

**Dance and music in India as experienced and reported in
paintings by two 19th century Hungarian painters:
Ágoston Schöffft (August Schoeffft)
and count Manó Andrásy**

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First of all, I have to apologise, as I slightly modified – or more precisely – broadened the subject of my presentation. My original intention was to speak about August Schoeffft alone, but later on I realised, another most important 19th century travelling Hungarian painter should also be included.

In 19th century Europe, as a result of expanding French and English colonisation, travellers and artists as well as common people had a growing interest toward exotic cultures. This peculiar interest resulted a special phenomena in European cultural history, the so-called *orientalism*. Orient meant first of all Northern Africa and the Middle East in the first half of the century, however, later on, Europe’s attention turned to further eastern countries and regions in Asia (India, Indonesian Islands), and at the end of the century, even further, to China and Japan. Both artists, whose works are the subject of this paper, travelled extensively in numerous countries within and outside Europe, and stayed a while in India. One of them was a professional painter, born into an artist family and trained in Vienna at the Art Academy; the second a wealthy nobleman, who – as a political refugee – had to flee his native country (Hungary) and escaped as far as Southern and South-Eastern Asia (including Ceylon, Borneo, Java, China and India).

Some of their paintings made during their Indian sojourn include representations of local musicians and/or dancers. On one hand, these paintings are of documentary value, and can be taken as "reports" (e.g. on musical culture in India, on the method of playing Indian musical instruments, etc.) written by paintbrush. On the other hand, one has to keep in mind, that most oriental pictures

were intended and painted to European art-lovers, collectors and were expected to comply with a certain set of ideas and preconceptions that European people had about Eastern cultures. In this paper a detailed discussion is dedicated to the documentary value of these pictures: What can be taken at face value? Are these pictures reliable and objective depictions? These pictures tell a lot more than the actual illustrated scenes. They also reflect on how their maker faced a cultural environment completely unfamiliar for them, and what did they consider worthy of depicting? These pictures not only show excerpts of musical life in 19th century India, but also point to a wider context of cultural encounter.

Ágoston Schöffft or August Schoeffft (1809, Pest – 1888, London)¹ (Pic. 1) had an extraordinary career, and was unique among his Hungarian contemporaries. He was born into an artist family. His father and two of his siblings were also painters, one of his younger brothers worked as a court architect teacher for the Egyptian viceroy.² After studying at the Art Academy in Vienna, Ágoston, married a girl in spite of his father's disapproval and the couple had to “hide”, they settled in Bucharest. In 1836, they moved on to Constantinople, later to Cairo in Egypt, then, even further, to India. Schöffft became a famous painter there and returned to Hungary in 1842 as an extremely wealthy man. Next year, he bought the Palazzo Grassi and settled in Venice, opened an art gallery in Paris, and received numerous commissions for painting oriental pictures based on his real experiences and sketches made in the Middle-East and in India. Three exhibitions were organised in the 1850's in Vienna, London and Paris to promote and represent his oriental paintings. However,

¹ The most complete source on August Schoeffft's life and career is the following work: Szvoboda Dománszky, Gabriella: *Schoeffft Ágoston (Pest, 1809 – London, 1888) pesti festő indiai útja*. In: *Az előkelő idegen: III. Nemzetközi Vámbéry Konferencia*. Ed. by Dobrovits, Mihály, Dunaszerdahely: Liliium Aurum, 2006, pp. 195-236. If otherwise not indicated, all information on August Schoeffft cited in this paper are taken from this work.

² He was appointed to head of building projects by Mehmed Ali, the Egyptian viceroy, and did a two years long study tour around Europe accompanying Mussar effendi, visiting many universities in Western Europe to learn about the most recent technologies. See: Schultz, Augustzt: “Schöffft-testvérek”, In: *Életképek*, 20 September 1845 (Nr. 12), p. 408.

Schöffft was not able to manage well his sudden fame and enormous wealth, and all his money drained quickly in the end. He took a last opportunity to travel around North-America and Mexico. Finally, he died as a poor person in an asylum in London.



