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Inventors of Notation Systems in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Istanbul: The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner

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This paper aims to take yet another look at the problem of notation within the Ottoman/Turkish musical tradition, but from a rather unusual perspective. I will deal with neither the causes nor consequences of the absence of the widespread use of notation since this is an issue I have dealt with elsewhere, nor will I glorify the handful of inventors of notation systems and any of their shortcomings. There is already an overabundant amount of literature on all of these topics.

I will try to look at the other side of the coin—that is, notation systems from their inventors' perspective. Some of the questions I will try to answer—or at least to clarify a bit—are the following: Within the Ottoman/Turkish musical tradition and before the advent and the generalization of the use of European staff notation, what did the inventors or users of notational systems think of their own notation; why did they invent it or use it in the first place; what did they expect from it and to what use did they put it; how did they justify it; and what value did they attach to the notation system they invented or used?

We know very well that systems of musical notation are not paragons of certainty and precision. Besides, none of them have been welcomed and accepted overnight. The most obvious example is Guido d'Arezzo's eleventh-century innovation: staff notation. It took almost half a millenium for that innovation to take hold and become the norm. As to d'Arezzo himself, he defended his system by arguing that it had simplified music teaching, made reading and deciphering easier, and contributed to standardizing performances. Thanks to this new notation, the education of a church singer would take a much shorter period of time. Small wonder, exactly the same arguments were used in Ottoman Istanbul towards the end of the nineteenth century by the promoters of Western staff notation. One of the most enthusiastic of these promoters was none less than Tanburî Cemil Bey himself.[1]

More interestingly, these arguments were also instrumentalized by Theodoros Phokeos, Hurmuzios Chartophylax, and Stavrakis Byzantiou, the trio that reformed Orthodox church music and invented the so-called neo-Byzantine/neo-Hellenic notation in the 1820s. This reform brought a rationalization in the notation of church music together with a reduction in the number of diacritical signs in use. Thanks to this simplified and more practical version of church notation, a large number of compositions of Ottoman/Turkish music as well as many secular songs in Greek were notated and published from 1830 on and throughout the nineteenth century.[2]

The same motivation has, to some extent, also prevailed in the formation of the Hamparsum notation around the year 1810. The old Armenian system of medieval *khaz*es was much simplified and was from then on, as we all know, widely used both for Armenian church music and, especially after the middle of the nineteenth century, by many secular musicians (Armenian and non-Armenian) who were part of the mainstream of Ottoman/Turkish musical tradition.[3]

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1 Tanburi Cemil Bey, *Rehber-i Musıki* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1902).

2 Cem Behar, "Geleneksel Osmanlı/Türk Musıkisinin Tarihsel Kaynaklarından: Karamanlıca Yayınlar," *Musıkiden Müziğe, Osmanlı/Türk Müziği: Gelenek ve Modernlik* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017).

3 Aram Kerovpyan and Yılmaz Altuğ, *Klâsik Osmanlı Müziği ve Ermeniler* (Istanbul: Surp Pırgiç Ermeni Hastanesi Vakfı Yayını, 2010).

What I want to look into more closely now is the attitudes, motivations and possible expectations of four inventors of musical notation: the Polish convert Wojciech Bobowski—also known as Ali Ufkî Bey (1610?–1675?)—the Moldavian Prince Demetrius Cantemir (1673–1723), the Mevlevî *ney* player and sheikh Nâyî Osman Dede (1652?–1729), and yet another Mevlevî sheikh Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede (1765–1821). I will deal with their notation systems as such only in so far as they shed some light on the authors' motivations, intentions and personal relation to the notation systems they have created. What is important here to me is the relationship of the author to his musicological work, as far as this relationship transpires in his own writings.

We are obviously not dealing here with a homogenous group. We shall see, however, that their approaches to their respective notation systems are more congruent than their social or musical personalities.

Ali Ufkî Bey

Of course, this seventeenth-century Polish renegade did not, properly speaking, invent a notational system. Ali Ufkî Bey, who spent two thirds of his life in Istanbul, was only the first to make an extensive use of Western staff notation in order to put on paper a large number of vocal and instrumental pieces of Ottoman/Turkish music.

