presentation text and recordings) New York, Shanachie, 1997.

<sup>41</sup> For comparison, see: J.During, "The Organization of Rhythm in Baluchi trance music", in ed. M.P.Baumann, A.Simon, U.Wegner, *European Studies in Ethnomusicology Historical Developments and Recent Trends*, Wilhelmshaven, Florian Noetzel, 1992 (:200-212).

<sup>42</sup> J.During, *The Spirit of Sounds: The Unique Art of Ostad Elahi (1895-1974)*, Rosemont, N. J., 2003, (chap. V, 6). These melodies share the same structural features with Baluchi's ones.

<sup>43</sup> We could object that there is at least from ten to twenty per cent of *Guâti*s among men, and that *khalife* are equally found among men and women.

<sup>44</sup> In spite of his scepticism, 'Abdoramân admits that his mother is *Guâti*, since she goes in trance when she listens to the Pir 'Omar tune. Curiously, this melody is also the one which he is particularly fond of and which he plays the most often, especially when he begins a cycle of musical pieces.

<sup>45</sup> To quote a Sufi formula (*gazâ-ye rûh*) and the book of Jean Lambert, *La médecine de l'âme. Le chant de Sanaa dans la société yéménite*, Nanterre, Société d'ethnologie, 1997.