

DÜNYA and Islam In The West presents

Sufism After Rumi: **Past and Present in Turkey and the US**



Tuesday, October 28, 5:30pm, Harvard University, Faculty Club

Panelists

Jocelyne Cesari, Virginia Danielson, Robert Labaree, Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

The Dünya Ensemble

Shanteri Baliga/ney, voice **Robert Labaree**/çeng, percussion, voice
Cem Mutlu/percussion, voice **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol**/voice, ud, divan sazı, ney
Noam Sender/ney **Frederick Stubbs**/ney

The Mevlevi Sufi order has played an important intermediary role between Islam and the West, where Islamic mysticism in its various forms has long been a source of fascination. During the 20th century, Mevlevi poetry, Mevlevi music and the famous Mevlevi whirling ceremony have captured the attention of American audiences, giving the founder of the order, Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi (d. 1273), substantial name-recognition and making him one of the best selling poets in the U.S. today. Presentations of the Mevlevi sema by both American-based groups and touring ensembles from abroad attest to the group's continuing, and even growing, influence in the West. In today's program, a panel of scholars and musicians explores the current role of Mevlevism in Turkey and in the U.S., followed by a concert of pieces drawn from the traditional repertoires of Mevlevi and other Sufi tarikats.

I. Turkish Sunni Islam and Sufi Practice

Our musical presentation begins, not with the Mevlevi themselves, but with musical excerpts representing some of the Sufi brotherhoods which have contributed to Mevlevi practices, both here and in Turkey. The complex character of Mevlevism is suggested in this set by some of the practices of the Sufi orders more closely associated with Sunni Islam, practices which include: the singing of songs (*ilahiler*) in praise of the prophet Muhammed; the restricted use of instruments except for percussion; ceremonies involving the singing of repeated rhythmic phrases (*zikir*); and finally the chanting of The Holy Koran in Arabic (*tilavet*) and of devotional poetry in Turkish (*kaside*). Under the influence of such Sunni Sufi orders, in particular those which originate from North India, some Mevlevi brotherhoods in the U.S. have come to include the above practices in their gatherings to a degree that might surprise their Mevlevi counterparts in Turkey.

Tilavet: chanting of The Holy Koran, I: 1-7 The Exordium

Bismil-lâ-hir-Rahmân-ir'Rahim

Al-hamdu lillahi Rabbil-âlamîn. Ar'Rahmânir-Rahim. Mâlikî Yawmiddin. İyyâka nâbudu ve İyyâka nastain. İhdinassirât al-mustaqîm. Sirat al-ladina an'amta 'alayhim. Gayril magdubi alayhim walad dâllin.

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. King of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help. Guide us to the straight way; The way of those whom you have blessed, not of those who have deserved anger, nor of those who stray.

Saba ilahi (devotional song)

Anonymous

*Seyreleyip yandım mah cemalini
Nur kundak içinde yatar Muhammed
Canımın cananısın ya Muhammed*

At the sight of your beauty I burn
Muhammed lies in radiant swaddling clothes
O Muhammed, my beloved

*Ter ter dudakların bilmem ne söyler
Hulusi kalb ile Hakkı zikreyleyler
Daha tıfil iken ümmetin diler*

I don't understand what your lips say
With purity of heart you called on God
Even as a child, you spoke for your people

Çargah ilahi (devotional song)

Music: Anonymous *Text:* Yunus Emre (13th c.)

*Ben dervişim diyene bir ün idesim gelir
Segirdi ben sesine varıp yitesim gelir*

I praise those who call themselves dervish
I want to go to them when I hear their calls

Semadan Sırrı Tevhidi (*kaside ve zikir-vocal improvisation over repeated phrases*)

*Semadan sırrı tevhidi
duyan gelsin bu meydana
derun içre bugün Allah
diyen gelsin bu meydana*

Those who hear the secret to be one soul
should join us in this arena
Those who say God from the deepest places of their heart
should join us in this arena

Rast ilahi (devotional song)

anonymous

*Erler demine destur alalım
Pervaneye bak ibret alalım
Askın atesine gel bir yanalım
Devrana girip seyran edelim
Eyvah demeden Allah diyelim*

Let us get permission to become knowledgeable men
Let us look at the moth and learn from it
Let us burn with the fire of Love
And whirl and dream
Before calling out for mercy let's say Allah

*Günler geceler durmaz geçiyor
Sermayen olan ömrün bitiyor
Bülbüllere bak efgan ediyor
Ey gonca açıl mevsim geçiyor*

Days and nights pass
And your life, which is your fortune on earth will soon end
Look at the nightingales they are crying
O rosebud it's time to blossom the season is changing

II. Turkish Shiite Islam and Sufi Practice

An historical split within Mevlevism is indicative of a further complication of Mevlevi identity, representing those more influenced by the Bektasi Sufi order (the so-called Semsî Mevlevîs) and those influenced by Sunni tarikats such as the Naksibendi (the so-called Veledî Mevlevîs). After centuries of interaction between the

Bektasi and the Mevlevi, their relationship came to an abrupt end in 1826 when the Bektasi were suppressed by the Ottoman government and the order was forced to go underground. (The Mevlevi continued their close association with the Ottoman elite right into the early 20th century.) The Bektasi practices which survived this period gradually evolved closer to those of the Alevi, a separate ethnic and religious minority group from Anatolia with theological characteristics similar to the Bektasi. Today Bektasism displays more of the characteristics of the Alevi than of the pre-1826 Bektasi order and, despite the distinct histories of the two groups, they are at times represented as one: "Alevi-Bektasi".

