

Rauf Yekta's Notes on the 1932 Congress of Arab Music

Being a Mediator in a Dual Musical Universe

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Abstract The participation of the Turkish musicologist Rauf Yekta (1871–1935) in the Cairo Congress of Arab Music in 1932 and his rejection of the proposed 24-tone equal-tempered scale are well-known facts in musicological literature. However, due to the dearth of primary sources, Yekta's influential role in the discussions remains largely unknown. Recently discovered notes, published in the periodical *Mukhādana/Muhadenet* following the Congress, provide new insights into Yekta's musicological approach and his position relative to other participants at the Congress. Based on these notes, this article provides the first comprehensive analysis of Yekta's opinions on the Congress. Yekta's stance cannot be fully understood without considering Turkey's position between the "Arab" and "Western" worlds at the time. However, his views, particularly as a scholar defending the Turkish makam tradition against the musical revolution of the Republic, did not align with those of Turkish state representatives. Taking a unique position, Yekta envisioned a dual musical universe and saw himself as a mediator capable of reconciling the distinct qualities of these two worlds.

Introduction

I got up at seven. I wandered the streets. The width of the streets, the number and order of the functioning trams, wagons, buses, and so on could not be believed without being seen. I stood there looking all around me with admiration. (Rauf Yekta in Süreksan 1972b:4)¹

Rauf Yekta (1871–1935), a Turkish delegate to the Cairo Congress of Arab Music, inscribed these lines in his travel journal on his first day in Cairo, 13 March 1932. The Congress took place during a historical period when the

regime of the young Republic was distancing itself from all Ottoman, Eastern, and Arab elements, which were inherent to the culture of the region. Meanwhile, a lively discussion in the intellectual arena was accompanying the modernization process. Yekta's fascination, which led him out of the door early on a Sunday morning, and his astonishment at the sights before him provide some insight into the complex feelings about the Arab world in Turkey during his lifetime.

Two delegates from Turkey attended the Congress: musicologist Rauf Yekta, and performer Mesut Cemil (1902–1963). The other Congress participants included the Egyptian delegates and musicians from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco who exemplified their “traditional music”², alongside musicologists, comparative musicologists, Orientalists, music historians, and composers from European countries.³ Reflecting the colonial dynamics of the era, and the Congress's aim of reshaping Arab music according to Western standards, most Arab delegates were musicians, while the roles of scholar and expert were occupied primarily by Europeans from both Europe and their North African colonies. However, the position of the Turkish delegate among the participants did not fit at all neatly into this dichotomy.

Turkish music was not on the Congress's agenda; rather, it was included due to the shared characteristics of the musical systems and repertoire of Arab and Ottoman-Turkish music. This similarity but not sameness provided a unique position for Turkey at the event.⁴ Unlike the Arab countries, Turkey did not send a musical ensemble to the Congress to showcase the country's musical characteristics. Nevertheless, Mesut Cemil's performances essentially played such a role and were recorded by the recording committee. On the other hand, Rauf Yekta, as a music scholar, played an active role in the discussions about the scale of Arab music⁵ by suggesting the same intervallic system that he had previously suggested for Turkish music. Even though his published notes, appearing immediately after the event in both Arabic and Turkish in the bilingual Egyptian newspaper *Mukhādana/Muhadenet*, reveal the details of his participation, they have remained obscure. In these notes, he aimed to position himself in a unique “third” position, beyond the “Easterners” and the “Westerners.”⁶

During the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Westernization and relations with the West had become ideologically crucial, leading to the adoption of policies to modernize and integrate Turkey into the Western world. In this respect, Turkish historiography began to forge a new direction for Turks in the early 1930s, creating a historical identity that differentiated them from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire as an Eastern, Muslim entity. From the early years of the new nation-state, music was viewed as an ideological tool for implementing Republican ideals. The revolutionary shift in official discourse on music was heavily influenced by the ideas of sociologist Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), who largely dismissed Ottoman-Turkish makam music as a relic of the empire. However, Rauf Yekta, among the first to challenge these views (Erol 2012:41), cannot be considered an ideal representative of the Turkish state’s official stance. Instead, he adopted a heterodox position in defense of the makam tradition. While avoiding political conflicts, Yekta framed his arguments using a positivist approach and Western terminology, which aligned with the modernist ethos of the new Republic. Yet, he remained firmly opposed to the Westernization of “Turkish music” (Ayas 2014:2011–14, Olley 2023:150).⁷

In this article, rather than reiterating well-established facts about the Congress or covering all the discussions at the event, I focus on Rauf Yekta’s notes published in *Mukhādāna/Muhadenet* to highlight his unique understanding of Arab music and his self-positioning as a Turkish musicologist during the Congress. Recognizing the complexity of the era, which resists simplistic categorizations based on processes such as nationalization and modernization, I aim to explore Yekta’s mindset as a pioneering figure navigating this intricate historical context.

The Turkish-Arab relationship in 1932

In the aftermath of the War of Independence against Western powers, the Turkish Republic, established in 1923, opted not to take on a leadership role among Middle Eastern nations in opposition to the West, but instead embarked on a journey of modernization that closely paralleled Westernization (Ayas 2014:41–2). Serving as an ideological instrument, the “Turkish History Thesis” formulated in the early 1930s endorsed the objectives of the early Republic’s elite to delineate a unique Turkish identity, distinct from its

Ottoman heritage, which was inextricably linked to the Eastern and Muslim world, and to cultivate a new national identity that embraced Westernization and secular Turkishness, while renouncing the Ottoman-Islamic legacy (Ayas 2016:1058). While the thesis depicted the Turks as pioneers in introducing civilization to various parts of the world through a series of migrations from their original homeland in Central Asia, by emphasizing the continuity of Turkish states dating back to the ninth century the narrative reduced the influence of the Ottoman Empire and Islam in Turkish history and notably marginalized the roles of the Ottomans and Arabs (Ayas 2016:1061).

From the perspective of the rationalist project of modernity, the Middle East has been viewed as a backward region of conflict where Islam adds an element of irrationality to politics, a region of superstitions, inefficiencies, and questionable morals (Jung 2005:7). In the narrative echoing this perspective, Arab subjects, as well as other ethnic groups within the Ottoman Empire, were depicted as communities that had failed to coexist harmoniously under the empire's ideals (Mandal 2022:37)⁸, while Arab identity was cast as an extension of Ottoman identity and functioned as an externalizable "Other" (Bora 2003:42). Along with the ideal of Westernization, one of the primary reasons for the distancing of the Turkish Republic from Arab identity has been the discourse on the role of Arabs in the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Berkes 1975:15) and the treachery of Arab countries as collaborators with Western imperialists.

In parallel with this view, the Turkish music revolution rejected Ottoman music, a remnant of Ottoman heritage, which was thought to be influenced by Greek and Byzantine culture (Gökalp 1959 [1923]:300). Gökalp argued that Ottoman music, influenced by Arab, Persian, and Byzantine traditions, lacked national content. He believed that the new national Turkish music should be rooted in Turkish folk music, which represented pure Turkishness, and should utilize Western polyphonic techniques. According to him, folk music was the authentic Turkish national music, created by the people, unlike the palace-born Ottoman music, which he considered to be of artificial character.⁹

While Ottoman-Turkish makam music became a subject of controversy¹⁰ due to its representativeness as a creation of Turkish culture being questioned, Yekta made significant efforts to emphasize the value of this music

both in theory and in practice, countering the emerging critique of Ottoman music that was part of Gökalp's project to purify Turkish culture (Feldman 1990–91:98). Yekta also vehemently opposed the closure of the Turkish music education branch of Darülelhan¹¹, where he was teaching, just a few years before the Congress. His critical view of the Republic's musical revolution – embodied by Musa Süreyya Bey, who advocated the closure in favor of Western music – and his appreciation for the Egyptian government's efforts to modernize their traditional music instead of ignoring it, can be discerned from one of the installments of his Congress notes:

I wonder if they think that Egyptians are convening an international congress to decide on discontinuing Arab music education in schools, just as Turkish music education was removed from Istanbul Conservatory through the infamous former director Süreyya Bey's handiwork. Thank God there is no Süreyya Bey in Egypt, and it is impossible for there to be one. On the contrary, the government and the people love and support music [...] (Yekta 1932c:2)¹²

During the same time period, in a reverse strategy, Arab countries also attempted to distance their culture from Ottoman-Turkish influence. It was not a coincidence that Henry George Farmer and Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger both chose to use the term "Arab music" in their publications. According to Lambert (2007:2), the Cairo Congress literally invented the concept of "Arab music" by "purifying" what was previously referred to as "Oriental music" and was now considered "Arab," free from all Turkish, Iranian, or minority religious influences. This transformation was also followed by the renaming of the Cairo Oriental Music Institute as the Arab Music Institute.

