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Itineraries of Enlightenment: Whirling Dervish Shows, Ethnographic Reflexivity, and Tourism in Egypt and Turkey

ABSTRACT

By the year 2010, both Turkey and Egypt had achieved tremendous success in growing their tourism markets, in part by turning to Sufi spiritual and musical practices, which had by then been internally rehabilitated after being historically met with suspicion or outright suppression even as they gained a global following in the New Spiritualities and World Music arenas. Taking the case of the so-called 'whirling dervish show,' this article traces how its characteristic 'dance' was strategically used to promote tourism and how rituals featuring it were adapted for presentation to ever-bigger audiences coming from abroad. Based on ethnographic research conducted in Cairo and throughout Turkey, the article demonstrates how binary distinctions between tourist and pilgrim, sacred and profane, and local and foreign, become quickly blurred or contested at these shows and in other sacred settings involving travel. Further embedding the musical ethnographer within these vagaries, the article seeks two main ends: to call for an ethnomusicological method that better accounts for tourists and their subjective experiences and, thereby, to also encourage more open reflexive framework in which the fieldworker working in tourist and tourist-like settings can better take stock of their own positionality while in situ and when engaging in the writing of ethnography.

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Bearings, Directions, and a Roadmap

The principal impetus of this article is to explore how ethnomusicological fieldwork methodology might better account for and gain insights from tourist subjectivities. Although the study of music in touristic settings has increased steadily in the past couple of decades (especially after Gibson, Connell, 2005), few have heeded Martin Stokes' call for "taking into account at least some of the motivations of actors and agents in tourist encounters and exchanges" (1999: 141). Still particularly noteworthy is that the average tourist is rarely, if ever, enumerated in the cast of characters of ethnographies dealing with music and tourism experiences; Cooley (2005) for instance fleetingly mentions some,¹ but, like in similar writings, they are mostly anonymous and do not speak for themselves. The fault for such a glaring lacuna, I would submit, lies in our research methodology – not only in the ethnomusicologist's proclivity for interviewing master musicians and experts at the expense of the audience who might only very occasionally be sampled, systematically by way of a questionnaire or usually more informally, but also because of the ethnographer's own positionality.

"We are not tourists," Józef Pacholczyk once declared (Pacholczyk, 2002) in one of the two compulsory field methods seminars I took with him during my graduate training, which I further supplemented with an additional three courses in field research, including one in dance ethnology. Tourists and ethnomusicologists indeed appear to be on rather different, if sometimes parallel, paths. If the budding ethnomusicologist learns anything in her or his field methods courses, it is that ethnographic research is serious, rigorous business. Codified in the canon of field manuals and reflective writings is that the ethnomusicologist is an essentially lone figure who spends about a year embedded as deeply as possible in a culture, learning to live (musically) as a local. Even during shorter research trips, significant amounts of time must be spent, per professional obligation, systematically collecting and cataloguing data, transcribing interviews and sound recordings, and taking written stock of personal impressions, all while endeavoring to responsibly fulfill the incurred debts, or, somehow, give back to the community. Although tourism research following Urry (1990), especially in the fields of sociology and anthropology, has done much to elucidate the multivalent subjectivities of

¹ A majority of the tourists Cooley discusses were historical figures who were also in some sense ethnographers. In this article, I wish to focus on the vast numbers of modern-day tourists who slip through the methodological cracks of contemporary ethnomusicological research.

the tourist, the amount of time *in situ*, officially defined by the United Nations as between 24 hours and six months, nevertheless renders the tourist quantitatively and therefore qualitatively quite unlike the ethnomusicologist, at least ostensibly, even if there might be some cursory similarities.

This does not mean, however, that tourists should be wholly excised from our research, or that those similarities should be so quickly glossed over. Especially in musical settings in which tourists, travelers, and other related transient figures like festivalgoers and pilgrims make up an important constituency, the ethnomusicologist's methodology should reasonably and sympathetically account for their motivations, behaviors, and insights. Any assumption that they might lack individuality simply because they arrive on a tour bus, are frivolous because they are not around for very long, or are culturally or musically ill-informed because they live elsewhere, – or, in a similar vein, that the performer constitutes some kind of insider because he or she might rule the stage – strikes me as antithetical to the ethnographer's normal impulse to document thoroughly and acquire the full array of perspectives: emic, etic, and those that are somewhere in between. Meanwhile, it is worth asking: What advantages do ethnomusicologists gain from distancing themselves so far from tourists? What do they miss out on by not placing themselves in the well-worn shoes of travelers?

To arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the musical experiences of tourists and other related types of travelers, and to move more closely towards developing a theory and method of ethnomusicology in which awareness and reflexivity can be informed by them as well as by the ethnographer's own touristic and semi-touristic engagements, this article focuses on the fairly complicated case of Sufi ritual and music in the form of the whirling dervish show as adapted for the tourist market in Egypt and Turkey: a case that, as I will explain in more depth later, has frequently challenged or called to the fore my own positionality. Indeed, when I first applied for a research visa to Turkey to conduct this study, I was told by the embassy in Washington that because my work was ethnographic and did not involve library or archival research that I should just get a tourist visa. Although I was initially quite put off by this development, eventually I came to find value in it and allowed it to frame my thinking about the project. Since I was officially regarded as a tourist anyways, I sometimes, contrary to Pacholczyk's teachings, approached field sites where there were many visitors 'as such', openly exchanging with

them about travel itineraries, interests, and impressions while also explaining my research aims. Tourist experiences and the inner workings of the tourism industry, thus, became important to my research not only as central subjects, but also in informing my epistemology and methodology.

Embracing, rather than denying, tourism as a critical context for Sufi music as well as a means by which I and many others engaged with it, this article begins in the following section by describing the tourism industries of both Turkey and Egypt at their heights in the first decade of this century, and then elaborates on the place that Sufi ritual and music had within them, particularly their strategic use in tourism advertisements. Subsequently, the article delves more deeply into the nature of the whirling dervish show, and how it has been adapted as a tourist spectacle. By way of ethnographic description, I then explore the complex way in which concertgoers, as tourists and pilgrims, deftly negotiate the fine line between cultural insider and cultural outsider. The vagaries of the emic-etic continuum plague ethnomusicologists as well, but through reflective awareness I learned to handle being simultaneously an ethnographer, tourist, and sometimes pilgrim during my research. Thus, I conclude the article with a discussion of the advantages of such reflexive thinking for the discipline of ethnomusicology.

Tourism Booms and Spiritual Highs

In the first decade of the 21st century, both Turkey and Egypt experienced unprecedented tourism booms despite considerable instability in the region brought on by such events as the Second Intifada in Israel and Palestine (2000-2005), the Iraq War (since 2003), and intermittent terrorist bombings of important local tourist centers like Istanbul (1999, 2003, 2008, 2010), Kuşadası (2005), Taba and the Sinai Peninsula (2004), Cairo (2005), and Sharm al-Sheikh (2005).² According to reports from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Turkey during this time was among the world's most productive tourism markets, its revenues having grown from 5.2 billion US dollars in 1999 to over \$22 billion by 2010 (World Tourism Organization, 2000: 27; 2018: 15). Overall, Turkey peaked in that decade as the seventh most popular tourist destination in the world in 2010 (World Tourism Organization, 2011: 5), with the

² Both markets spiraled downward in the following decade owing to a variety of factors, but especially on account of the Arab Spring in Egypt and a series of political, diplomatic, and financial crises in Turkey. The latter has since rebounded considerably, peaking as the world's sixth largest tourism market in 2014, but Egypt has continued to struggle.

number of international visitors rising over 450% from 6.9 million in 1999 to about 31.3 million by the end of the decade (World Tourism Organization, 2000: 27; 2018: 15), shattering all projected targets. Such growth came in no small part due to Turkey's aggressive marketing campaign, which has had many imitators among its Mediterranean competitors. Although a considerably smaller, if far more ancient market, Egyptian tourism likewise rose from 4.5 million visitors in 1999 to 14 million in the peak year of 2010 (World Tourism Organization, 2000: 21; 2018: 19). Generating 12.5 billion dollars in revenue that year (World Tourism Organization, 2018: 15), the tourist industry was among the most lucrative sectors of Egypt's economy, accounting for 11% of the GDP (Smith, 2014) and employing 12% of the total workforce (Dziadozs, 2009).

While beaches and seaside resorts naturally remained huge draws, cultural tourism, including religious-based tourism, which also comprises pilgrimage, continued to be a top priority for both countries. Like Israel with its tours of the Holy Land, Turkey and Egypt courted visitors with religious festivals and newly preserved or reconstructed holy buildings. While promotional campaigns traditionally targeted Christians from wealthier nations in Europe and North America, many other kinds of cultural/religious tourists were also evident across the Middle East at the turn of the Millennium owing to the rise of new spiritual attitudes, changing demographics, and several other factors related to modernization and globalization. Thus, in addition to excursions to the Biblical sites of Turkey and Coptic centers of Egypt, travel agencies also offered package tours of the holy places of Islam to pilgrims and tourists alike. Increasingly popular were guided tours of so-called 'Islamic Cairo' and discount group travel to Sufi festivals in Turkey, especially those honoring the saints Jelaleddin Rumi and Haji Bektash Veli. Sufism, often identified as the 'mystical' branch of Islam, had in recent decades attained a global appeal unprecedented in its history (see Vicente, 2013).