This set features the *nefes*—a song type characteristic of pre-1826 Bektasi sufism. The songs all share a common reverence for the figure of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, aligning them more closely with Shi'a Islam than with Sunni Islam. As some of the texts here demonstrate, Bektasi ceremonies may include heterodox practices such as the ceremonial use of *rakı* (local alcohol) or *sarap* (wine), making them at times the focus of official disapproval, with the result that much Bektasi poetry involves coded language which is difficult for outsiders to interpret. The *nefes* here have been chosen because their texts are somewhat less prone to hidden meanings, though they still rely on language which suggests an earlier time.

Pencgah nefes

Text: Resmi

Mushaf demek hatadır ol safhai cemale
Bu kitap bir sözdür fehmiden ehli hale

It's wrong to say that The Qur'an is the face of perfection
This book is a promise to those who try to comprehend

Ussak nefes

Text: Bayram

Noldu bu gönlüm noldu bu gönlüm
Derdü gamınla doldu bu gönlüm
Yandı bu gönlüm yandı bu gönlüm
Yanmada derman buldu bu gönlüm

My heart—what has happened to it?
My heart is filled with sorrows
My heart is burning
My heart has found relief in burning

Hüseyini nefes

Text: Semsî

Mescit ile medreseyi
İsmarladık zahitlere
Hakka ibadet etmege
Yeter bize meyhaneler

The mosque and the medrese
We'll gladly give them to the ascetics
To pray to God
The tavern is enough for us

III. Mevlevism

A variety of musical styles have found their way into the practices today associated with Mevlevism, even including current developments influenced by commercial popular music. In this final section of the program the focus will be on what may be called traditional forms of Mevlevi music. *Ayin* is the name given to the four movement musical setting of the text of the whirling ceremony. The poetry being sung in the *ayin* is in a mixture of Persian and Turkish, much of it drawn from the *Mesnevi*, the revered work of Celaleddin Rumi that has been called "the Qur'an in Persian." The ney (reed flute) is the ultimate symbol of Mevlevism since Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi begins the *Mesnevi* with a reference to it. To most people born in Turkey, the instrument is inseparable from the idea of mysticism, even when it is used in a secular context. Rather than perform a complete *ayin* tonight we will instead present two movements from a relatively recent *ayin* composed in the mid-20th century. This will be followed by a composition which the Mevlevi refer to as *niyaz ayini*—a kind of *ayin* in short form which was performed for a variety of occasions, such as the honoring of a donor to the Mevlevi order.

Ney Taksim

Hisarbuselik Pesrev

Neyzen Halilcan (20th c.)

Hisarbuselik Ayin (2. and 3. Selam)

by Sadeddin Heper (20th c.)

Ey ki hezar aferin
Bu nice sultan olur
Kulı olan kisiler
Hüsrevü hakan olur
Her ki bugün Velede

Oh, the creator of thousands of beings
What a sultan you are
Those who are your servants
Become royal rulers
So if today you believe in

Inanuben yüz süre
Yoksul ise bay olur
Bay ise sultan olur

and therefore side with Veled
If you're poor you'll become rich
If you're rich you'll become a sultan

Niyaz Ayini

*Sem-i ruhuna cismimi pervane düsürdüm
Mevlayi seversen beni söyletme gamim var
Dinle sözümü sana direm özge edadır
Dervis olana lazım olan askı hudadır
Asıkın nesi var ise masuka fedadır
Sema safe cana sifa ruha gıdadır
As k ile gelin talibi cüyende olalım
Zevk ile safalar sürelim zinde olalım
Hazreti Mevlanaya gelin bende olalım*

anonymous
To the candle of your soul I have become a moth
If you love the Lord don't make me explain, I'm in sorrow
Listen to what I'm saying, it is about another way
What a dervish needs is the love of God
What the lover possesses is sacrificed for the Beloved
The sema is joy, and it is good for body and soul
Come with Love and let's strive to be the seeker
Let us enjoy our time and be alive with divine Love
Come to Mevlana so we can be his servants

Program notes and translations by M. Sanlıkol, R. Labaree

The panelists and the musicians

Jocelyne Cesari directs the **Islam in the West** program and has also held teaching positions in the anthropology department and at Harvard Divinity School. Her most recent books are: *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (2004) and *European Muslims and the Secular State* (2005).

Virginia Danielson has held the Richard F. French Librarianship of the Loeb Music Library since 1999. Trained as an ethnomusicologist, she is the author of *"The Voice of Egypt": Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song and Egyptian Society in the 20th Century* (1997). She recently co-edited the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: The Middle East*.

Robert Labaree (*çeng, voice, percussion*) is an ethnomusicologist specializing in Turkish music and medieval European music. He is chair of the Music History department at New England Conservatory and director of the conservatory's Intercultural Institute, which he established in 1993.

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol (*voice, ud, saz, ney*) completed his doctorate in composition at New England Conservatory in 2004, is a composer and jazz pianist and president and co-founder of *DÜNYA*, a non-profit music collaborative based in Boston established in 2004.

Shanteri Baliga (*voice, ney*) has been a student of Frederick Stubbs for over 12 years, and plays with a number of Boston based ensembles.

Cem Mutlu (*voice, percussion*) a member of the *DÜNYA* board, plays jazz and a variety of world musics with groups in the Boston area.

Noam Sender (*voice, ney*) performs with a variety of ensembles in the Boston area and is a member of the advisory board of *DÜNYA*.

Frederick Stubbs (*ney*) is an ethnomusicologist specializing in Turkish music who teaches World Music and Ethnomusicology at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.