Still, it should be noted that even though nationalism and Pan-Arabism were strong political and intellectual movements, in both Turkey and Egypt, there was no sharp break at the level of people's musical tastes and preferences. This is supported by various facts and incidents, including the well-known concert in Sarayburnu (Istanbul) by the Egyptian singer Munira al-Mahdiyya in 1928; the interest shown in Cairene radio and Egyptian films in Turkey; news and interviews in the press documenting the love of Turkish audiences for 'Umm Kulthūm (Özyıldırım 2013); Turkish composer and oud performer Şerif Muhiddin Targan's establishment of Western and Oriental music departments at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1930s and his influence on Arab oud performance (Işıқтаş 2018:225); Turkish composer and tanbur performer Refik Fersan's involvement in the establishment of Damascus Conservatory; and the performances of Turkish musicians in Arab coun-

tries.¹³ In short, despite ideological rejections at the official level or the concerns of some intellectuals including musicians and music scholars on both sides about the loss of their music's identity, interactions between Arab and Turkish musics were very much alive in the early twentieth century.

Within this complex historical relationship, Rauf Yekta's engagement at the Cairo Congress provides a unique lens to examine Turkey's cultural position vis-à-vis Arab music. Rauf Yekta, an individual well versed in the historical connections between Arab and Turkish musical cultures, did not reject Ottoman musical culture or its connection with Arab music. In fact, he appreciated certain stylistic examples of Arab music and emphasized the relationship between Arab and Turkish music as two branches of "Eastern" music.

Rauf Yekta's studies on "Oriental music"

Rauf Yekta was a music theoretician, composer of around 40 musical pieces in various forms, and a respected ney (end-blown reed flute) performer. He is also considered to be the first musicologist in Turkey, although musicology had not yet been established as a discipline in his time (Özdemir 2022:379, Tansuğ 2006:5).¹⁴ He began writing articles and essays for newspapers in the late 1890s while working as a civil servant on the Imperial Council (Divan-ı Hümayun), and studying music under Ataullah Efendi (1842–1910), the sheikh of Galata Mevlevi Lodge. Yekta was a prolific writer who contributed to various journals, newspapers, and magazines such as *İkdam*, *Şehbal*, and *Âtî*, producing both polemical and musicological writings. From 1922 onwards, he began teaching the theory and history of "Eastern" music at Darülelhan. In 1926, when the government decided to close down the Eastern music branch of Darülelhan, Yekta's articles voiced his opposition to the decision.

He played a pivotal role in the collection of Turkish folk music undertaken by Darülelhan during the early Republican era, significantly contributing to the recording, transcription, and publication of music from various regions. However, his scholarly interests were primarily focused on the Turkish makam system. His writings primarily reflected his exploration of Turkish music theory, where he proposed a system that segmented the octave into 24 unequal intervals. This system was informed by his research on the manuscripts of the Systematist school of music theory, which described the

makam system as based on the 17-tone scale proposed by Şafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī in the thirteenth century, a system that was largely forgotten after the sixteenth century (Olley 2023).¹⁵

In addition to publishing numerous writings in Turkish, Rauf Yekta published a series of articles in *La Revue musicale* in 1907 and 1908. Believing that the lack of information about Turkish music in the West led to its undervaluation (Rauf Yekta 1336/1918) – while emphasizing the differences between Turkish music and the Western tonal system – he aimed to present the foundations of Turkish music theory to European readers using mathematical calculations and Western terminology. Yekta’s other notable contribution to musicology in the French language was his extensive article “La musique turque” in *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du conservatoire*, edited by Albert Lavignac and published in 1922. This was the first comprehensive resource on Turkish music in a European language and it presented Yekta’s theoretical interpretation of the Turkish makam system in a scientific manner (Taşdelen & Doğrusöz 2021:2810).

From his earliest writings, Yekta distinguished between two musical systems: Western (European) music and Eastern (Oriental) music, reflecting the broader epistemic dichotomy of West and East. In his view, these systems were not hierarchically related. However, Western music was widely recognized, taught using standardized methods across regions, and accessible to amateur musicians worldwide, whereas Oriental music, despite its broad geographic reach, remained less understood and undervalued by Western scholars. Yekta attributed this disparity to limited research, outdated sources, and the absence of a scientific framework for studying Oriental music (Raouf Yekta 1922:2945). He considered Turkish music to be a branch of Oriental music, emphasizing a unique position for Turkey as a country where Oriental music had been developed in the most sophisticated manner (Raouf Yekta 1922:2946). Thus, while not adopting an evolutionary view in describing two equally significant musical worlds – Western and Oriental – he nonetheless implied the superiority of Turkish culture over Arab culture. This unique evolutionary approach of Yekta was also central to his stance at the Congress.

In his “La musique turque,” Yekta rejected the idea – whose proponents allegedly included François-Joseph Fétis – that Arab music was divided into 17 intervals while Turkish and Iranian music were divided into 24. Rather,

Yekta argued that Arab and Turkish music were based on the same musical system. He emphasized that in Oriental music, whether Arab, Turkish, or Iranian, the division of the octave was the same for each, and he attributed the audible differences between Arab and Turkish music to stylistic differences in their performance (Raouf Yekta 1922:2947). As Feldman notes, Yekta was aware of the differences in the rhythmic structures of Egyptian music through his teacher Zekai Dede (1825–1897), who had lived in Egypt (Feldman 1990–91:97). Yekta was also a member of the Mevlevi Sufi order, which had branches in Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo. However, despite his knowledge of Arab music, instead of emphasizing the differences between Turkish and Arab music, he focused on their similarity. His recognition of a shared musical system between Arab and Turkish traditions points to one of the fundamental approaches that was presented in his notes on the Congress.

Yekta's participation in the 1932 Cairo Congress of Arab Music

On 18 July 1930, the newspaper *Vakit* reported that the Istanbul Conservatory had received an invitation to an “Oriental music congress” in Egypt, organized by the Cairo Oriental Music Conservatory. The Istanbul Conservatory, with its focus on Western music education, declined the invitation; however, it offered to provide the congress's organization committee with the contact information of individuals studying Oriental music, including Rauf Yekta, who was mentioned as a potential participant (*Vakit* 1930:5).

In July 1931, Rauf Yekta wrote a letter to Henry George Farmer about a congress in Egypt to which he had been invited, planned for March 1932. Yekta offered to mediate for Farmer if he had not already been invited (Katz 2015:134). Even though it is unclear whether the invitation was made officially to the Turkish authorities or directly to Rauf Yekta¹⁶, his tone in the letter suggests a personal connection between him and the organizers. In a follow-up letter, Yekta asked Farmer about the travel allowances that the organizers were willing to cover for European attendees. Before responding to the organizers' inquiry about his own travel expense requirements, he sought to understand the financial provisions made for participants hailing from Western nations (Katz 2015:135). Yekta's letter underscores his belief in the significance of his presence at the event, asserting that his contribution

held a value commensurate with that of his Western counterparts. Eventually, the news in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on 16 February 1932 confirmed the participation of Yekta and Mesut Cemil as invitees of the Egyptian government, who covered all their expenses (cited in Kiyak 2018:78).