Tourism commercials sponsored by the tourism ministries of each country and disseminated globally online, including on their official governmental websites, and on cable television, tapped into the burgeoning sacred tourism market, including notably into Sufi ritual and musical practices, as early as 2003. In that year, Dream Design Factory (stylized as dDf), a communications design company based in London and Turkey, produced a series of fantastical tourism spots titled *I Dream of Turkey*. One of the more captivating versions of the ad opens with the camera panning clockwise

around a small child seated on Mt. Nemrut by the bust of Zeus-Oromasdes. The boy is lost in thought, staring at the figurine of a Mevlevi dervish whirling in his hand. Abruptly, the scene changes to a surreal landscape in which what appears to be computer generated dervishes whirl on the peaks of the 'fairy chimneys' of Kapadokya. Dervish-like CGI characters appear yet again on the minaret of the *İsak Paşa Saray* in Doğubeyazit, on the Byzantine mosaic of Jesus in the *Ayasofya* in Istanbul, and beating large drums with mallets on the peaks of a craggy island resting in the azure waters of the Mediterranean. Other versions of the ad show dervishes spinning, and sometimes breathing fire and playing musical instruments, on the minarets of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, in Turkish baths, and over the lakes of Pamukkale. More motivic than overtly melodic, the brisk music for the ad is wholly Turkish in style with the punctuated, oscillating main figure and descending sequences played on the *ney*, the reed flute emblematic of the Mevlevi Sufi Order, accompanied by pounding drums and occasionally embellished by arabesque-like flourishes played on oud, kanun, tef, and strings.

I Dream of Turkey won Best Advertising Film and Advertising Spot in Poznan, Poland at the 2003 Tour Salon Fair's 6th Annual International Festival of Tourist Films. Interestingly, the Embassy of Egypt in Warsaw secured the second place position with its entry entitled *Egypt*. Though I have not been able to locate the latter video for further comment, I find it telling that Egypt would continue to follow Turkey's lead as its own marketing campaigns evolved. Egypt's 2003 *Red Sea Riviera* ad, produced by Lowe and Partners Worldwide, which I first saw on TV while in Turkey in 2004, featured prominently on cable news channels and stood out for its stately theme, sumptuously scored for orchestral strings. By 2006, however, the ad had been superseded by *Egypt, The Gift of the Sun*, produced by DDB Travel and Tourism and directed by celebrated French filmmaker Michel Meyer. Unlike the first commercial, with its heavy focus on pristine beaches and slow-moving, high-heeled bikini-clad Caucasian models, the latter was not only decidedly less distant from the lived realities of most Egyptians, but it was also much better balanced by the inclusion of more traditional cultural attractions and with its emphasis on the sun as 'sacred', along with glimpses of ancient temples, lingering shots of mosque-dominated skylines, and a traditional soundtrack featuring a maqam-inflected *firqa* ensemble underpinned by Arabic percussion. Yet it was only in 2010 with a commercial created by ECU Productions and scored by Amr Mustafa,

appropriately titled *Spirit of Egypt* in English,³ that Egypt would better capitalize on the Sufi tourism wave that had swept Turkey. The most thematically consistent of the various 45-second versions cut from the two-minute original, which features a mainly traditional Arabic soundtrack, focuses extensively on traditional dance styles, with *tannoura*, the Egyptian variant of dervish whirling, factoring in most prominently and most frequently, including inexplicably on one occasion with fire breathing like in *I Dream of Turkey*.