When he was captured by the Crimean Tatars and brought to Istanbul as a slave, Ali Ufkî was most probably over twenty-years old, and he was already musically highly literate. He also played an instrument which was both widespread in central Europe (its descendant is still in use today in Hungary and Romania—the *cymbalon*) and also had its equivalent in Islamic lands, the *santur*. Thus not surprisingly he was assigned to work with the group of palace pages (*içoğlan*) who made music.

For him, writing music and putting musical works on paper was just normal, natural, daily, and self-evident musical behavior. If he had worked not in the Topkapı Palace but in Schönbrunn, the palace of the Habsburgs in Vienna, he probably would have done more or less the same thing because learning, teaching, just remembering, or playing music was, for him, always necessarily associated with a written or published text. When he wrote his account of daily life in the Topkapı Palace and particularly about the *meşkhane* and music teaching in the imperial palace in the middle of the seventeenth century, this is how he explains the reason why he kept putting down on paper so many pieces of music:

> Music is always learned by rote, and writing it down is seen almost as a miracle. I used to write down the pieces I learned and my Turkish music-masters admired me. As to the palace pages they frequently forgot the pieces they learned and were thankful when I was able to refresh their memory.[4]

It is clear that Ali Ufkî considered staff notation first and foremost as a mnemonic device, a sort of *aide-mémoire*. But perhaps (and we can read it between the lines of the above quotation) it was also an instrument that gave him an appreciable advantage over the gifted but musically illiterate participants in the palace *meşkhane*. Clearly, he was the only musician who did not need to commit to memory the entire large and complex vocal and instrumental repertoire.

Interestingly, he never shared this advantage with anyone. As far as we know, he did not teach staff notation to anybody and always kept it as a strictly personal and useful skill. Most probably no one was seriously interested in learning it either. Therefore, he had no followers, successors, students or emulators. Besides, his musical manuscripts were carried over to Europe soon after his death, or even perhaps—that is a possibility, especially for the Paris manuscripts—while he was still alive.

4 Cornelio Magni, *Quanto di piu curioso e vago ha potuto raccorre Cornelio Magni nel primo biennio da esso consumato in viaggi e dimore per la Turchia* (Parma: Galeazzo Rosati, 1679), 555. Translation belongs to the author.

His most important musical compilation manuscript, now kept at the British Library, *Mecmua-yı Saz u Söz*, contains no less than five hundred and forty-four compositions belonging to a wide variety of genres. For us, it is a very precious manuscript indeed, a most important historical document too. And we have not yet finished studying it and commenting on it. But, seen from Ali Ufkî's viewpoint, it is a *unicum*. No other copy of it is known to exist neither from the author's own hand nor from anybody else's. He seems to have left no enduring musical legacy in Istanbul. As far as his musicological achievement is concerned, therefore, it is not totally wrong to say that Ali Ufkî Bey was indeed alone, a lonely man.

In Istanbul, Ali Ufkî Bey did not have to worry about any pre-existing notational system which he would need to learn first, then perhaps try to improve or simplify. But, as he quickly understood, he was living in a very different musical universe and still had to worry about the readability, fidelity, rigour and consistency of his notation, even if it was only for his own sake, for his personal use. This made him look for modes of adapting Western staff notation to the 'unusual' kind of music he was surrounded by.

Are we allowed to think that he was really satisfied with what he did with staff notation? The answer is yes and no. The reason for the 'yes' is obvious: he did, after all put down on paper—in two different manuscripts that we now cherish—hundreds of vocal and instrumental pieces that were part of the Turkish repertoire of the middle of the seventeenth century. And he did this to the best of his abilities.

There is, however, also a downside to this personal achievement. We have reason, and also some textual clues which lead us to suppose that, at some stage, Ali Ufkî had doubts and was not entirely satisfied with the way he combined European staff notation with some of the fundamental aspects of Turkish music.

The first of these clues is the way he dealt with the *usul*. The Turkish *usul*s are totally different from the European concepts of measure, rhythm, tempo, or accentuation. They belong to a completely different musical idiom and are fundamental to the processes of both composition and performance in Ottoman/Turkish music. Ali Ufkî did not manage to attain uniformity and coherence either in the description or in the designation and symbolic representation of the *usul* and of the number of time signatures each of these *usul*s contain. Writing down sounds and melodies is much easier than making visible the basic pulse that underlies these melodies. His treatment of the *usul* remains patchy, experimental and incomplete, and he kept changing his mind as to how to write them down.[5] This fact raises the question of the audience, the readership that Ali Ufkî targeted. If he had targeted a strictly Turkish audience, writing the name of the *usul* would have been sufficient. Targeting also a European audience would mean fully integrating the *usul* into the notation. But this question is not our concern here.