Although it is well known in musicological circles in Turkey that Yekta and Mesut Cemil participated in the 1932 Congress as Turkish delegates, the details of the discussions in the Congress and the roles of the participants remain anecdotal. While there were some news articles about the Congress and the Turkish delegates in the newspapers and music journals of the time, it appears that the topic did not spark a meaningful musicological conversation in the country. Similarly, few academic publications over the years have closely examined the details of the Congress and the specific contributions of the Turkish delegates. While various articles and book chapters do touch upon the topic, providing a limited amount of information, there are only two articles published in Turkish that are entirely dedicated to the Congress. Ögüt (2013) situates it within the context of the modernization of Arab music by various actors with diverse perspectives but does not focus directly on the actual positions of the Turkish delegates. A recent article by Öner (2023), on the other hand, which focuses on personal writings such as the diaries of Rauf Yekta and Farmer and the letters of Robert Lachmann in historical context, touches upon Yekta's participation based on the first-hand information on his travel journal.

The primary reason for the scarcity of information regarding the participation and role of the Turkish delegates in the Congress is the absence of primary documents from the participants themselves. Firstly, neither Arab nor Oriental music were a priority for the Turkish government at that time, there is no official report about the event available in Turkish since. Secondly, Yekta and Cemil published almost nothing on the subject in Turkish newspapers, music magazines, or journals. Öner (2023:152) states that the silence of the participants can also be interpreted as their choice to distance themselves from the ongoing discussions about the music revolution in Turkey. This argument also aligns with Ayas's evaluation (2014:211–21) of Yekta's cautious, heterodox position with regards to the Turkish music revolution.

Secondly, Yekta's archive, currently in the possession of his descendants, is not publicly available and has only been made partially accessible to a small number of researchers.¹⁷ However, an informal list of the contents of Yekta's archive, prepared by his grandsons Yavuz Yektay and Cem Yektay, is available (Yektay & Yektay 2023). This list identifies an envelope titled "Kahire Şark Musikisi Kongresi Notları" ("Notes on the Cairo Oriental Music Congress"), which includes 59 pages of notes that, as yet, remain untouched by researchers. The list also includes other materials from the Congress, such as Yekta's travel journal; several folders in French related to the Congress, including one titled, "Questions Techniques Qui Seront Étudiées par les Commissions du Congrès" ("Technical questions which will be studied by the committees of the Congress"); a draft of an opening speech by Yekta in French; photographs from the trip; business cards taken from other participants; press clippings from various Egyptian newspapers published during the Congress; several letters between Yekta and his family written during the journey; and correspondence with other participants following the Congress. The list also cites "a letter in French written by the organization committee of the Congress," which is most likely an invitation letter. Therefore, due to the limited availability and accessibility of primary documents and materials regarding the Congress and the Turkish delegates, the only valuable and accessible primary resource regarding the Turkish participants' attendance, until recently, was a selection of notes from Yekta's travel journal which were published in the journal *Musikî ve Nota* in 1970, 1972, and 1984.¹⁸

On the other hand, it is known that Yekta published his notes as a series of 31 articles titled "Musiki Kongresi ve Neticeleri" ("The music congress and its results") in *Mukhādana/Muhadenet*, a periodical published in Egypt in Arabic and Turkish with the support of the Turkish government (Bein 2020:140). The articles were first published in Turkish in the Latin alphabet together with an Arabic translation. Subsequently, the Arabic versions of the articles were also compiled into a book entitled *Muṭāla'āt wa-ārā' ḥawla mu'tamar al-mūsīqā al-'arabiyya* ("Notes and opinions on the Congress of Arab Music"), which was again published by the newspaper in 1934 (Ra'ūf Yektā 1934). This Arabic version has been mentioned in various publications on the Congress in English and French. For instance, Katz (2015:260) mentions this book as one of only four publications, all in Arabic, which were written about the Con-

gress and published after the Congress's proceedings appeared in Arabic and French in 1933 and 1934, respectively (see [al-Ḥifnī] 1933 and [al-Ḥifnī] 1934). In the Turkish literature, an article by Murat Bardakçı (1980), titled “Rauf Yektâ Bey'in Bilinmeyen Üç Kitabı” (“Three unknown books by Rauf Yekta Bey”), references this work, and additional sources have repeated this information mostly citing Bardakçı. However, as the content of the book has not yet been reviewed by any scholars in Turkish or English the original articles in *Mukhādāna/Muhadenet* are almost unknown.

Rauf Yekta's “Notes and opinions on the Congress of Arab Music”

At the Congress, Rauf Yekta played a significant role in the Modes, Rhythms, and Composition Committee, serving as its chair. He also attended the Music Education Committee as a member and followed some sections of the Scale Committee.¹⁹ Mesut Cemil participated in the Modes, Rhythms, and Composition Committee, the Scale Committee, the Instruments Committee, and the Recording Committee. Even though Yekta's notes indicate Mesut Cemil's active participation in some of the discussions in those committees, Mesut Cemil left very few written records. His main contribution to the event is acknowledged to be as a performer.

Published as 31 articles in *Mukhādāna/Muhadenet* between January and August 1932²⁰, Rauf Yekta's notes offer a comprehensive view of the Congress, encompassing the general atmosphere, key committee discussions, personal impressions, interactions with other participants, and concerts by participating musicians. Although these notes overlap with his travel journal in some areas, the journal provides more detailed accounts of his day-to-day experiences throughout his trip. In contrast, the notes present a more extended and systematic presentation of his opinions, comprising around 15,000 words. For instance, in the final installments of the series, after summarizing the reports of all committees within the Congress, Yekta proposes his recommendations for the advancement of Arab music. These proposals, which offer a glimpse into his viewpoint on the current state of Arab music and its modernization, are crucial for comprehending his perspective.

Yekta's notes not only highlight his contributions as a key actor during a specific moment in Turkish history when music played a significant role in the country's modernization, but also position him among his contemporaries. They demonstrate that Yekta was literate in Arabic and French, and was well informed about the historical and contemporary sources of Arab music, as well as the studies conducted by European musicologists of his time.²¹ Furthermore, his travel journal, newspaper articles, and correspondence in his archive attest to personal and scholarly interactions with both European and Egyptian Congress participants prior to the event. In other words, Yekta actively participated in the same milieu as contemporary musicologists and music scholars, with whom he shared a compatible perspective, despite some nuanced insights.

Yekta's overall approach was dominated by the prevalent positivism and evolutionism which were the paradigmatic understandings in European academia for most of the first half of the twentieth century.²² However, Yekta's evolutionary approach does not conform to the narrative of Western modernity, which places Western culture at the top of the evolutionary scheme. Instead, he describes two equally valuable cultural entities, the West and the East, each with their own evolutionary processes.

