



Secret Turkish folk music and issues of 'harmony' in Turkish music

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Translator's note

At the beginning of the 1940s, the Istanbul-born poet, musician, teacher and scholar Vahid Lütfi Salcı^{*3} (1883-1950) published two monographs on Alevi music and mystical dance (*semah*) – no more than short pamphlets – the first such monographs in republican Turkey. The earlier of those two monographs is presented here in English translation. Salcı's studies promoted the concept of Alevi musical culture as Turkey's 'secret' folk music, although they were not in fact the first works to do so. Salcı himself published several articles in the 1930s on Turkish folk music and Alevi culture, including a substantial study in 1938 in the journal *Ülkü Halkevi Dergisi* titled "Gizli Halk Musikisi" ("The Secret Folk Music"). Prior to this, the French musicologist Eugene Borrel in 1934 published a paper in the *Revue des Études islamiques* titled "Sur la musique secrète des tribus Turques Alévi" presenting similar conclusions (and in some parts similar descriptions) to Salcı's later work. As Borrel acknowledged, his work was largely influenced by materials supplied to him by Salcı and by what he described as "*un sensationnel article*" – referring to Salcı's series of articles on polyphonic folksong and harmony in folk music, published in 1933 in *Milli Mecmua*. Being Bektashi – he was also known as Vahid Dede – and growing up with a forthright Alevi mother who rejected the offer for her son to study as a *hafız* (his father died when he was young), Salcı was well placed to gain access to the secret rituals of Alevis and Bektashis as he travelled widely throughout Anatolia and subsequently lived and

^{*1} [The text used for the translation is an autographed 1940 edition in the possession of the translator. PK]

^{*2} [Notes by the translator are indicated by an asterisk and are included in square brackets followed by the translator's initials. In addition, Turkish terms used in the original that are of a technical nature relating to the subject (or in several of cases where greater transparency in the translation was considered desirable) are included in square brackets within the text of the translation. PK]

^{*3} [For information about the life and work of Vahid Lütfi Salcı (1883-1950) see Mevlüt Yaprak, *Vahit Lütfi Salcı'nın izinde* (Edirne: Ulusal, 2003). PK]

worked in Thracian Turkey, particularly around Kırklareli. As Salcı makes very clear in the work presented here, his purpose in publishing the monograph is in no small part polemical. Firstly, it was to set the record straight regarding 'secret folk music' and the issue of harmony in Turkish music, identifying misinterpretations of his earlier works by those unqualified or without access to materials. Secondly, it was a *cri de coeur* from the era of the newly established Turkish Republic and following the period of Turkish language reform for the need to abandon Ottoman music – which he recognised as beloved but also as a hindrance to the young republic's progress, reputation and place in the western world – in favour of Turkish folk culture, particularly the pure expression of it found in the secret music of Turkish Alevi tribal groups. In this context, Salcı calls for systematic action in collecting folk material generally, especially the secret music culture of village Alevi. The study itself is frequently rhetorical, with excursions into the description of ritual (specifically that of the *sofra* feast and communal *muhabbet* gatherings); it also presents some musical and textual materials, including examples from at least ten lyric poems, together with some rather perfunctory analysis. In keeping with the rhetorical purpose of the study, the language moves from the succinct and imperative to the lyrical and prolix, providing significant challenges for the translator – a task not helped by a number of printing and typographical errors in the original.

Paul Koerbin

The features of secret music and its stylistic distinctions

One of our well known and mighty poets speaks of our Anatolia as: "a subject that has not been expended"*⁴. However, I say it is: "a treasury, bearing in its chest many subjects that have not been able to be known or found".

One of these untouched subjects that cannot be known, cannot be found, and for these reasons cannot be investigated, but which when discovered and investigated will surprise the civilised world and will add great esteem and value to Turkish literature and music, is 'secret folk music'*⁵.

It is an undeniable truth that this secret folk music is very much alive and has persisted and been performed for many centuries in Turkey. However, this

*⁴ [*Harcanmamış bir mevzu*. This is a reference to the poem 'Sanat' by Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel (1898-1973) published in 1933. In fact, the line in the poem as published reads: *Yazılmamış bir destan gibi Anadolumuz*, which translates as 'Our Anatolia is like an unwritten story' The poem is republished in Atıf Behramoğlu, *Son Yüzyıl Büyük Türk Şiir Antolojisi: 1*. 3rd ed. (Istanbul: Sosyal Yayınları, 1993), 102-103. PK]

*⁵ [*Gizli Halk Musikisi*. This could be translated as 'secret' folk music or as 'hidden' folk music. I have variously translated *gizli* using either term throughout. Salcı frequently uses *gizli* (secret) music and literature in comparative constructions with *açık* (open) music and literature. PK]

remained so hidden that our musicians, and even our great music scholars, could not come to an understanding of its distinguishing features. Some have gone even further when presented with the existence of this sort of music among us, repudiating it and even whipping up the attack and lambasting and abusing their own sciences.