While there is an intrinsic element of exoticism in all tourist advertisements, the inclusion and increasing prominence of whirling dervishes in commercials, such as *I Dream of Turkey* and *Spirit of Egypt*, constitutes not only a case of auto-orientalism, but also reflects important new attitudes toward Sufism in the region since the turn of the century. Orthodox Muslims have often regarded Sufi practices with suspicion if not outright hostility (see, for instance, Sirriyeh, 1999). Though the massacre at a Sufi Mosque in the Sinai in November 2017 represents a disturbing setback, Sufism in Egypt had strong governmental backing throughout the 20th century and had been growing, notably among young people, so much since the 1970s that Brown (2011: 11) could declare it to be the religious “default setting” of the country in the first decade of this century. Meanwhile in Turkey, starting in 1925, Sufi orders were banned from promoting themselves as living religious traditions by the secularist government, and had languished as cultural relics until very recently, when their rehabilitation since the 1990s has made them actually iconic of the country, as evidenced in the *I Dream of Turkey* ad and in the 2013 *Lonely Planet* travel guide for Turkey, which featured female dervish whirlers on the front cover (see also Vicente, 2013). Such advertisements have proven enormously successful in drawing large numbers of tourists to both Turkey and Egypt. The Islamic sites and whirling dervishes depicted in these commercials have attracted religious tourists in particular, and local Sufi traditions have been adapted to accommodate such visitors. The next section focuses on one essential segment of this growing industry, that of Sufi mystical concerts known as ‘whirling shows,’ concentrating specifically on their audiences.

³ *Misr, Bidayat al-Hikaya* in Arabic, which may be translated as *Egypt, The Beginning of the Story*.

The Whirling Dervish Show as Touristic and Spiritual Attraction

The most immediate experience tourists and even some pilgrims have with Sufism in either Turkey or Egypt is at what are sometimes advertised as ‘whirling shows’ or ‘dervish shows,’ which are a must-see for any visitor to Istanbul, Konya, or Cairo. The central highlight of these performances is the ‘dance’ of white-robed Islamic mystics, who, with outstretched arms, elegantly spin counterclockwise in their flowing gowns. In Turkey, this whirling is called *sema* and is taken from the traditional Sufi ritual known as *zikr* (Arabic, *dhikr*), a ritual that is rarely viewed in public for a variety of religious and legal reasons. The purpose of both *sema* and *zikr* is to create an ecstatic trance state in which the worshiper achieves spiritual union with *Allah* and the whole of His creation. Music is an essential element in inducing this ecstasy and therefore is also a central feature of whirling shows. In fact, such performances typically take the form of concerts of traditional classical or folk music, with the whirling dance comprising the second half of the program.⁴

Although the whirling show and *zikr* differ considerably and detractors tend to view the tourist performances as devoid of spiritual essence (*tasawwuf, tasavvuf*), most aspects of the whirling shows either have their bases in traditional *zikr* or have historical precedence. For instance, the presence of non-participating foreign spectators at what seems to be a deeply private experience between a worshiper and his or her god goes back at least to the early fifteenth century when the first accounts of the *zikr* were recorded by foreign travelers to the region (De la Broquière, 1989). In fact, one well-known whirler explained to me in Konya that *sema* requires a minimum of three witnesses for it to be considered as having taken place (Vicente, 2004). Thus, *sema* and *zikr* are not individualistic, but communal experiences, as the designs of many Sufi lodges corroborate. The Mevlevi lodges in Galata, Istanbul and Girne, Northern Cyprus, for example, both have stages for whirlers, better known as *semazen-s*, and balconies for musicians as well as ample space reserved for a seated audience.

Whirling shows in Turkey today normally take place outside of the traditional context of such dervish lodges, not only because of issues of legality or an interest in preserving religious secrecy, though these are important factors, but also for accessibility and the comfort of the large number of non-whirling viewers. Although many foreign visitors do

⁴ For more on the performance proceedings, see Vicente, 2013: 104-110

find their way into underground lodges, shrines, and residences to attend *zikr*-s, most go to the equally evocative venues of the whirling shows. Furnished with appropriate seating and adequate stage space for turning, these settings include castles, caravanserais, museums, carpet shops, basketball courts, and even train stations. In some instances, whirling shows can be seen in locations specifically designed for them, such as at the Galata Mevlevihane in Istanbul or the newer Sufi cultural centers in Hacibektaş and Konya. In keeping with tradition, these performances are typically done in the evening, but increasingly popular are whirling shows that are given in a restaurant in conjunction with dinner. While this may appear to be a sacrilegious gimmick designed to lure unsuspecting tourists to questionable cuisine, there is a precedence of communal eating known as *sofra* after ritual gatherings like the *zikr* (see Soileu, 2012; Vicente, 2013: 151-152, 165).