Yekta's musical understanding and theoretical explanation of the makam system are rooted in his scrutiny of primary sources and comprehension of the local cultural milieu, together with an awareness of European scientific principles (Olley 2023:148). Parallel to his progressivist historical perspective, from the early stages of his career Yekta believed that Turkish music needed to be explained with "scientific" principles. He based his theoretical explanations on measurements made with a sonometer in relation to the strings of the tanbur (long-necked lute), the fundamental instrument of Ottoman-Turkish music. As in his theoretical studies based on the physics of sound and on meticulous acoustic calculations, in his notes, while rejecting the suggestion to theorize the scale of Arab music based on 24 equal-tempered intervals, Yekta uses calculations to explain his perspective and provides the resulting ratios to support his argument: "After all, what science in the world can explain its principles without the intervention of numbers?" (Rauf Yekta 1932c:2).²³

For Yekta, positivism is not only a means of accessing reality but also a framework that represents the divergent perspectives of Western and Eastern societies; the adoption or rejection of a scientific approach to music signifies a fundamental distinction between these two cultural spheres. Yekta repeatedly expresses astonishment towards the receptiveness of most of the Egyptian delegates present at the discussions towards the theory of 24 equal-tempered intervals. According to him, the absence of a scientific methodology had hindered Arab musicians from critically analyzing the musical system they employed:

Since those who are engaged in music in Egypt have all studied music with practical and empirical methods, and since there are no scientific principles to be adopted by all as codified norms, this confusion of ideas continues. The only remedy for the elimination of these conflicting opinions is the introduction of “science.” It is a natural expectation that just as the sun disperses the fog when it rises, science will shine through the clouds of delusions and false opinions in the same way. (Rauf Yekta 1932k:1)²⁴

As the famous saying goes, “A friend tells the bitter truth!” Likewise, our ancestors said, “He who hides his problem cannot find a cure.” That is why I, as a doctor of music, make a diagnostic statement and publicly say that what is lacking in Egypt’s musical world is only “science.” If there had been a musicologist in Egypt in the true sense of the word, and if this scholar had at the same time been well versed in the practical side of music theory, the issue of the musical scale would have been solved long before now and thus there would have been no need to convene a congress for this purpose. (Rauf Yekta 1932h:1)²⁵

Yekta’s views on the performances by musicians from Middle Eastern and North African countries, on the other hand, evidence his diffusionist and evolutionary approach. This approach is particularly apparent in his ranking of the evening concerts organized to showcase the music of participating countries during the Congress. He ranked Egyptian music at the top of his scale, followed by Syrian music just below, and placed Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia at the bottom. When he describes how, on various occasions throughout the Congress, he witnessed the “low level of knowledge and awareness of Arab music” among musicians from these three countries, he exemplifies the diffusionist point of view – with Egypt in the center – that he shared with European Orientalists of the period:

However, if it were necessary to give each of these three ensembles a rank, the Tunisians would receive the highest rank, the Algerians the second, and the Moroccans the third. It can be observed that just as water coming out of a

spring loses its purity and clarity as it moves away from the source, Arab music also lost much of its charm as it moved away from Egypt, which is its original cradle. Consequently, I have confirmed that Cairo is truly the center of the countries of Arab music on this occasion as well. (Rauf Yekta 1932b:1-2)²⁶

Again, while mentioning the lower level of Tunisian, Algerian, and Moroccan musics, his ranking was not solely dependent on musical standards. In fact, for him, musical standards clearly reflected the “level of civilization”:

As it was in former times, so today there is a very close relationship between the language and music of each nation and their progress on the path of civilization. Just as the idioms of primitive peoples are composed of a limited number of words, their music too is poor to the same degree as their languages and is deprived of the nuances which portray varied human emotions. (Rauf Yekta 1932a:2)²⁷

The hierarchical positioning of musical traditions as such was parallel to the evolutionary approach of comparative musicologists in Europe, and Yekta affirms to his reader that this approach was shared between him and the majority of European participants at the Congress:

In fact, one night, those who were listening to these concerts [by the ensembles from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia] were so overcome by sleepiness that all of us – I confess that I too was among them – [including] the famous Hornbostel, one of the German professors who was sitting on the seat in front of me, and some of the foreigners around him fell asleep! However, during the performance at the opera house, I noticed that the foreigners listening to Egyptian music did not fall asleep; on the contrary, they were as interested as the Egyptians and perhaps more than them. (Rauf Yekta 1932b:1)²⁸

However, while the European participants viewed all musical traditions as worthy of study, Yekta did not. For instance, Kristy Rigg (2007:83) highlights that Béla Bartók, who had previously visited Algeria, despite considering some aspects of Arab culture as inferior to European norms, still had admiration for certain facets of Arab music and placed great importance on recording rural music during the discussions of the Recording Committee. Similarly, Robert Lachmann, as the head of the Recording Committee, proposed recording Bedouin music. However, Yekta expressed his disagreement in his notes by stating that the money spent on such an effort would be wasted. As he writes: “I would greatly regret on my own account the funds that the government is going to allocate to collect desert music with absolutely no scientific value while the country is going through an economic depression.” (Rauf Yekta 1932n:1).²⁹

Yekta also noted that if “desert music” were to be recorded, it should be done under the supervision of the Arab scholars (Rauf Yekta 1932o:1). According to him, European comparative musicologists were not qualified to transcribe Arab music adequately. Yekta refers to earlier transcriptions by Hornbostel, stating that Westerners are unable to transcribe Oriental music correctly, in terms of both rhythm and melody (Rauf Yekta 1932n:2).³⁰ He even narrates an incident that occurred during the Congress in relation to Hornbostel in order to illustrate the inability of Western scholars to understand Oriental music:

One night, the Algerians were giving a concert in the hall of the Institute of Music. The piece they played was in the 6/8 meter, but the fact that the rhythmic pattern always started from the last two beats gave this piece such a special and delicate style that even I was a bit surprised at first. Hornbostel, who was sitting in the seat in front of me with a paper and pen in his hand, was trying to understand the rhythm of this piece, while I was looking at his notes from behind him. He put the 4/8 meter [on the paper], counted the beats with his fingers, and could not understand at all where the rhythm began and where it ended. This piece played by the Algerians was very long. Finally, the old master, in a state of lethargy caused by being unable to understand the rhythm and perhaps also the melodies of the piece he was listening to, fell asleep with the pen and paper in his hand! (Rauf Yekta 1932n:2)³¹

However, Yekta held a nuanced view about the capability of Western scholars to understand Arab music, which he saw as roughly corresponding to their disciplines, divided between comparative musicologists and Orientalists. On one hand, he believed that, based on errors he had detected in certain publications, some Western scholars – mostly comparative musicologists – were not only incapable of thoroughly understanding Arab music “scientifically,” but also could not properly enjoy it. On the other hand, he appreciated the deep understanding of Arab music by some European Orientalists, such as d’Erlanger and Farmer.

Still, Yekta was skeptical about the possible benefits of the Congress to Arab music. The scientific narrative he employed, which highlighted the lack of knowledge among some European participants concerning the disparities between Western and Eastern music cultures, was remarkable in presenting his dual evolutionary approach and his doubts about the ability of Western scholars to recognize this “fact”:

A “chemical formula” is the same in Cairo as it is in Berlin, whereas there are mountains of difference between the musical formulas of Berlin and those of Cairo. (Rauf Yekta 1932j:1)³²

Unlike the European scholars, Yekta described himself as a scholar who was not only capable of approaching Oriental music scientifically but could also appreciate it.

Yekta's rejection of the 24-tone equal-tempered scale

An examination of both Yekta's notes and the broader literature on the Congress reveals that his most significant contribution was his opposition to the adoption of a 24-tone equal-tempered scale in Arab music (Lambert 2007:5). This debate was of paramount importance to Yekta, as it provided an opportunity for him to advance his proposal to utilize 24 non-equal-tempered intervals as the basis of Turkish music, which lies at the heart of his theoretical approach to Oriental music. Yekta described three different types of interval within a whole tone and on this basis proposed a 24-tone non-equal-tempered scale for Oriental music. While he rejected the idea of the 24-quartertone equal-tempered scale for Arab music, he also emphasized the artificiality of the 12-semitone equal-tempered scale in Western music (Rauf Yekta 1932d:2).