Pic. 1. Selfportrait by SCHÖFFT Ágoston / August SCHOEFFT, 1840's (1809 – 1888)

Ágoston was originally specialised and earned his living as a Biedermeier portrait painter. He painted portraits of important and rich people – already before moving to India, while living in Moldavia, in Istanbul and Cairo. In India, too, he advertised himself primarily as a portrait painter in local newspapers³. He painted portraits not only of Europeans – primarily British officers and clerks –, but had been commissioned to paint portraits of local nobilities, members of the Indian ruling class (navabs⁴, rajas, maharajas).⁵ He arrived to Bombay in the beginning

³ Bombay Courier, 2 August 1838.

⁴ *Navab* (meaning 'lord' in Arabic and Urdu) is a Muslim prince or governor of an Indian territory within the Mogul Empire. The Hindi counterpart of *navab* is *maharaja* and *raja*.

of 1838 and stayed over about two years. He visited every important cities, looked around for commissions. In 1841 and 1842 he lived in today Pakistani, in Lahore, Punjab, at the court of Maharaja Sher Singh and was given the special position of court painter.⁶ In his paintings he documents the last days of independent Punjab, immediately before the colonisation. He stayed in Lahore until the summer of 1842 then, via Agra – Bombay, travelled back home through Egypt with his wife.

In 1855, Schoefft had presented his paintings to European connoisseurs in an exhaustive, rich exhibition in Vienna, 1855 (*Hof von Lahore und andere Bilder aus dem Oriente. Nach der Wirklichkeit gemalt von August Schoefft. Wien, 1855.*) The catalogue tells that apart from the numerous portraits Schoefft also painted animals, landscapes, townscapes (Benares, Delhi) and ethnographic genre scenes during his journey. The painting that will be discussed in detail can be ranked into this latter category. It shows members of the Thug sect. (Pic. 2) This religious group was actually dreaded all over India because they killed many people by strangling them for religious reasons. A gruesome, terrifying explanatory text accompanies the picture in the Viennese catalogue.

On the painting, the Thugs gathered under a tree. A group of musicians (Pic. 3) occupy the right side of the picture. One of them holds a wind instrument, a simple flute (*vaiśā*) in his hand, the young woman in the middle plays a pair of brass cymbals, the ubiquitous *manjira*, and the elder man in the very right wearing a red turban, plucks a stringed instrument lying on his lap, in all probability a *vīnā*. The other figures seem to listen to their performance. No one is dancing or singing, instrumental music is depicted in itself, not as an accompaniment to dance or singing. May be it is a sort of liturgical music, preparing the souls of the fellows for a prayer, or mysterious ritual.

⁵ August Schoefft’s name is primarily known for the portrait he painted of Kőrösi Csoma Sándor (author of the Tibetan-English Dictionary) in August 1840 in Calcutta considered the only authentic portrait of the famous scholar.

⁶ A considerable part of his pictures was bought by a late descendant, Dalip Singh maharaja, in the 20th century, living at that time in England. It was Bamba Jindan, one of his daughters, who inherited the paintings. She returned to, settled, lived and died in Pakistani, and after her death the collection was bought by the Pakistani state, and is kept at present at the Lahore Fortress, at the Pakistani National Gallery as part of the Princess Bamba Collection.



Pic. 2. A. Schoefft: *The Thugs of India, Halt at the Shrine of Ganesh*. oil on canvas; 113.8 × 186 cm



Pic. 3. A. Schoefft: *The Thugs of India, Halt at the Shrine of Ganesh*. Detail: musicians

We do not know whether the painter had been musically trained and could play or ever tried playing musical instruments himself, or tried to do so in India. It is not impossible that he had ever seen musical instruments of Asian culture before, however it was not in Hungary⁷, for sure, but during his study travels in his youth, in Paris, or London. He also had the opportunity to gather information on exotic cultures and remote parts of the world from various journals, however, these magazines circulated commonplaces rather, not detailed and exact information. Considering the little number of paintings with musical subject in Schoefft's oeuvre, he did not have a special interest in music, musical instruments or dance. However, as to the reliability and documentary value of his paintings: generally, it is truly characteristic of his style that he paid very special attention to every single details e.g. dresses, accessories, textile material, local people, plants, flowers, animals, etc., so we can trust him to be an objective observer and a genuine reporter of musical life in India – at least that fragments of Indian music he personally encountered while being there. Genuineness is also stressed in the title of the Viennese catalogue (*nach der Wirklichkeit*).