The Egyptian counterpart to the globally famous *sema* of Turkey is the *tannoura* show. Since virtually nothing has been published on *tannoura* in the scholarly literature, most probably because its very close association with tourism renders it academically inconsequential if not wholly trivial, I will provide a brief sketch here based on the few shows I attended in Cairo, though I was not in a position at the time to conduct interviews with practitioners or study the tradition in any real depth.⁵ While traced directly to the Mevlevi *sema* of Turkey, *tannoura* is not supported by and does not follow any specific *tariqa* (Sufi order), and so is not, strictly speaking, a religiously recognized or consecrated ritual, although it is often advertised as such and usually involves some sacred or spiritual elements, such as recitations from the Qur'an, chanting of Sufi poetry, and sometimes outward trance-like display, or at least *tarab* (musical ecstasy). Meaning 'skirt' in Arabic, *tannoura* is famed for its costuming: multiple skirts, usually black, but decorated with large geometrical patterns in a kaleidoscopic array of colors ranging from magenta and orange to teal and purple. Worn over a long white *gallabiya* robe, these skirts can be separated and removed at the belt so that they can be spun above the head and around the body and manipulated to form a variety of showy displays, all while the dancer whirls clockwise or counterclockwise. Like in Turkey, the actual whirling constitutes only part of the show. Typically, the whirling is preceded by a short concert

⁵ Several videos with brief explanations posted by tourists as well as the occasional ethnomusicologist can be easily found on YouTube and on personal blogs. See, for example, AP Archive (2011), Grippo (2009), and Kakemura Yusuke (2013).

of folk or folkloristic music, performed on instruments that can be played standing up, namely any combination from *mizmar*, *nai*, *kawala*, and *rabab*, accompanied by *tabla/darabuka*, *riq*, *duff/deff*, and/or *sagat/toura*. Four (occasionally six) brightly painted frame drums will often be used as dance props by whirlers, who use them, two in each hand, in a virtuosic prelude to the skirt twirling. Traditionally performed at *moulid-s* (festivals commemorating Sufi spiritual figures), *tannoura* is now most commonly staged, often to prerecorded music, at historical sites, in restaurants, and on dinner cruises on the Nile (see, for example, Zi Dan, 2017).

Perhaps, for traditional sensibilities of *tasawwuf*, the most jarring aspect of the dervish shows has to do with the ‘showiness’ of the *sema* and *tannoura* shows. On several occasions I witnessed untamed displays of showmanship on the part of whirlers and musicians alike. *Tannoura* performances can be especially ostentatious not only because of the dazzling skirt manipulations at velocities that make those accustomed to the tranquility of the white-clad *semazen-s* of Turkey balk, – some *tannoura* performers even sew LED lights into the linings of the skirts for performance in the dark –, but also because of the high degree of choreography involved, including sometimes synchronized swaying on the part of whirlers and musicians and the antiphonal virtuosic display that occasionally takes place among percussionists (see, for example, Sky Blue, 2012). Such theatricality is not unique to *tannoura*, though. At a Sufi music concert I attended in Konya in 2004, an Azerbaijani clarinetist, a renowned purveyor of Sufi mystical music, pranced onstage in wide circles and performed daring feats of virtuosity that included playing sustained high notes on just the mouthpiece of his instrument while he prompted the audience with his free hand for applause. The traditionally reserved Turkish audience was aghast with such liberties taken in the name of spirituality, but ethnographers of trance experiences have long recognized the performative capabilities of the spiritually possessed (see Goodman, 1972: xv-xvi; Rouget, 1985). In my experience, even at private *zikh-r-s*, the religiously devout more frequently than not lapse into bouts of hysterics as a result of their spiritual ecstasy, and sometimes are prone to weeping, hyperventilation, and uncontrolled fits of abnormal behavior in what seems to be, in some cases, a plea for attention.

Lest the reader, misled by such theatrics and the occasional laser light display, conclude that whirling shows are devoid of *tasawwuf* or the potential for it, it is worth noting that,

at least sometimes, whirling shows are performed within the context of Islamic ritual worship called *salat* (Turkish, *namaz*). This notwithstanding, Jonathan Shannon (2006: 269) in his writing on similar performances in Syria explains that, generally speaking, the framing of musical performance as distinctly secular or sacred is not so clear in the Middle East. With respect to whirling shows, he contends that it is through Western conventions of performance that such concerts and stagings are 'made to be sacred', even if they are not inherently so (Shannon, 2003: 267, 269). At a whirling show I attended at the Saladin Citadel in Cairo in February 2005, I found the situation very similar to that described by Shannon. The performance in the long, cavernous performance hall was packed with tourists from all over the world, but unlike the characteristic frenzy of the city of Cairo or even of a Sufi *zikr*, the attendees sat quietly, as the ushers had instructed them. The organizers had done their best to create the dignified, contemplative atmosphere of a mosque or church, or of a classical music concert, forbidding photography and video recording, and prohibiting the audience from sitting on the floor. During the performance, I overheard a latecomer behind me arguing with one of the ushers who had told her that she had to wait in the back, as there were no seats in front. The woman, who appeared to be a New Ager, exclaimed in North American English, "But this is about God, man!" and spent the rest of the evening slowly working her way up toward the stage.