In this respect, Rauf Yekta was among the staunchest opponents of the 24-tone equal-tempered system at the Congress.³³ Yekta's notes indicate that he was well prepared for his journey to Egypt and approached the Congress with a strategic mindset. He composed a report in advance (Rauf Yekta 1932c:1), and, as Vigreux notes, he successfully prevented opponents from joining the Scale Committee (Vigreux 1992a:para. 22). Contemporary accounts in Egyptian newspapers such as *al-Şabāḥ* suggest that Yekta was perceived as a significant impediment to the committee's work, indicating that some local participants did not appreciate his efforts (trans. in Vigreux 1992b:para. 60–61).

In his notes, Yekta explains some of the main motivations of those advocating for 24 equal-tempered intervals. He notes that some participants, such as Alois Hába and Najīb al-Naḥḥās, were keen to market a microtonal piano tuned to these intervals. Yekta refers to them disparagingly as piano manufacturers (*piyano fabrikacıları*; *piyanocular*), highlighting the commer-

cial motives driving their insistence on this tuning system. Despite al-Naḥḥās expressing his longing for polyphonic music – stating, “You have harmony, symphonies, operas, pianos, organs in your places of worship, in short, you have various musical instruments... but we have no instruments other than a humming oud and a kanun that scratches at our ears! We too want harmony: We want polyphonic music, we want opera.” (cited in Rauf Yekta 1932e:1)³⁴ – Yekta underscores what he believes to be al-Naḥḥās’s true intent: he had manufactured a 24-tone equal-tempered piano in 1912 yet failed to sell a single one (Rauf Yekta 1932f:1).³⁵

Yekta’s observations about of the influence of historian Mikhā’īl Mushāqa’s treatise *al-Risāla al-shihābiyya fī’l-ṣinā’a al-mūsīqiyya* (“Treatise on the art of music for the Emir Shihāb”), written in around 1840, on the widespread adoption of the 24-tone equal-tempered scale in Arab music are noteworthy. He argued that Mushāqa’s work, thought to be the primary source for this idea, was based on a flawed premise³⁶:

Mişaka’s work proves that this person either has never studied the Oriental music theorists or has studied but not understood them. His biggest mistake is attempting to create a theoretical doctrine whose scientific foundations and impracticable arrangement are imaginary, as if Arab music did not have a past and its theory had never been codified until then. Mişaka, having come across a Turkish tanbur in Syria, which at the time when he wrote his book was a Turkish province, saw that within the octave on its neck there were 23 divisions, and without realizing that these divisions were “non-equal-tempered,” he supposed that the octave in Oriental music was divided into “24 equal quarters,” and wrote this in his book by relying on theories whose invalidity is proven today.

Thus, it is this book that has led many people in both the East and the West to imitate his ideas about the true theory of Arab music, and in some individuals these mistaken ideas have become so entrenched that one sees with the greatest surprise that even in the music congress there are passionate supporters of them. (Rauf Yekta 1932d:1)³⁷

According to Yekta’s notes, when Père Xavier Maurice Collangettes, the chair of the Scale Committee, reluctantly took a position closer to the proposal for the equal-tempered scale, it was Yekta himself who reminded Collangettes of his own earlier statement that the scale described by Mushāqa was not the same as the Arab music scale (Rauf Yekta 1932g:2).³⁸

In the sixth installment of his article, published in *Mukhādāna/Muhadenet* on 8 August, Yekta also stated that the absence of d’Erlanger from the Congress (due to health issues) caused a big misunderstanding that could have

been avoided if he had been present. In the invitation to the Congress, written by d'Erlanger himself, it was stated that the first task of the Scale Committee was to “examine and verify previous experiments on the values of the 24 pitches included in the general scale of Arab music, which is based on the seven pitches of its essence.” However, in d'Erlanger's absence, the committee skipped this task and proceeded directly to the second one, which focused on experiments on the 24-tone equal-tempered scale (Rauf Yekta 1932e:1-2).

Ultimately, Yekta suggests that the crux of the problem is not the “bad intentions” of the piano makers, the “misreading” of historical sources, or the incompetence of the organizing committee. Instead, he emphasizes that the main reason the Egyptian participants accepted the 24-tone equal-tempered scale was their lack of a positivist scientific approach, which would have prompted them to question the validity of this concept in Eastern countries. He proudly notes that his written proposal to establish a music academy as a solution to a significant issue was accepted by a majority following intense debates during the Scale Committee meetings. This effectively deferred the contentious discussion (Rauf Yekta 1932l:1).

Taking a third stance: Mediating between the two musical worlds

The Congress presents a complexity of intersections of various viewpoints on several issues, such as the value of various Arab music traditions, the criteria for valuing them, the ideal way of modernizing them, the ideal actors to manage the process, and so on. Besides the diverse positions of the European and Arab participants (see endnote 6), even the two Turkish participants had nuanced views regarding the Turkish music revolution (Öner 2023:152). Despite acknowledging this multilayered view, Yekta still held a distinct dichotomy in his mind. He believed that Arab music (as a branch of Oriental music) and European music were two separate entities operating according to their own scientific principles. While Arab musicians lacked a scientific approach to their own music, European scholars were incapable of properly understanding and appreciating Arab music. With these perceptions, Yekta positioned himself uniquely, embodying the qualities he found lacking in the other two groups.

First of all, being neither Arab nor European, the Turkish participants' position had a level of flexibility. In most of his notes, Yekta refers to musicians and scholars on both "sides" with the pronouns "they" or "them." However, at times, it is clear that he had difficulty positioning himself. One sentence from the tenth installment of his article neatly exemplifies his ambiguous position: "During the congress, I would have private conversations with my European friends. As I am also, to whatever extent, an Easterner, and especially (praise and thanks to God) a Muslim, according to their character which is well known, they would not express their opinions completely openly" (Rauf Yekta 1932j:1).³⁹ Interestingly, in his short report published in *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* in 1933, Mesut Cemil also mentions his encounter with two Tunisian attendees and describes himself as being in a position in between two worlds: "Despite my European frock coat and even despite the Western influences on my behavior, which have become second nature to me, we have something in common, something that primarily connects Muslims, but also Orientals in general." (Mesut Djemil 1976 [1933]:48).⁴⁰

However, Yekta considered his in-between position as an advantage and positioned himself as a mediator between the two musical worlds. Rauf Yekta's proposals for the future of Arab music aligned with the third stance he positioned himself in. In the thirtieth installment in *Mukhādāna/Muhadenet*, Yekta outlines his recommendations for the actions that the Egyptian Ministry of Education should undertake without delay in order to improve the current situation as revealed at the Congress. Among Yekta's proposed initiatives are the creation of a music academy and the appointment of a professorship dedicated to the scholarly instruction of Arab music history and theory at the Egyptian University.⁴¹ The successful implementation of these endeavors would require the recruitment of a foreign expert with an "established global reputation in the field of Oriental music" (Rauf Yekta 1932p:2). In another installment, he recalls a report in the Turkish press regarding a request from the Egyptian government in 1927 to hire a specialist in Oriental music via the Egyptian consulate in Istanbul (Rauf Yekta 1932m). Yekta contends that the appointment of a Turkish scholar would have significantly improved the current situation. In fact, a document discovered and published by İrfan Karaduman (2013) reveals that Rauf Yekta ini-

tiated correspondence on 6 September 1926 with the Institute of Oriental Music in Cairo regarding a possible position.