The second clue is the fact that Ali Ufkî seems to have also experimented with a different system of notation. In one of the loose folios bound together to form the Paris manuscript there is a short and untitled musical piece in his own handwriting. In this piece each note is represented by one or two letters of its name (*segâh*, *dügâh,* etc.) and the duration by a number above it.[6] This single page is the only example we have of Ali Ufkî's use of a different notational system. He probably quickly abandoned this experiment and reverted to staff notation. Nevertheless, these two facts (his rather unsuccessful treatment of the *usul* and his experiment with a kind of indigenous system of notation) seem to indicate that Ali Ufkî felt a certain amount of discontent on the matter of the suitability of Western staff notation in order to fully represent Ottoman/Turkish music.

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5 Judith Haug, "Representations of Usûl in Ali Ufuki's manuscripts," *Rythmic Cycles and Structures in the Art Music of the Middle East*, ed. Z. Helvacı, J. Olley, and R.M. Jaeger (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2017), 91–109; Cem Behar, *Saklı Mecmua - Ali Ufkî'nin Bibliothèque Nationale de France'taki [Turc 292] Yazması* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2016).
6 Cem Behar, *Saklı Mecmua,* 147–148.

Cantemir invented a system of notation where every note is represented by the first letters of the names of the pitches in use within Turkish music and is accompanied by numbers indicating duration and tempo. On them he built a theory of modes (*makam*). Then, he exemplified both his notation system and his approach to modes by putting down on paper more than three hundred and fifty instrumental compositions of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Usually called *edvâr*, his book's full title is *The Book/The Writing of the Science/Knowledge of Music through Letters of the Alphabet* and contains the first specifically Ottoman/Turkish music theory.[7] The first part of the book is theoretical and the second contains the notations. We know for certain that he was not aware of Ali Ufkî's writings.

As Cantemir himself explicitly writes, two of his essential objectives for embarking on such an ambitious project were exhaustivity and fidelity—exhaustivity of the repertoire and fidelity in performance. He wanted to make sure that he had covered the entirety of the instrumental repertoire of early eighteenth-century Istanbul and simultaneously, to make sure that performers were always faithful to the intentions of the composers. He was successful in neither of these objectives.

We know that the desire for exhaustivity is often an illusion. In his *edvâr,* Cantemir first sets out to make a complete list (which he calls a *fihrist,* that is, a table of contents) of all instrumental pieces (mainly *peşrev* [ouverture] pieces but also a number of *saz semaisi*) in the contemporary repertoire, including some of his own compositions. He tells us that he is aware of the existence of 442 *peşrev* pieces and gives a list of their names. Of these, he writes down 239 and marks them as *mevcûd* (extant), and lists the remaining 203 as *nâmevcud*, that is, works known to him only by reputation. Then he finds out and writes down 74 more from among the 203, which reaches a total of 313. At the end of the day, 129 *peşrev* pieces—almost one third of the total repertoire—has been left out of his collection of notations. So much for exhaustivity.

Now, fidelity. Cantemir often boasts of having invented a system of notation that adequately represents all the basic elements of Ottoman/Turkish music (i.e. pitch, melodic line, tempo, etc.) and that, therefore, thanks to this system of notation, compositions can perfectly be put down on paper and performed exactly as desired by the composer. Let me give a relevant quotation fom the *edvâr*:

> [...] the melody begins its movement and stops together with the usul so that by writing the tempo under the letters (i.e. the notational symbols) we can play the *peşrev* or the *beste in accordance with the intention of the composer*.[8]

"In accordance with the intention of the composer..." This sentence is repeated verbatim at least four times in Cantemir's text, always in a context describing excellence in performance.[9] Cantemir must have been well aware of the fact that in a predominantly oral musical culture every performance of a composition was also a re-creation and that different versions and variants of the same work might therefore coexist. Therefore, within Ottoman/Turkish musical culture fidelity is always relative and the European concept of a stable 'finished work' does not hold.