Contrary to August Schoefft, Count Andrassy Manó (Kassa/Košice, today in Slovakia, 3 March 1821 – Görz /Gorizia, in Northern Italy, 23 April 1891) was not a professional, but a self-taught painter⁸, primarily known for his caricatures; also an art-collector, connoisseur, politician (representative at the national assembly), and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. (Pic. 4)

After finishing university studies, he travelled extensively through Europe and in Northern Africa⁹ During the 1848/49 revolution against Austrian rule and the Habsburg dynasty, he participated as a military officer, so, when the revolution turned out to be unsuccessful, and was suppressed, he decided to leave the country, and escaped to a distant part of the world as a refugee.

⁷ The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest preserves a good collection of exotic musical instruments, but these were brought to Budapest and donated to the museum by János Xántus, a scholar, collector of interesting objects, who travelled extensively in America and Asia, but much later, in the second half of the 19th century (1869-70).

⁸ He already exhibited works at the Salon of the Kunstverein in Pest in 1841, and later became president of the Kunstverein

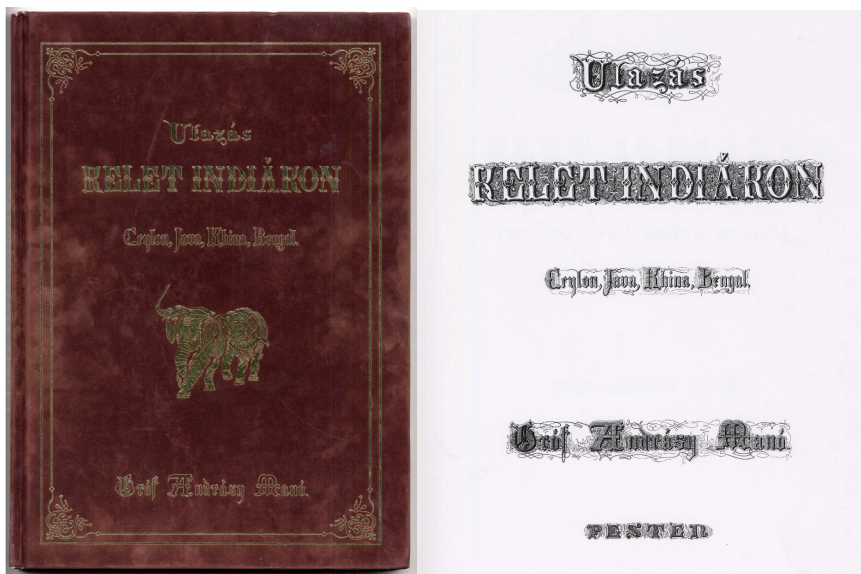
⁹ He published the travel experiences of his European tour in a journal titled *Honderű*, in a series of letters.



Pic. 4. Selfportrait by Count ANDRÁSSY Manó (Emmanuel) (1821 – 1891) painted when 19 years old or Photo from the 1860's

He spent 11 months in the Far East, travelling about Ceylon, Java, Borneo, South Eastern parts of China, and Bengal.¹⁰ Four years later, in 1853, the count published a book about his experiences, in the form of a travel journal. (Pic. 5) The representative and sizeable volume includes 16 very fine illustrations (lithographed picture tables) made by the count himself, that serve as visual representation of certain sections of the text. Count Andrassy has been granted membership at the Hungarian Academy for this book.

¹⁰ After the Compromise of 1867, all participants of the Revolution were given amnesty, and the count settled back to Hungary. He did investments into iron ore mining and metallurgy in Northern-Hungary, and worked on developing mining techniques and managed his estate.



Pic. 5. Front cover and title page of count Andrásy's book. Gróf Andrásy Manó: *Utazás Kelet Indiákon* (Travel through Eastern India) Ceylon, Java, Khina, Bengal. Pest, Emich G. Könyvnyomdája, 1853.