Turning Inward: Tourist-Pilgrim Subjectivities and Ethnographic Reflexivities

As I experienced time and again, often it is difficult to discern precisely at such performances if someone like the woman in the Citadel is a tourist or a pilgrim, or even a foreigner or local. Islam is not an ethnically, culturally, or nationally monolithic faith. Meanwhile, many Sufi *tariqa*-s eschew such divisions in their teachings, frequently calling for tolerance, coexistence, and humanistic universalism. Even when visiting mosques, the distinction between tourist and worshiper is not always evident. Once, on a semi-touristic visit to the Mevlevi Mosque in the city of Afyon in Central Turkey, I found myself in the rare situation of being completely alone in the large mosque and took the opportunity to freely explore the structure until two young women came in to pray. The mosque was built on the grounds of an important thirteenth century Sufi settlement and had an unusual construction. I slipped into a second room by the exit in the back and saw through the unique interior windows looking into the prayer hall that the women had abruptly ended their prayers and were scurrying about, posing and

taking pictures, thinking that I had left; they resumed their composure and self-consciously adjusted their headscarves when they saw that I was still lingering about. I observed such touristic behavior frequently at Sufi ritual and musical events, particularly among pilgrims taking part in the commemoration of the life and teachings of Jelaleddin Rumi at the annual Mevlana Festival in Konya. In 2004, for example, Iranian pilgrims at the shrine of Rumi were so eager to film each other going into fits of religious ecstasy during recitations of Rumi's poetry that they continually disrupted the reciters. Meanwhile, on another day during the festival, the sheikh of a local *tariqa* who normally prohibits photography and video recording in his lodge immediately struck a pose with pilgrims from Latvia as soon as their cameras were unleashed after a *zikr*.

This blend of piety and tourism is indeed all too common in the Middle East. Despite signs posted at mosque entrances forbidding flash photography and requiring mobile phones be turned off, Muslim visitors are among the first to speed through their ritual prayers (*salat*), produce camera phones from their pockets, and linger until they have taken the perfect photograph. Conversely, non-Muslims, as I likewise frequently observed, tend to take quick pictures first, perhaps overwhelmed by the beauty of mosque interiors, and then sit quietly in a corner in contemplation. To what extent is the European budget backpacker on a quest for spiritual fulfillment? To what extent is *salat* a pretext for getting that prized souvenir snapshot? Since travel is consecrated as a matter of religious obligation in the *arkan* (pillar) of hajj to Mecca and as a popular practice of spiritual devotion in pilgrimage (*ziyarat, ziyaret*) to Medina and the shrines of Sufi saints and other holy figures, it should not be too surprising that many of the habits and trappings of modern tourism, such as taking photos and buying souvenirs, would be naturally adopted by even the most devout of Muslims. Thus, figurines of *semazen*-s like that held by the boy in *I Dream of Turkey* (see, for example, Figure 1), along with the Rumi-inspired coffee mugs in the shops on the way back from the whirling shows in Konya should not be simplistically regarded as tacky trinkets denoting the commodification of Sufi Islam (see Hutnyk, 2000: 94). Indeed, for the most part it is pilgrims, not tourists who buy such souvenirs to display in their living rooms as markers of their fulfillment of religious duty.



Figure 1: Mevlevi Dervish Figurines and the Author's Reflection, Store Window Display, Ankara, June 6, 2005

Equally as nuanced are the drives and experiences of tourists that I have spoken to over the years at whirling shows in Turkey and, to a lesser extent, in Egypt. Widely dismissed as uninformed and even derided for lacking spiritual depth in their daily lives on account of what John Hutnyk calls their “middle-class affliction” (2000: 92-93), tourists are pessimistically blamed by such critics, including some of my informants in Cairo, Konya, and Istanbul, for the rapid commercialization of Sufism and, by extension, its purported decline. The embracing of Sufism by New Age believers, its growth in Europe and North America (Westerland, 2004), and the global popularity of its various ritual and musical expressive forms have all contributed to the view held by some that Sufism has become too secularized (see Shannon, 2003), inauthentic (see Manuel, 2008: 397), and ‘cheapened’ by cultural and political exploitation (Usmani, 2010). On the ground at whirling show centers, tourists bear some of this backlash. Yet, tourists are not all so ignorant or naïve about Sufi traditions and practices as detractors imagine. Fairly good introductions to Sufi teachings, philosophies, history, and customs are widely available in many languages online and in the tourism literature (see, for example, Yale, Campbell, and Plunkett, 2003), which at least in some places like Konya, can be bought on the spot along with more substantive materials. In fact, rarely did I meet tourists at whirling