An entry in Yekta's travel journal on 5 April 1932 records a job offer from Muṣṭafā Riḍā, the manager of the Institute, which Yekta was at that point still willing to accept. However, Muṣṭafā Riḍā's manner of discussing the salary and the modesty of the proposed remuneration disappointed him. In this entry in his journal, he also refers to their earlier failed "adventure," probably implying a similar exchange in 1926 (Sürelsan 1972h:5). On 9 April, there was another meeting in which Yekta provided his conditional acceptance by expressing his terms and received a promise that Muṣṭafā Riḍā would bring the issue to the Egyptian government and inform him of the outcome (Sürelsan 1984a:6–7). However, this communication seems to have led to no further developments.⁴²

Conclusion

The 1932 Cairo Congress of Arab Music was held during a significant historical period for both Egypt and Turkey. This was a time when the discourse on modernization and Westernization was at its peak, with European countries playing a crucial role in the process. This transformative process instigated multi-dimensional debates involving various actors, which had a direct impact on the musical landscape.

Extensive studies on the Congress have provided detailed analyses of both the historical process in Egypt and the diverse perspectives of the Egyptian and European participants. This article has specifically aimed to scrutinize the position of one of the Turkish participants, Rauf Yekta, through an examination of his personal notes, within this broader context. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the debates on modernization and Westernization, particularly in the field of music in Turkey, are expansive and nuanced, extending beyond the confines of this article.

Rauf Yekta's attendance at the Congress and his objections to the 24-tone equal-tempered scale proposed at the Congress are well-known facts in musicological literature. However, due to the scarcity of first-hand documents, such as official reports on the Congress in Turkish, our understanding of these events is limited. The lack of official data reveals a disinterest in an Arab music congress on the part of Turkey at a time when the offi-

cial policy was focused on maintaining a significant distance from the Middle East and Arab countries in particular, while Yekta's personal archive is currently inaccessible. On the other hand, Yekta's detailed notes, published in an Egyptian newspaper shortly after the Congress, have been known only by name in their Arabic version; their content has until now remained unknown. Based on these notes, this article represents the first attempt to comprehensively understand Yekta's perspective on the discussions and to hear his own voice.

An examination of Yekta's notes provides a deeper understanding of his musicological approach to Arab music. As a pioneer of Turkish musicology, his self-positioning among the other participants is noteworthy. His stance as a "scientist," who does not belong either to Arab or to Western music culture, yet is capable of understanding and appreciating both, to some extent mirrors Turkey's position at the time as a modern nation situated between the "Arab" and "Western" worlds. However, amidst the complex discussions surrounding the music revolution in Turkey, Yekta's position is not only distinct from the official opinion of the Turkish state but also unique among his colleagues.

Yekta formulated his approach to Arab music based on his extensive studies, demonstrating a deep interest in both Eastern music theory and contemporary discussions among Western music scholars. His approach, rather than being complex, was consistent: On one hand, akin to the European or Western-educated scholars of his era, he embraced a scientific approach grounded in positivism, and an evolutionary perspective that shaped his overall view on music. In this respect, he identified himself as a member of the Western scholarly community. On the other hand, however, he did not establish his evolutionary scale by placing Western music at its pinnacle; instead, he delineated two distinct cultural and musical worlds. Within Eastern music culture, despite the existence of a musical hierarchy, Turkish music was at the apex, followed by Egyptian music. This specific approach provided him comfort while operating in a positivist and evolutionary musicological environment.

During the Congress, confident in his ability to understand – and appreciate – Arab music better than his Western colleagues, he carved out a third, mediating position for himself between Arab and Western worlds – a position that he would likely have preferred for Turkey.

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Notes

1. “Yedide kalktım... Sokak-sokak dolaşım. Caddelerin vus’ati, işleyen tramvay, şimendöfer vagonları, otobüsler vesâirenin çokluğu ve intizamı, gözle görmeyince anlaşılamayacak bir halde idi. Her tarafıma hayrân-hayrân bakakaldım.”
2. Even though the event was named the Congress of Arab Music, while the North African countries were included in the conference those on the Arabian peninsula from Yemen to the Gulf were not (Lambert 2007:3).
3. For the full list of organizers and participants, see [al-Ĥifnî] 1934:36–40.
4. Kristy K. Riggs (2007:83) points out that the inclusion of Turkey in the Congress emphasized a preference for nations over indigenous groups such as Assyrians, Armenians, Kurds, and Chaldeans; the Berbers were the only exception.
5. Despite the direct reference to “scale” in the name of the associated committee, the debate surrounding the acceptance of the 24-tone equal-tempered scale for Arab music encompassed a comprehensive theoretical explanation of the Arab maqâm system.
6. The approaches to Arab music, the level of information on this musical subject, the understanding of modernization, and the expectations from the Congress were not unified among the European participants, who were mainly represented by two groups: Orientalists/historians and comparative musicologists/folklorists (Racy 1993). This division aligns to some extent with the nationalities of the participants, with German participants primarily being the dominant figures as comparative musicologists (Llano 2023; Öner 2023). On the other hand, Anne Elise Thomas (2007) argues that the Egyptian participants of the Congress can be divided into two groups: The conservative wing, made up mostly of professional musicians who were largely excluded from the discussions, and the reformist group, composed of members of the organizing body, the Institute of Oriental Music. The members of the Institute were an elite group of musicians, mostly educated abroad, and their views, which largely reflected those of the ruling class, dominated the Congress. Rauf Yekta’s nuanced narrative about the intentions, capabilities, and discourses of various actors largely fits this scheme. However, his frequent use of the terms “Eastern” and “Western” shows that a basic dichotomy remains distinctly evident in Yekta’s understanding.
7. Güneş Ayas (2014:214) states that Rauf Yekta was indeed the first Turkish scholar to employ the term “Turkish music.”
8. As shown by Turan (2009), this construction of the Arab image in the mind of the new Turkish Republic can be traced in history books from that era.
9. This approach, which positions folk music as the essence of national identity, aligns with the European folklorists’ and comparative musicologists’ pursuit of authenticity in rural music (Llano 2023:600–601, Riggs 2007). The choice between folk music and art music traditions as the embodiment of national culture forms the main distinction between Egyptian and Turkish musical modernization processes. This divergence elucidates why makam music was the centerpiece of the Cairo Arab Music Congress, sponsored by the Egyptian government, while the same musical tradition was overlooked by the Turkish authorities.
10. It should be noted that the discussions about music in the early Republican period were multi-layered and involved various actors with different positions. Besides the main issue of replacing Ottoman-Turkish makam music with the new national Turkish music, there was another discussion in the 1930s related to the Arab influence on music. Some performers and scholars saw the influence of Arab music as one of the reasons for the supposedly low quality of makam (or alaturka) music performance in the commercial music market. The latter

was also a concern shared by some of the Egyptian organizers and participants. As Yekta noted in his travel journal, in his conversation on 13 March 1932 with the Vice Minister of Education, 'Abd al-Fattāh Şabrī Pasha, one of the organizers of the Congress, the Minister expressed his concern that Arabic music had been speaking only of love in recent times, and that family heads who disapproved of these songs were steering their children instead towards alafraṅga music. However, according to Şabrī Pasha, "real" Arabic music possessed undeniable sublimity and beauty (Sürelsan 1972f:6).

11. The first official institution of music education, later known as Istanbul Conservatory, which was established in the Ottoman Empire in 1917.

12. "Acaba vaktinde İstanbul Konservatuvarı'nın sabık müdürü meşhur Süreyya Bey'in eseri siâyeti olarak bu müesseseden Türk musikisi tedrisatının ilga edildiği gibi acaba Mısırlıların da böyle beynelmil bir kongre toplayarak Arap musikisinin mekteplerden tedrisinin ilgasine karar istihsal etmek istediğini mi tahayyül ediyorlar!?!... Cenabı hakka çok şükürler ederim ki Mısır'da bir Süreyya Bey mevcut değildir ve olmasına da imkan yoktur. Bilakis hükümet ve millet musikisini o kadar seviyor ve himaye ediyor [...]"