In the preface, the author shares with the reader that the idea of publishing a book about his adventurous exotic journey was given by the fact that only very few works had been earlier published and were available in German or in Hungarian on the subject. Moreover, most of these books were based on works written by foreign (mostly English and French) writers, thus, these works reflect foreign viewpoint and aspects.¹¹ The count wanted to write a book specially

¹¹ The original version in Hungarian: “Haza érkeztem után majd két év mulva gyűjtém össze adataimat csupán emlékből: és így keletkezett jelen munka, mellynek hiányaiért nyájas olvasómtól utólagosan kérek bocsánatot. Megvallom, csak az bátorita közönség elé juttatásában, hogy a beutaztam világrészről vajmi kevés jelent meg akár magyarul, akár németül. Többnyire azon jegyzetek is, miket e részben birunk, majd mind idegen forrásból erednek: idegen szem után irvák, idegen felfogás érzik azoknak mindegyik során.” p. 166.

tailored to his compatriots. He began his long journey on 20 January 1849 in London. On a steam ship he travelled through the Mediterranean Sea, along the following itinerary: Biscaya-gulf – Cadiz (8 February 1849) – Gibraltar – Algier – Malta – Alexandria – Mahmoudi-canal – Cairo – Suez (17 March 1849) – Aden (24 March 1849) – Ceylon – Java – Borneo – Southern regions of China – Bengal (mainly Calcutta).

Count Andrassy was fond of hunting, and hunting stories occupy a considerable part of his travel journal. However, he was open-minded and curious about everything that was different from what he already knew and encountered at home. Also, he might have been musically trained, as some passages in his book deal in detail with dance, music, and local musical instruments. Fortunately, two out of the sixteen illustrations depict dance performances. According to their titles both pictures show dances seen in Bengal and visually represent two detailed reports, two actual passages of the book. Both times, the count had been invited by a local nobleman to his court, and the performance was given in the honour of the unusual and exceptional guest. In the chapter on Bengal there are two passages, one shorter and another longer description of North-Indian dances (see APPENDIX, Text 1 and Text 2). These two excerpts represent clearly, that the count is a most genuine writer who tells his “raw” impressions and thoughts evoked by this special, strange, very unfamiliar sounding vocal and instrumental music without additional varnishing. He really suffered from sitting for hours and listen to the boring dance performance, that did not give him the least entertainment. One of the two illustrations in the book representing dance performances actually depicts the dance performance related in the second excerpt. (Pic. 6) The count obviously had time to observe every single details, and to make sketches and notes. He depicts the instruments that were used to provide music for the dance show. (Pic. 7) One of the three musicians plays the *manjira*, the brass cymbals, another a middle-size drum, may be a type of the *pakhawaj*, and the third one plays the *sarinda*, a bowed string instrument, a kind of folk fiddle, primarily used and widespread in Northern India, Pakistani and Afghanistan. However, the count allowed to himself some superficiality. He copied thoroughly the unusual shape of the fiddle, but the corpus of the depicted instrument became much flatter on the back side than it is supposed to be on real instruments, as *sarinda* has a protruding curved back.



Pic. 6. Andrassy Manó: *BENGAL – Dancers at the Murserabati Court* Drawing by Andrassy Manó. Lithography by H. Clerget & Bayot. Printed by Lemercier, Paris



Pic. 7. Andrassy Manó: *BENGAL – Dancers at the Murserabati Court*. Detail – Musicians

What could have been the dance that the two ladies performed? There are more types of traditional Indian dances that women have the privilege to perform, or at least they are also allowed to do so. For example *Manipuri*, popular among Hindus living in the main valley of the north-eastern state of Manipur, a certain type of which is performed to a line of poetry set to highly ecstatic high pitched devotional music, often sung by women. The performing ladies wear dresses typical for Northern Indian regions.

To discuss in detail the other illustration depicting dance performance (Pic. 8), one has to be careful, as the picture does not correspond to its title, telling “*Bengal - At the nazim’s court*”, but the illustration shows actually a Javanese dance performance and corresponds to another passage to be found in an earlier chapter of the book telling the count’s experiences on the island of Java. This passage also contains a long and detailed, in depth description of the dance performance as well as the musical instruments (the typical Javanese instrument, the *gong*, and again brass cymbals, and a lot more other that also appear on the illustration) (Pic. 9) (see APPENDIX, Text 3). The only difference between the text and the image is that the text tells about 6 performers, but the picture actually shows 3 girls. As to the long and detailed report on the dance performance, only the first sentences will be cited here: “From the right, also from left three dancing girls popped into the middle of the playground, and, as if in a ballet performance, they were waiting for a sign, in a graceful position, to begin the performance. Behind them, a group of musicians sat down on the ground, and began to play on instruments that we have never seen before, also some half-naked singing women mingled among them. The dancers were about 16 years old maidens, all from the prince’s harem. They were wearing fine and beautiful dresses, and performed the famous Javanese martial dance in 6 scenes. The dancers were moving around with veils in their hands.”