It is somewhat ironic to see that Cantemir himself has, in his notations, put down on paper slightly different versions of the same composition. 'High fidelity,' as we might call Cantemir's wish, could only exist in a totally written musical culture. Perhaps this could have been

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7 On Cantemir's work, see Eugenia Popescu-Judetz, *Dimitrie Cantemir – Cartea şiintei muzicii*, Bucarest (Editure Muzicala, 1973); *Prince Dimitrie Cantemir – Theorist and Composer of Turkish Music* (Istanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 1999); Owen Wright, *Demetrius Cantemir – The Collection of Notations, Part I – Text* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992); *Demetrius Cantemir – The Collection of Notations, Part II – Commentary* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Yalçın Tura, *Kantemiroğlu, Kitabu 'İlmi'l- Musıki 'alâ vechi'l Hurûfat* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), Cem Behar, *Kan Dolaşımı, Ameliyat ve Musıki Makamları – Kantemiroğlu (1673-1723) ve Edvâr'ının sıradışı müzikal serüveni* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017).

8 "...nağmenin âgâzesi usûl ile birden harekete şüru' ve birden karar-ı istirahate dahil olalar ve rakam-ı vezn ile harfin altında bend edip lâzım olan peşrevi yahut besteyi *şart-ı musannif üzere* okuruz." Demetrius Kantemir, *Kitabu 'İlmi'l- Musıki 'alâ vechi'l Hurûfat*. İstanbul Üniversitesi Türkiyat Enstitüsü Kütüphanesi, Y.100, 8 (our emphasis).

9 Ibid., 9, 12, 14.

imaginable if Cantemir's notation had been generally accepted as a standard. But it was not, of course.

In Istanbul, Cantemir was at the center of a network of highly qualified master musicians and famous composers. He had come to know Hâfız Post, for instance. He regularly met, had conversations and discussed musical topics with such eminent luminaries as Buhurîzâde Mustafa (that is, Itrî), Taşcızâde Recep, Tanbûrî Angeli and many others.[10] We are not aware that any of these master musicians ever showed any sort of interest for the Cantemir notations. Cantemir's only and lonely emulator was, about half a century later, a Mevlevi dervish, Mustafa Kevserî Efendi who copied all of Cantemir's notated pieces and added another one hundred and fifty compositions to the collection but showed no real interest for his *edvâr*.

Cantemir was no fool, however. He was fully aware of the limitations of his enterprise. Exhausting the repertoire and fidelity of reproduction were not sufficient conditions for success. Conscious of himself being a sort of learned and literate soul on a deserted island in the midst of an ocean of orality, he often reverts to the traditional teaching and transmission method: *meşk*. Here is one example:

> […] if you want to move from theory to practice, it is necessary for you to learn from a master. Otherwise, perfection can not be achieved only from books […][11]

Elsewhere, when speaking of the *usul*s and their tempos, he uses a similar expression: "[…] learning the tempo of the *usul*s only from written material seems very difficult to me."[12] At the end of his exposition on modes (*makam*) and their possible transpositions (*şedd*), his conclusion is quite clear: "However, to learn about transposition a long practice of the meşk with an accomplished mester is needed."[13]

Cantemir was basically a late-Renaissance man. His intention was to understand and rationalize the unfamiliar musical universe he encountered in Istanbul. At the end of the day, however, we have reason to suppose that he had reached and acknowledged the limits of his endeavour.

Nâyî Osman Dede

Osman Dede was a poet, calligrapher, *ney* player, and Mevlevi dervish, successively the chief *ney* player (*neyzenbaşı*) and then sheikh of the Mevlevi convent of Galata for thirty-two years until his death in 1729—a contemporary of Cantemir, then. Osman Dede was also a prolific composer remembered mainly as a composer of no less than four Mevlevi Rites (*ayin*), a number of instrumental pieces and a very long vocal solo/recitative type of piece, the *Miraciye,* in celebration of the Prophet's ascension to heaven.

Nâyî Osman also left behind a manuscript in which, with a system of notation of his own invention, he has put down about seventy instrumental pieces; all of them, it seems, also present in Ali Ufkî's and Cantemir's collections.[14] This manuscript, another *unicum*, apparently has no title and is sometimes referred to as *Nota-yı Türkî*. It is in private hands now and not available for scrutiny by historians and musicologists.[15]

From what we know of the manuscript (a couple of pages have been photocopied and published), it seems that his notation system is very similar to that of Cantemir, so whether one has been inspired by the other has been the subject of debate.