13. The 1933 concert tour of the famous Greek-Turkish singer Eftalya (known as "the Mermaid") and her husband Sadi Işıl, a renowned violin performer, to Medina, Palestine, and Egypt serves as only one example among many (Hikmet Feridun 1933). According to contemporary testimonies, they met 'Umm Kulthūm and the composer and oud performer Muḥammad al-Qaşabjī during their trip to Egypt (cited in Özalp 2000:402).

14. Feldman has argued that Yekta's significance as a theorist and collector of repertoire is comparable only to that of Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723) (Feldman 1990–91:96). According to Ayas (2014:2011–14), Yekta, who defended makam music in his own unique and scientific way against the official discourse of Westernization of the Turkish Republic, held a uniquely respected position in music circles in Turkey.

15. Jacob Olley contends that Yekta's theoretical approach is grounded in the rejuvenation and reanalysis of ideas sourced from Arabic and Persian manuscripts of the Systematist school, which had been largely forgotten since the early sixteenth century (2023:128). For more information on Yekta's conceptualization of the makam system, also see Rauf Yekta 1924, Öztürk 2018.

16. In his book on Şerif Muhiddin Targan's musical heritage, Bilen Işıktaş evaluates some documents he discovered in Targan's archive. According to Işıktaş, in 1930, while Targan was in New York, the Egyptian Consul General Anis Azer contacted him to request his opinion and assistance with the congress they were planning. Işıktaş also notes that another Turkish musicologist, Ali Rifat Çağatay (1867–1935), was among the names mentioned in their correspondence (Işıktaş 2018:223). Another possible connection behind the invitation of Rauf Yekta and Mesut Cemil to the congress may have been the acquaintance between Mesut Cemil and Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Ḥifnī (1896–1973), the general secretary of the Congress, dating from their studies in Berlin in the early 1920s (Katz 2015:185).

17. A concise catalog of Rauf Yekta's archive, including details of some valuable documents and manuscripts, was published as the outcome of research by the Ottoman Turkish Music Studies Research Group (OTMAG) at Istanbul Technical University (Doğrusöz 2018). However, this catalog does not cover the documents related to his participation in the Congress, with the exception of some photos.

18. İsmail Baha Sürelsan, a Turkish musician, initially selected, transliterated into the Latin alphabet, and published some sections from Yekta's travel journal (which Yekta maintained during his journey to Cairo, from 8 March to 15 April 1932) in an issue of *Musikî ve Nota* in 1970 (Sürelsan 1970). Two years later, he began publishing a more comprehensive selection from the travel journal in eight consecutive issues (Sürelsan 1972a–h). However, when the journal ceased publication, he first published the final sections in another newspaper (Sürelsan 1973a–c), and then, when *Musikî ve Nota* resumed publication, concluded the series by reissuing the final sections (Sürelsan 1984a–b). I would like to thank Onur Öner for providing detailed information about the fate of the last two sections of the series in his article (see Öner 2023).

19. Interestingly, even though Yekta's name is not listed among the participants of the Scale Committee in the book of congress proceedings, his notes published in the newspaper provide extensive information about the committee meetings. Fortunately, some of his remarks clarify the situation. From his writings, it is understood

that he attended the early meetings of the committee, likely unofficially, but was unable to continue attending due to his responsibilities as the chair of the Modes, Rhythms, and Composition Committee. Despite this, the details he provides from the later meetings demonstrate his enthusiasm to gather information from his colleagues – most likely from Mesut Cemil, an official attendee of the Scale Committee: “In fact, the first experiments carried out in the Scale Committee had yielded very inconsistent results and it had become clear that there was no benefit to be gained from the continuation of the committee’s work in this way. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to organize a secondary committee. This secondary committee worked for about a week; I could hear from afar, with great regret, that the disagreement among its members had reached a point where one of them said “white” and the other said “black.” I could no longer be present in this secondary committee because the work of the Mode and Rhythm Committee, of which I was the chairman, had been abandoned for a week, and many investigations had accumulated. Therefore, I started to chair my own committee and to work exclusively there [...]” (“Zaten süllem komisyonunda ilk yapılan tecrübeler gayet mütenakız neticeler vermiş ve komisyonun bu şekilde mesaisine devamından istifade olunamayacağı da anlaşılmiş idi. Binaen aleyh tâli bir komisyon teşkiline lüzum görüldü. Bir hafta kadarda bu tâli komisyon çalıştı; azası arasındaki ihtilafi efkarın derecesi gayeyi bulduğunu, birisinin ‘beyaz’ dediğine diğerrinin ‘siyah’ dediğini kemali esefle uzaktan işidiyordum. Ben bu tali komisyonda artık bulunamıyordum; çünkü reisi bulunduğum ‘makam ve ika” komisyonunun işleri bir haftadan beri yüz üstü kalmış, yapılacak birçok tetkikat teraküm etmişti. Binaen aleyh kendi komisyona riyaset etmeğe ve münhasıran orada çalışmağa başlamıştım [...]”) (Rauf Yekta 1932g:2).

20. Yekta originally published four articles summarizing the Congress in the same newspaper immediately after the event. However, letters requesting more information led him to publish a more detailed text (Rauf Yekta 1932a).

21. In some cases, he used these sources against their respective authors in debates during the Congress: “In 1904 Collangettes wrote a book called *Etude [sic] sur la musique Arabe* and published it in *Journal Asiatique*. I remembered that in this work, which I had read at the time and found to be based on serious research, the esteemed author of the book spoke of his conviction concerning the scientific nature of the scale of Arab music. I had included Collangettes’s work among the books I brought with me to Cairo. What a good thing I did!” (“1904 senesinde Kollanjet *Etude sur la musique Arabe* isminde bir kitap yazmış ve bunu *Journal Asiatique* ile neşretmişti. O vakit okuduğum ve ciddi tetkikate müstenit bulduğum bu eserinde müellifi muhterem, Arap musikisi süllemnin mahiyeti ilmiyesi hakkında yaptığı tecrübelerin kendisinde hasıl ettiği kanaatten bahsettiğini hatırladım. Kahire’ye gelirken beraberimde getirdiğim kitapların arasına Kollanjet’in bu eserini de koymuştum. Ne kadar isabet etmişim!”) (Rauf Yekta 1932g:1).

22. Okan Murat Öztürk (2021:53) describes Yekta as a representative of a school of musicology in Turkey that was based on evolutionary and positivist principles and elucidates the sources of these approaches in Yekta’s personal history (Öztürk 2021:56–8).

23. “Zaten dünyada ‘rakamlar’ın müdahalesi olmadan hangi ilmin düsturlarını izah kabil olabilir?”

24. “İşte Mısır’da musiki ile iştilal edenler hep ameli ve indi (empirique) usullerle musiki tahsil etmiş olduklarından ve ortada hekesçe düsturül âmel ittihaz olunacak kavaidi ilmiye mevcut olmadığından bu keşmekeşi efkâr devam etmektedir. Bu ihtilafi efkârın ortadan kalkması için yegâne çare “İlm”in meydana konulmasıdır. Güneş çıkınca nasıl siteri dağıtırsa ilmin de evham ve zununu batile bulutlarını öylece iza’e edeceği ümürü tabiiyedir.”

25. “Meşhur darbı meseldir, “Dost acı söyler!” derler. Kezalik atalarımız “derdini saklayan devasını bulamaz” demişlerdir. Bunun içindir ki: ben de bir tabibi musiki sifatile teşhisini (Diagnostic) vazediyorum ve alenen diyorum ki Mısır’ın musiki aleminde eksik olan şey ancak “ilim”dir. Mısır’da kelimenin tam manasile bir alimi musiki “Musicologue” mevcut olsaydı ve aynı zamanda bu alimi nazari musikinin ameli cihetinde de bi hakkın vakıf bulunsaydı süllemi musiki meselesi şimdye kadar çoktan hal edilmiş ve bunun için beynel milel bir kongre toplamağa hiç de lüzum kalmamış olurdu.” (An irrelevant footnote has been omitted from the quotation.)