Pic. 8. Andrásy Manó: *BENGAL – Dancers at the nazim's court*. Drawing by Andrásy Manó. Litography by J. David & Eug. Cicéri. Printed by Lemercier, Paris



Pic. 9. Andrásy Manó: *BENGAL – Dancers at the nazim's court*. Detail - Dancers and musicians

The count found this dance performance (contrary to those seen in Bengal) also the accompanying music very expressive and enjoyable. He gives detailed description of all the six scenes. He was most surprised when in the final scene, that was about reconciliation and joy over peace, musicians imitated animal sounds on their instruments. The performance lasted about 2 hours. However, an exciting question arises: Why did count Andrassy put a wrong title to one of the illustrations? Clearly, it is not the editor's mistake, but it seems, that count himself gave an inaccurate title to the picture, that is even more striking as the difference between the outlook of the members of the public, also their dresses on the two pictures is evident.

Arriving to the end of this paper, it may be useful to gather together, why are the works of August Schoefft and Manó Andrassy so special and interesting for musical iconography research.

Both of them travelled to India in the first half of the 19th century, when orientalist interest has not yet turned to the Far Eastern countries, not to mention that orientalism almost did not exist at that time in Hungary. They were unique among their compatriots. It was not customary at all in Hungary in the 19th century to travel to India, and most Hungarians did not know too much at that time about India and other Far Eastern countries.

They were not orientalist in the classical sense of the world, their attitude is different in more respect. August Schoefft went to India to gain a better living as a painter, not primarily to get new inspiration for his art. The count had to flee his country, that was his main reason for travelling so far.

Their approach is very particular. What gives a special value to their observations and reports is that they seem not to have preconceptions about the Orient, they reflect local musical culture as they experienced, as they faced it, without previous studies or special interest in music.

Being Hungarians, and not Western Europeans, they were not affected by colonial attitude and viewpoint as for example French or British artists. They did not want to represent neither the colonizer's nor the native's side, they just observed and painted down their observation, their raw experiences.

Regarding artistic quality, the difference between the two artists is clear, but both of them were most careful to paint as precisely every details as possible.

In the very end, a third painter, Gyula Tornai (Görgő, 1861 – 1928, Budapest) should not remain without mention. However, his artistic oeuvre would require another in-depth study. Gyula Tornai was an orientalist painter in the classical sense of the world. He belongs to a later generation of artists, and represents a different attitude toward the Orient. He travelled and worked in Northern Africa painting Arabs and Bedouins, then, in 1905, he made a long journey even further East to India and Japan, and spent 16 month in both countries. His paintings were eagerly received by contemporary art-dealers are still looked-for at the art market throughout Europe (Britain, France, Germany). Many of his works show musicians, dancers and singers.¹² (Pic. 10)

¹² Reference also can be found in contemporary sources and 19th century artist biography lexicons about another painter Pál Petrovics (1819 - ?), who is reported to travel through the world, also getting as far as India, and later to South-America, he even died there – but apart from the fantastic biography and career, and some suspicious (may be falsified) reporting letters sent by him to Hungarian journals, no paintings are known to day painted by him while a wayfaring artist. Only his early works survived: altarpieces in Orthodox Churches in today Serbia.



Pic. 10. TORNAI Gyula: *Dancing Indian bayader*. Reproduction in a newspaper. In: *Vasárnap Újság* (Sunday News), 10 October 1909, p. 851

APPENDIX

Gróf ANDRÁSY Manó: *Utazás Kelet Indiákon (Travel through the Eastern Indias)*, Pest, 1853.