shows and *zikh*-s who truly knew nothing about or held unsympathetic views toward Sufism. To the contrary, most had a fair command of the basics and were seeking to learn more about Sufism and experience it firsthand; moreover, many, or at least far more than I initially anticipated, were actually repeat visitors, like one woman from England I met at a show in Cairo who traveled to Egypt frequently and had been to over half a dozen *tannoura* performances because she made it a point to attend every time she was in town (Vicente, 2005). Meanwhile, the founding of many Sufi branches in Europe has made the tourist-worshiper distinction quite blurred in Turkey, where Sufi novices from abroad can easily be mistaken for tourists; on one occasion in Konya one particularly cynical local shopkeeper and I made this very error about the sheikh (!) of a lodge in Italy.

The distinctions between insiders and outsiders were complicated for me even further on a personal level during my fieldwork expeditions. Particularly in Turkey, it was assumed that I was a Muslim because, as I am often told, I 'look Turkish'. Convincing the people I was working with otherwise became a moot point when they learned that I was not only doing research, but also teaching at a university. I automatically became an 'expert' in a host of matters I was only just beginning to discover. Like many ethnomusicologists, I became skilled at using this to my advantage when necessary, but the most valuable lesson I learned came from the people I observed in mosques and shrines, who moved fluidly between being pilgrims and tourists. I too had a backpack full of guidebooks and cameras, and I found that in several contexts, being a tourist, which I sometimes in fact was, allowed me access and liberties I did not have as a scholar. This proved especially advantageous in conducting interviews. The line between tourist and scholar, however, is much finer than that between tourist and worshiper, and I found that this is a card that can be played only sparingly and then, in some contexts, never more than once (for a discussion of the harmful consequences of what is known as 'covert fieldwork', see Cassell, 1980: 35). Yet in having discovered it, I realized that ethnographers have many such cards, but may not necessarily feel comfortable with them. In allowing myself to be a tourist, for instance, something I was taught a good ethnographer should never do, I gained insights not only into important touristic aspects of Sufism that were not really validated by the scholarship at the time, but also arrived at an insider's perspective of tourist culture that is likewise neglected in more polemic studies of tourism.

Such reflexivity and self-awareness about my research methods while still in the field proved to be especially fruitful in December 2004 as I attempted to document the many events of the Mevlana Festival in Konya. Over the course of the week, I had met and begun to work with an anthropologist from France and several journalists, who had similar goals and problems as myself, in documenting the festival. We shared insights, recordings, and methodologies, and, in particular, the anthropologist and I grew to admire the more direct, aggressive tactics that the journalists had for questioning informants. Journalists have a long history in the Middle East and command a great deal of respect as oral transmitters of information. I found that, like the scholar-tourist approach, being a journalist-ethnographer had its own advantages. My interaction with my makeshift research team further brought to light the slipperiness of emic-etic distinctions when, after a lunch meeting on our way to a ceremony, we spontaneously began to interview one another. We discovered that the Iranian journalist, under his veneer of professionalism, was a kind of pilgrim in his own right, as he passionately sang one of Rumi's *ghazal*-s on the sidewalk with a tripod resting on his shoulder. I had this realization of myself when the anthropologist played back the video of an interview he had conducted with me and pointed out how much I sounded like one of the pilgrims. Not having yet grasped the full implications of what all this meant, we arrived at the shrine of Rumi, when the American journalist spontaneously had me pose in front of the tomb, as if I were just another tourist. Fuller clarity and reckoning with my own positionality came to me only much later when I developed the picture used in Figure 1, which I took in Ankara several months later; I was surprised when reviewing the prints that my reflection could still be made out in the store window despite having tried so hard to avoid it, and I regretted that I did not take an outright self-portrait with the figurines, be they kitschy and commercialized, or reverent and authentic, depending on vantage point within the tourist-pilgrim and emic-etic continua.

Coming Round Again: Review/Conclusion/Moving Forward

Reflexivity, what Margaret Mead (1928) had in another, earlier sense called "reflexiveness" and what Erik Erikson (1958) later termed "disciplined subjectivity," became a primary ethnographic concern starting in the 1970s following anthropologist Bob Scholte's critical assessment of research at the time:

Anthropological activity is never only scientific. In addition, it is expressive or symptomatic of a presupposed cultural world of which it is itself an integral part. As anthropologists, we cannot simply take this *Lebenswelt* and its attendant scientific traditions for granted. We must subject them to further reflexive understanding, hermeneutic mediation, and philosophical critique (1972: 431).