26. “Bununla beraber bu üç heyete birer nomro vermek gerekirse en yüksek nomroyu Tunuslular alacaktı; Cezayirliiler ikinci; Faslılar ise üçüncü dereceye kalacaktı. Görülüyor ki bir menbadan çıkan su oradan uzaklaştıkça safvet ve halisiyetini gaip ettiği gibi Arap musikisinde mehdi aslisi olan Mısır’dan uzaklaştıkça

letafetinden çok şeyler zayi ediyordu. Bina'enaileyh Kahire'nin Arap musikisi memleketlerinin hakiketen merkezi olduğunu bu münasebetle de teslim ettim.”

27. “Eski zamanlarda olduğu gibi, bugün de her milletin lisanı ve musikisi ile medeniyet yolundaki terakkisi arasında çok sıkı bir münasebet vardır; ibtidâî akvamın lehçeleri nasıl ki mahdudul miktar kelimelerden mürekkep ise musikileri de lisanları derecesinde fakir ve muhtelif hissiyatı beşeriyeyi tasvir eden furuku lah-niyeden (nuance) mahrumdur.”

28. “Hatta bu konserleri dinleyenlere bir gece o kadar ağırlık basmış idi ki -itiraf ediyorum: içlerinde ben de dahil olduğum halde- önümdeki koltukta oturan Alman profesörlerinden meşhur Hornbostel ile etraftaki bazı ecnebler hep uyumuş idik! Halbuki operada verilen müsamerede dikkat ettim, Mısır musikisini dinleyen ecnebler uyumak değil, bilakis Mısırlılar derecesinde ve belki onlardan ziyade alakadar oluyorlardı.”

29. “Memlekette iktisadi buhran devam ederken hiçbir kıymeti ilmiyesi olmayan çöl musikisini toplamak için hükümetin vereceği tahsisata ben kendi hesabıma çok acırım.”

30. The transcriptions Yekta referred to are those of the songs recorded in 1902 by Felix von Luschan in Zircirli (Gaziantep province, Turkey) (Yavuz 2020:87, Abraham & Hornbostel 1904:203).

31. “Bir gece mahedül musiki [müzik enstitüsü] salonunda Cezayirli konser veriyordu. Çaldıkları eser 6/8 mizanında idi, lakin iyka'ın daima son iki darbından başlaması bu esere öyle hususi ve calibi dikkat bir tavru hareket veriyordu ki vehleten ben dahi biraz şaşladım. Önümdeki koltukta oturan Hornbostel elinde bir kağıt ve kalem olduğu halde bu eserin iyka'ını anlamağa çalışıyordu, ben de arkasından yazdığı notalara bakıyordum. Kağıda 4/8 miyzanını koymuş, parmaklarile darpları saymakta ve iyka'ın nereden başlayıp ve nerede bittiğini bir türlü anlayamamakta idi. Cezayirliğin çaldığı bu eser çok uzundu. Nihayet ihtiyar üstat dinlediği eserin iyka'ını ve belki de nağmelerini anlayamamaktan mütevellit bir rehavet içinde elinde kalem kağıt olduğu halde uyumuştı!”

32. “Bir ‘kimya formülü’ Berlin’de ne ise Kahire’de de aynı formüldür, halbuki Berlin’in musiki formülleri ile Kahire’ninkiler arasında dağlar kadar fark vardır.”

33. According to Lambert (2007:5), Egyptian scholars who opposed the adoption of a 24-tone equal-tempered scale were either in the minority or silenced during the Congress. Yekta, as a Turkish scholar, was the sole individual to propose an alternative approach. However, the details of the discussions as well as the short- and long-term ramifications of the issue are outside the remit of the present article.

34. “Sizin armoniniz var, sinfonileriniz var, operalarınız var, piyanolarınız var, mabetlerinizde ergenunlarınız var, elhasıl mütenevvi âlâti musikiyeniz var... bizim ise hım hım sesli bir ut ile kulağımızı tırmalayan bir kanundan başka âlâtımız yok! Biz de armoni istiyoruz: Kesirussavt (Polyphonique) bir musiki istiyoruz, opera istiyoruz...”

35. According to Vigreux, the objectives underlying the proposal to accept the 24-tone equal-tempered scale for Arab music went beyond mere commercial interests. The Egyptian participants were primarily interested in achieving integration with Western music, especially the ability to perform Arab music on the piano (Vigreux 1992a:para. 13). Additionally, Vigreux cites the views of Naguib Nahas (Najīb al-Naḥḥās) and Georges Sammân (Jūrj Sammân), who believed that Arab music could enrich Western polyphony with innovative concepts (Vigreux 1992a:para. 12–13; see also Sammân’s views translated in Vigreux 1992b:para. 25). Also notable is the argument of Wadia Sabra (Wadī’ Şabrā) that harmony, which can be found in the naturally occurring sounds of the physical world, is not exclusively rooted in Europe but rather has origins in “the Orient, the cradle of civilizations!” (cited in Vigreux 1992a:para. 12). A similar discourse can be found in the context of musical modernization in Turkey.

36. Yalçın Tura notes that in 1907, Yekta asserted his system with 24 unequal intervals per octave after reading Mushāqa’s work. However, Yekta did not adopt the equal-tempered intervals suggested by Mushāqa but was influenced by him in terms of the number of intervals per octave and the names of the pitches (cited in Öztürk 2020:188).

37. “Mişaka'nın eseri delalet ediyor ki bu adam, şark nazariyecilerini ya hiç okumamış, yahut okumuş da anlayamamıştır; en büyük kabahati de Arap musikisinin hiçbir mazisi yokmuş nazariyesi o zamana kadar

asla tedvin edilmemiş gibi esasatı ilmiye ile nakabili telif hayali bir nazariye vaz'ine kalkışmasıdır. Meşaka kitabını yazdığı tarihlerde bir Türk vilayeti olan Suriye'de eline geçen bir Türk tanburunun sapında zülkül bu'du octave dahilinde 23 destan bulunduğunu görmüş ve bu destanların 'gayri müsavi ebadilahniye'ye işaret olduğuna dikkat edemeyerek, şark musikisinde zülkül budünün 'müsavi 24 ruba" taksim edildiğini zannetmiş ve kitabında bugün butlani sabit olmuş nazariyelerine istinaden yazmıştır. İşte bu kitaptır ki hem şarkta hem garpta Arap musikisinin hakiki nazariyesi hakkında bir çok kimselerin tağliti efkarine sebep olmuş ve bu yanlış fikirler bazı zevatte o kadar kökleşmiştir ki Musiki kongresinde bile bunun şiddetli taraftarları bulunduğu kemali hayretle görülmüştür!"

38. See endnote 21.

39. "Kongre esnasında Avrupalı dostlarımla hususi hasbihaller ederdim. Her ne kadar olsa ben de bir şarklı ve alhusus lehülhamt velminne Müslüman olduğum için malum olan tabiatleri iycabınca fikirlerini pek açık söylemezler."

40. "Trotz meines europäischen Fracks also und sogar trotz der abendländischen Einflüsse auf mein Benehmen, die mir in Fleisch und Blut übergegangen sind, haben wir ein Gemeinsames, etwas, das in erster Linie die Mohammedaner, dann aber auch die Orientalen überhaupt verbindet."

41. The Egyptian University was founded in 1908 and became the University of Cairo after 1952.

42. It is worth mentioning that Mesut Cemil became one of the Turkish musicians who taught at the Baghdad Conservatory in the late 1950s.

About the author

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