Passages reflecting on dance performances seen by the count in Bengal:

TEXT 1

p. 141.:

The original text in Hungarian

“Egyik nap bizonyos gazdag hindu kereskedőhöz hittak meg nézőül valami nemzeti ünnepélyre, mely itt *nodge* néven ismeretes. A multság színhelye nagy négyszög épület, olasz izlésben, oszlopos folyosókkal véve körül, mellyeken most néző tömeg szoronkodék: az udvart szinte nézőség lepte el, kik székekre telepedve várták a jelenetet. Három zenész keserves hangjára ugyanannyi bayader vagyis tánczosnő lépe ki s az udvar közepén nagy nehézkesen döcögve, kezeikkel hadarászva járták a lassut, mellette vékonyan visitozván. Órákig huzódott a multság, időről időre csunyábbnál csunyább tánczosnők váltogatván föl egymást: míg végre egy csapat angol kereskedő-legény, mindnyájan gözölgő fejjel, a körbe rontva nagy hejjehujját kezdenek; és így a keleties komoly ünnepély megzavartatván, europai dáridóvá fajult. Én e durva betolakodás után rögtön odahagytam a kört. “

*English translation*¹³

“One day, a Hindu merchant invited me to join them to celebrate one of their national feasts, the so-called *nodge*. The inner courtyard of the building served as stage and auditorium at once; every single square meter of the court as well as the arched gallery was occupied by the crowd. Now, three musicians began to play a miserable melody, upon that, three *bayadere*, or Indian dancing girl, stepped into the middle of the courtyard.

¹³ Regarding that the original Hungarian text is written in an old fashioned, 19th century Hungarian language, the literal style of the English translation does not give back the original, most of the time very amusing atmosphere of the original. Also, in the translation, some abundancies are abandoned.

Moving around clumsily, throwing their arms about, they performed a very slow dance, accompanying it by thin squeaking. This entertainment lasted for long hours, every now and then uglier and uglier women taking their turn on the stage.”

Finally, a group of drunken English shop assistants happened to come in, and put an end to this exquisite amusement, also brought a relief for the count.

TEXT 2

pp. 147-148.: On a dance performance seen at the prince’s court in Murserabat

The original text in Hungarian

“Esti mulattatásunk végett bayadereit küldé hozzánk a fejedelem. Elsőbb két véncsont, ijesztő boszorkánykép, jelent meg, időtlenül sikitozva énekelők a szokásos nyitányt: alig bírtam legyőzni a kacajingert, olly iszonyu macskanyávogást volt e hangverseny.....

Magát a tánczot, vagy inkább az összes előadást, néhány szóval így jellemezhetem: képzeljen az olvasó két éltet nőt, kiaszott, nagyszemű képeket, kik czammogósan egyetkettőt lépintve, kezeiket darab faként kiterjesztve, vagy legfőlebb szögeletesen meghajlítva, majd azonegy helyben mozganak, éneklésül meg rozsdás torkaikból mintegy nyomkodják a vastagabb hangokat, a vékonyakat meg rozzant fogaikon át szűrögetik, mint didergő tót a kéregető mondókát, s ha mindezt elég elevenen képzelte az olvasó, fogalma lesz e hires bayadertánczról. De tudnia kell, a kép kikerekítése végett, még azt: hogy e sylphidpár legkevesebbé darázs-dereku, sudár alak, s mi legköltőiebb, bugyogójuk bokaig ér, himes felöltönyük meg földig: s azért mást sem látni, csak lábfejeiken az öreg ujjakat. Illy öltönyben, illy termettel, két illy bagózó szépség valami kellemes tünemény! S képzelhető, milly könnyeden lejt, milly káprázatosan forog, azaz bizony csak tipeg, csoszog. Hindunak sem igen lehet más élvezete ebben, csak a szavalás: de ebből meg mi nem értettünk csak egy bötyünit.

A második tánczospár, melly ezeket fölvaltá, szintolly tetőtől talpig beburkolt, bettelkérődő, esetlen alak vala: s előadásukkal csak ugy felsültek, mint előzőik.

Finnváskodásunk hire fülébe mehetett a nazimnak, mert végre, hogy mégis becsületet valljon tündéreivel, hihetőleg parancsából jelent meg egy finom alkatu, gyöngéd, fiatal szépség, ki már nem visitozott, mindamellettt tánczával sem ragadta el a

nézőséget; hanem kedves vonásain, szabályos termetén, szóval összes bájain, akár órákig kéjelgett volna szemünk, olly igéző lény vala.