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10 For the 'Cantemir circle,' see Behar, *Kan Dolaşımı*, 133–157.
11 "[…] bu ilmi eğer amele bir hoşça getireyim dersen gerektir ki kâmilinden dinleyip kendine mülk edinesin, yoksa yalnız okumakla kemâliyetin bulmak müşküldür […]" Kantemir, *Kitabu 'İlmi'l- Musıki*, 16
12 "[…] usulün veznini yalnız yazıdan bulmak bana gayet ile müşkül iş görünür." Ibid., 79.
13 "Lâkin çok zamanın meşki lâzım ve bu şeddin yolunu bilenden birkaç kere işitmeğe muhtaçtır." Ibid., 50.
14 See Eugenia Popescu-Judetz, *Meanings in Turkish Musical Culture* (Istanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 1996); Nilgün Doğrusöz, "Nâyî Osman Dede'nin Müzik Yazısına dair birkaç belge," *Musıkişinas* 8 (2006): 47–66.
15 Suna and Inan Kıraç Manuscript Collection ŞR78 is a song *mecmua* that contains a *peşrev* written by Nâyî Osman Dede, copied from the aforementioned manuscript. See *Memories of Humankind: Stories from the Ottoman Manuscripts* exhibition at the Istanbul Research Institute, October 18, 2019 – July 25, 2020; and Günay Kut et al., *İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yazmalar Kataloğu* v. 3 (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute, 2014), 1272-1276.

Whatever the case may be, and pending detailed information to be obtained if and when the manuscript becomes available for scholarly study, the following two historical facts stand out: 1) Osman Dede seems to have recorded none of his personal compositions, all of which have come down to us through traditional oral transmission, that is, *meşk*; 2) Nâyî Osman taught and transmitted his notation system to no one. This is particularly surprising given the fact that the Galata Mevlevi Lodge of which he was the sheikh for more than three decades was not just a kind of isolated monastery with dervishes busy only with prayer and contemplation. It was a real and lively cultural center where–besides both religious and lay music–literature, poetry and calligraphy were also taught and cultivated and where people came not for solitary mystical confinement but mainly to participate in this cultural atmosphere.

Therefore, either nobody was interested in learning how to write music or Osman Dede was not interested in teaching how to do it. Probably both of these statements are correct. Confirmation may be sought in the testimony of an eyewitness, Mirzazâde Sâlim Efendi, a contemporary of Osman Dede and a well-known biographer of Ottoman poets. This is what Sâlim Efendi writes in the entry for Nâyî Osman Dede of his *şuarâ tezkiresi*, a collection of biographies of poets completed in 1722:

> […] however long, complex and artful a melody might be, it was, for him, sufficient to listen to it only once. He would then commit it to memory and never forget it.[16]

According to his biographer, Osman Dede was first and foremost known for his extraordinary feats of memory. He was able to commit to memory a composition he had heard only once and never forget it, however long and complex this composition might be. This judgment is indeed perfectly justifiable and meaningful in a musical universe based on oral teaching and transmission and in which memory plays such a pivotal role.

After that, in the same entry, Sâlim Efendi pursues his biographical sketch with another, but less important musical feat of Osman Dede:

> Besides, all his learning, he also had the extraordinary ability of taking possession of a kâr or a nakış he had listened to only once. He would write down sounds and melodies as if they were letters and words…with some particular symbols he would write down a kâr or a beste and would then perform that composition without missing a single note. To all those familiar with the art of music it is obvious that this is exceedingly difficult to achieve and that such masters are very rare indeed.[17]

What Nâyî Osman Dede did was "amazing, mind-boggling," something that was "extremely difficult." Therefore, it is almost impossible to find another person with the same abilities. Osman Dede invented a unique mnemotechnic device, extra proof of his extraordinary feats of memory. That was Sâlim Efendi's opinion, certainly shared by the literate society of eighteenth-century Istanbul at large and also probably of Nâyî Osman Dede himself, the solitary inventor of a system of notation that no one else ever used.

Abdülbâki Nâsır Dede

We have here another Mevlevi sheikh and the grandson of Nâyî Osman Dede. But his case is quite different. The notation he invented in 1794 was the outcome of an imperial command. He had previously authored a book on music theory (*edvâr*) and presented it to the reigning sultan, Selim III (1789–1807), also a musician and composer who then gave him the instruction to compose a book on music notation.