An ensuing reflexive turn swept through anthropology almost immediately, and, as Philip Carl Salzman (2002: 805) has observed (and critiqued), came to be accepted as an unequivocal paradigm shift that would dominate not only the field, but also all related disciplines till the present. Fieldworkers since the mid-1980s have been particularly consumed with issues of implicit, especially colonialist/imperialist and gender, bias in the writing of ethnography (Clifford, Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1988). Notably, some of the most seminal writings on ethnographic reflexivity (i.e., Rabinow, 1978; Abu Lughod, 1999) have emerged from research into the Muslim world. Ethnographers of music have been equally eager to adopt self-critical frameworks and likewise produced powerful models for interrogating the scholar's own positionality: Carol Robertson's questioning of our ability to truly understand the ontology of another musical culture (1979), Steven Feld's innovative approach at reading his writings to his informants (1990), and Michelle Kisiuk's self-location not just within the body of ethnographic literature that came before her, but vis-à-vis the sensibilities and interpersonal dynamics of the those who contributed to it (1998).

Hence, in virtually every master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, and monograph involving any substantive amount of ethnographic field research includes, *de rigueur*, usually in or somewhere near the methodology section in the introductory chapter, some disclosure of the author's motivations, personal involvements, biases, and other potential liabilities that might have influenced the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data. Within the burgeoning subfield of tourism ethnography, reflexivity has received the standard amount of attention (see Andrews, Jimura, Dixon: 2018), but it has been far less robust in the ethnomusicology of tourism. In Barz and Cooley's *Shadows in the Field*, still the most widely read and highly regarded collected volume dealing predominantly with issues of reflexivity in ethnomusicological work, tourism and tourists are mentioned only in passing in a litany of various field subjectivities that also includes

missionaries and journalists; little is elucidated about how ethnomusicologists working within tourist contexts might methodologically go about their work or theoretically conceptualize their own subjectivities besides understanding the fact that, as cultural outsiders, they might be implicated in (even as they may try to distance themselves from) colonialist legacies and power dynamics that could be adverse to locals (2008: 4-5). In his own ethnographic study of music and tourism in the Polish Tatras, however, Cooley explains at length how the first music ethnographers in the region were also tourists, and he deliberates on his own fluidity as ethnographer, tourist, and performer, revealing how on some occasions he allowed mistaken tourists, and even himself, to believe that he was a local musician (2005: 212). While the fruits of Cooley's identity shifting are in evidence in the many subtle cultural and musical analyses he provides, regrettably he does not dwell much on how his sometimes tourist self provided unique vantage points into the musical culture (2005: 211), which has been among my primary interests in this article.

Fieldwork is a challenging and perplexing endeavor, perhaps not only because of the music, people, and situations we encounter and study, but also because of the way we choose to interact with them. Ethnomusicologists who aim to ascertain emic understandings of a musical culture should not just place themselves within a strictly binary insider-outsider paradigm. They should allow themselves, at least from time to time, to behave and think within the possibilities of the continuum, just as their informants might. I found that perceiving and acting like a tourist or a journalist, or even a sort of pilgrim, gave me insights I would have missed otherwise. When I first saw the trinkets in the bus station in Konya, I dismissed them as nothing more than typical tourist junk, but from the pilgrim's perspective I came to understand their deeper religious significance. Through the eyes and ears of the tourists and pilgrims at the whirling dervish shows, I observed not inauthentic commercial reproductions of a once great, but now fading musical and religious tradition, but a thriving movement revitalized by peoples of different faiths and backgrounds having honest and profound musico-religious experiences. Dervish shows have helped to spread interest in Sufism and, at least with the case of Turkey, have enabled the government to soften its stance on the tradition; in a sense they also help to protect and preserve more private traditional expressive forms like *zikr*, especially from an unmanageable flood of interested outside visitors. In this article, I have tried to advocate neither for a more

simplistic reckoning of Sufi practice, nor for a slackening of fieldwork rigor, as the term 'tourist' might generically imply, but rather quite the opposite: for a more nuanced, sharpened framework; not so much a shift in paradigm, but a shift in perspective. It is all of course a matter of perspective, but a scholar's path to 'enlightenment' may yet hinge on his or her willingness to think more empathically and reflexively within the ethnographic moment.

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