Rendesen négy öt zenész, dalos kísérte a bayaderek mutatványát. Egyik guitarreféle hangszert pöngete, másik az indiaszerte kedvelt tam-tam nevű hosszukás dobot döngteté, a többiek leginkább réztányérokat csattogtatának. Illy gyarló hangszerek játéka csak emelte a bűvös hatást, mellyet a fönebb jellemzett előadás gyakorla ránk.

Átalán e vidékeken mahomedan és hindu egyiránt gyönyörködik a zenében, s tán a világon semmit nem kedvel olly szenvedélyesen, mint épen ezt: azért innep nem is lehet el nélküle, sőt ugyszólván a társodalmi életnek ez mindennapi fűszere. Leghasználtabb hangszereik a lant, czimbalom, harsona és dob: de van ezeken kívül még többféle, mert europaiaiak már vagy harminczhatot ismernek ezekből, s pedig olyakat, mellyek tudományos elvek szerint alkotvák. Egyébiránt a köznép zenéjében nem annyira a hangvitelt, a dallamosságot, szerkezeti szépséget keresi, hanem a hang mennyiségét, a nagy csengést bongást. Csodálatos látni ama villanszerű hatást, mit az egyébként hideg hindura e zagyva hangászat gyakorol: ilyenkor imént még olly borus szemei lángolni, s tagjai mintha galvanicus folyam futna végig ereiben, rángatózni kezdenek, és aztán ugrál fáradtig, mint valami átbüvölt lény. Mindez az egyszerű tamtam hangjára már megtörténik uton utfelen. De nagyon csalódnék, ki azt hinné, mikép ez utcai hanga az indusnak mindene: mert e nép között, hol a költészet olly erejében bujálkodó gazdag, és tündöklő, a zene sem maradhatott hátra fejlődésében, ha túl nem szárnyalá is tertvérét, a szóló művészetet. S bár ujabban régi műveltségében a hindu hanyatlani kezd, kétségtelenül még igen jó zenélvel birhat az előkelőbb vagyonos osztály legbelső körében, hol a családtagok vagy a hárem gyöngyei legszenvedélyesb zenekedvelők, sőt gyakorló művészek egyszersmind. Költeményeik nem egyszer szólanak legföllengősb képekben a zene hatalmáról, többi közt, hogy a fejedelmi hölgy teremébe csalta bájos hangjával a legdallamosb madarakat, ugy elbűvölé ezeket a mennyei zene. Festményeiken is többször megjelent a zenész, s nem egyszer kezében az istenség lantot, vagy más hangszert visel.”

English translation

“In the evening, the *nazim* sent his *bayadères* to provide us with entertainment. First, two old, frightening, witch-looking “ladies” presented themselves, singing the regular overture in a shrieking voice. I could hardly control myself not to burst in laughter, for this concert rather sounded like cat meowing...

As to the dance, it can be shortly described like this: Imagine, my dear Reader, two elderly women, haggard faces with big eyes, who trudge along one-two steps, expanding their arms, or bending them awkwardly and rigidly as if wooden branches; slightly moving around, staying mostly in one position and one place. These charming dancers produced singing by pushing out lower notes from their rusty throats, and filtering high pitched notes through their row of teeth. ... The women, this nice “sylph pair”, neither wasp-waisted nor slenderly-built, wore strange pants reaching down to the ankles, with an embroidered jacket sweeping the ground, so you could not see anything, apart from the old, wrinkled toes. ... For sure, even Hindu people did not find great amusement in such a performance, if not in the recited verses; but, unfortunately, we could not get a letter of that....

Our squeamishness might have been reported to the nazim, for, at last, to defend the fame of his fairies, probably on his particular command, a young girl of delicate construction and tender beauty appeared on the scene at last, who performed her dance without screaming. However, it was not her dance that enchanted the public, but her lovely face, graceful and superior beauty, that could have captivated the attention of the public for many hours.

Regularly, four or five musicians accompanied the show of the *bayadères*. One of them plucking a guitar-like instrument, another banging the *tamtam*, the India-wide popular drum, all the others clapping brass cymbals. You can imagine, such an accompaniment provided by this humble, poor sounding ensemble of instruments, even further enhanced the bewitching effect imposed on us by the charming performance described above.