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16 "[…] bir kerre gûş-zedi olan kâr-ı sa'bü'i-menâl ve nakş-ı san'at-ı mâlâmâl ve nağme-i hayâl ender hayâli mersûm-ı sahife-i bâl eyleyip mürur-u zamanla nisyân eylemek 'adîmü'l-ihtimâl idi." Sâlim Efendi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ*, ed. Adnan İnce (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayını, 2005), 637.

17 "Cümle maarifinden maadâ fenn-i musıkide muhayyir-i 'ukûl bir ma'rifet-i vâlâya destres-i vusûl olmuş idi ki bir kâr ya da bir nakış bir kerre istimâ ile kendi için birümmetihi çıkarmak mümkün idi. Binaenaleyh kâh kelimât ü hurûf kitabet eder gibi nağme vü savtı kitâbet ederdi….bir hecâ-yı mahsus ile yazıp bir veçhile zabt ederdi ki rakam-keşidesi olan kâğıdı önüne koyup o kârı ve besteyi bi-nagamâtiha min gayri ziyâdetîn ve lâ-noksânîn okurdu. Bu emr bu fenne kemâl-i ıttıla'ı olan erbâb-ı irfâna âyandır ki begayet 'asîr ve bu vech ile erbâb-ı kemâlden bir kâmil bulunmak gayetü'l-gaye nadirdir." Ibid.

The result was a short text, a sort of pamphlet (eighteen folios) which he named *Tahririye-i Musıki*. Here, he uses again a notation in which each note is represented by a letter, but unlike Cantemir's and Osman Dede's notations, these letters have nothing to do with the name of the pitch but follow the traditional *ebced* order. Besides, to exemplify his notation Nâsır Dede has not chosen to notate a large repertoire but only pays due homage to his imperial patron. He has put down on paper only three compositions. A Mevlevi *ayin* composed by the sultan himself and two *peşrev* to serve as an introduction and conclusion to this Mevlevi ritual. One of these *peşrev* is, again, by the sultan himself and the other is by Musahib Seyyid Ahmed Ağa, a boon-companion to Selim III who had served as a go-between from the sultan to the sheikh. And all of these three works are in *sûzidilârâ*, a *makam* newly invented by Selim III himself.

An interesting feature of the *Tahririye* is that the author has apparently seen other notation systems, but whether those were Cantemir's or Osman Dede's is not clear. But he is fully aware that he has predecessors. Nâsır Dede criticizes these earlier notation systems for being too complex, impractical and incomplete. Compared to them, he praises his own notations for being clear, complete and easier to read and write. At the end of the day however, and not surprisingly, of his *Tahririye* only two manuscript copies are known to exist, and both are by the hand of the author.[18]

This is what, in the concluding section of the *Tahririye*, Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede warns us about the excessive use of musical notation in general:

> Learning to write down music is indeed necessary. However, only those who have first learned music from a master, have acquired a certain repertoire and have become a real artist should learn it. For those who have not yet attained a certain degree of mastery, learning to write down music is useless and perhaps even harmful. Learning music from a master (meşk) should come first.[19]

So much for his trust in the efficiency of notation systems, and so much for the limits that the notation systems should not trespass.

And this is precisely where Ali Ufkî, Cantemir, Nâyî Osman, and Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede reached a sort of consensus, which is that notation may indeed have been useful in some circumstances but that it was never indispensable. Notation was neither absolutely necessary nor, obviously, sufficient.

And none of these authors thought that his enterprise could be an overall success. From our viewpoint what unites them, therefore, is not their achievements or their success, but their almost total failure.

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18 Recep Uslu and Nilgün Doğrusöz Dişiaçık, *Abdülbâki Nâsır Dede'nin Müzik Yazısı: Tahririye* (Istanbul: İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, 2009).

19 "Fe-emmâ tahririn lüzum-u tahsili beyâna hacet değildir lâkin sa'y-ı tahsili üstaddan taallüm ve biraz te'lifât cem'ile oldukça tefennün ve sazında mümarese eyleyenedir. Ve illâ bu mertebenin dûnunda olana sa'yi abes ve belki tahsiline mani kabilindendir. Zira üstaddan bi'l-ahz taallüm ve tahsil bundan akdemdir."