Generally, in this region, Muslims and Hindus alike take much pleasure in music, and are not fond of anything else so enthusiastically as of music. So, no feasts can be organised without music, so to say, music is the most common mean to give tasty flavour for everyday social life. Lute, santur (“czimbalom”), trombone and drum are the most common and widely used musical instruments; but there are even more species: Europeans already know further 36 different type of musical instruments. ... However, for common people, it is not primarily melody, timbre or tonal structure that bear of high importance in music, but volume: the loud and noisy ding-dong. It is fascinating to see the miraculous, electrifying effect imposed by this chaotic, medley music on the otherwise rather cold Hindu people: suddenly, their gloomy eyes begin to glow, and as if a sort of galvanised blood run in their veins; bewitched, they begin to twitch, and jump until they collapse of fatigue. Hindus can easily be enraptured with the sound of a single *tamtam*, as one can observe it almost every corner.”

TEXT 3

p. 81 - 82: On Javanese musical instruments

The original text in Hungarian

Jelen multságban szereplő zeneszerek is érdemelnek néhány szót. A dob- és hegedűfélét, mellyen itt szinte nyirettyűvel játszanak, kivéve, többi hangszerük mieinktől nagyon elüt, akár alakját, akár hangképességét vegyük vizsgálat alá. Többnyire czimbalomfajta minden huros hangszerük: legsajátosb azonban és legfigyelemreméltóbb a gong nevü öblös réztál. Van négy láb átmérőü is, — s ezt hangterjedelme miatt egyszerre ketten verik, — fokonkénti arányban le a közönséges tányérnagyágúig. E hangszert kettős zsinegről lelógatva szabadon tartják balkézzele a légben, vagy függ állványról s úgy verik, mint a dobot szokás. A megütött érc erős zugása egészen eltölti a levegőt, s utözöngelme átolvad a másikéba, mellyet kellő időpontban a szomszéd zenész ütött meg. Illy gongok illőleg összehangolva, művészi kezelés mellett, egybeolvasztott szakadatlan hangzataikkal, legandalítóbb, legérzékbehatóbb zenét képezik. Annyi hatását itthon is tapasztalám, hogy elnémiték általa egy hegedünyuzót, ki szállásommal szemben sokaig kinezta fületem. Egy más hangszerük üvegharmonikánkkal rokon, csakhogy üveg helyett fadarabkák vannak hurként egymás mellé helyezve, s rajta úgy játszanak, mint czimbalmon szokás. Szinte sajátzerü szer az üstdob, akár a felfordított rézlábas, használtatva magasb hangok eléidézése kedveért. Ezenkivül van még egy sereg apró hangszer, általunk nem ismertek. Legkülönösb azon két három énekesnő, kik szájuk előtt libegtetett legyezővel rezegettik hangjaikat, és idomitják ekként a zenéhez.

English translation

“Musical instruments used for the present entertainment deserve some additional comment and detailed description.

Most of them, except the drum-like and the violin-like instrument (the latter also played with a bow), differ from all instruments familiar to us in Europe regarding both shape and sound/tone. All of their stringed instruments are similar to the dulcimer, however, the most characteristic and intriguing among all Javanese musical instrument is the *gong*, a flare brass plate. It exists in various sizes and pitches, according to the musical scale. The diameter of the biggest measures 4 ft, it is beaten by two musicians at once; the smallest has just the size of a simple plate. The instrument usually is hanging down freely in the air

from a frame, or partly hold by the player in his left hand. It is sounded by beating, using drumsticks. The boom, produced by the beaten metal completely fills the air around, and the reverberations melt into the sound of the next gong, beaten at due time by another musician. Such tuned gongs played in an artistic way produce the most pleasurable and sensual musical harmony by their continuous sound one melting into another.

I have to say, I experienced its special power when – already back in Hungary – I could mute a violin player (in whose hands the violin actually did not sing or produce music but suffered heavily), who caused severe torture to my ears standing just opposite to my house.

Another Javanese instrument is a relative of our glass harmonica, but instead of glass, wooden pieces are put next to each other and serve as strings. It is played in a similar way as a dulcimer (cimbalom), with sticks.

Also a very typical instrument is the tympani. Here, it looks as an enormous brass pot, turned upside down, to make high pitches available.

Beyond all these, they have a great number of smaller musical instruments, completely unknown to us.

However, the most striking was to see two or three female singers making their voice tremble by oscillating a fan in front of their mouth, in order to make their voice suitable for such a special music provided by these particular musical instruments.”

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