The proposition is this:

Consider secret music. It has continued for centuries. Having closely examined it, we propose that: just like Turkish folk literature, which has two aspects, one open and one hidden, there are two aspects, one open and one hidden, to Turkish folk music.

Folk literature's open part has suffered from a lack of attention, being drowned out by the noise and oppressive force of the *Divan* literati [*edebiyatçiler*] and the Ottoman linguists [*Osmanlı lisancı*]. However, the hidden part, being mixed in with the hidden traditions and ceremonies of the secret doctrines maintained by Alevi^{*6} tribes – 'Turkish Islam' [*İslâmı Türk*] – is now heading towards obscurity and is at the point of being lost.

If the open and secret parts of folk literature have begun to be revealed by the inquisitive with the coming to hand of written manuscripts^{*7}, it has not been possible, up to now, to get at folk music's secret part. While written manuscripts^{*8} and publicly distributed [*perakende*] writings have served for the mere quarter century since secret folk literature has come to light, because manuscripts with notation could not be put together for either open or secret folk music, it remains hidden and has not been able to be captured. Since the revolution of the Republic, some institutions have been able to collect some handfuls of the deluge of the open part of folk music; but true to its name, not even a drop of the secret part has been able to be collected.

The principal reason for this is the prohibition of Turkish Alevi and mystical faith that has continued for centuries, with a powerful tenacity and unshakable belief. Let us now take a look and try to explain, in a concise but essential way, how these things came about and progressed, and how they remained hidden.

While secret music prevails among the Turkish folk Alevi tribes, and mystical belief groups and can be broken again into smaller groups according to their character, in order to best explain and understand the problem it is necessary to firstly break them into two basic groups.

^{*6} [Salcı does not generally capitalise Alevi, and is at times inconsistent with capitalisation of other proper nouns such as Bektâşi. I have not followed Salcı and have capitalised such names, whether in their noun or adjectival use, in accordance with English practice. PK]

^{*7} [*Cönk* (pl. *cönkler*) are manuscript collections of folk poems, with the lines usually written parallel to the binding or seam. PK]

^{*8} [*Cönk* and *mecmua*: the latter could mean a periodical or, as it appears here, another form of manuscript distinct from the *cönk*, with lines written perpendicular to the seam. PK]

1. Secret music of the urban dervish lodge [şehir tekke]
2. Secret music of the folk 'village' [halk 'köy']

Foremost to understanding the music of the urban dervish lodge is the secret music of the Istanbul lodge. In Istanbul, when secret lodges are mentioned, no others come to mind than the Bektashi lodges. This is quite true. Preeminent in Istanbul are seven great and famous, albeit secret, Bektashi lodges. Their names and locations are:

3. At Rumeli Hisar - *Şehidlik*
4. At Büyük Çamlıca - *Hacı Tahir Baba*
5. At Merdiven Köyü - *Şahkulu Sultan*
6. At Kara Ağaç - *Hasib Baba*
7. At Eyüp - *Kar Yağdı*
8. At Yedikule - *Kazlı*
9. At Sötlüce - *Münür Baba*

These lodges are organised in respect to districts. These Bektashi lodges have manuscripts [*cönkler*], written over a period of time from the 18th to the 20th century, containing *nefesler*^{*9}, each one of which, if examined, will reveal without fail old Alevi folk literature and similar verses of Gaygusuz, Hatayi, Pir Sultan, Kul Himmet, Muhiddin Aptal, Sersem Ali and Türibi, and many more like them. Of course, they pre-date the 18th century. These names and these poets are, at the same time, among the religious greats of all Bektashis and Alevis.

Afterwards, a second group, following in the footsteps of those coming before, considerably developed Bektashi and Alevi literature. These, such as Seyrani, Dertli, Emrah, Hengâmi, Zikri, Fedayi, Kenzi, Hâki, Mir'ati and Bosnevi, are worthy Bektashi folk poets, whose works are valued these days with wonder and unanimity. It means, does it not, that all of these being connected to folk literature, the groups that their literature dominates also depend upon that same literature? We understand from very close acquaintance that Istanbul Bektashi lodge literature, up to the beginning of the 20th century, depended upon secret folk music. The *nefesler* of folk and saz poets^{*10} whose names we esteem are sung with their own distinctive melodies. So then, they always sing the *nefes* of Sersem Ali Baba^{*11} that I have notated below, to the same melody, in Istanbul, Thrace, Macedonia, even in Syria, and throughout Turkey.

^{*9} [I have not translated *nefes* (pl. *nefesler*) referring as it does specifically to Alevi and Bektashi poems and songs. The term literally implies 'breath' and they are lyric works dealing with Alevi and Bektashi beliefs and practices. I have also used the singular '*nefes*' to stand for the plural class of lyrics where this seemed more suitable to English usage. PK]

^{*10} [*Saz şairler* - poet-musicians who compose and perform their lyrics to the accompaniment of the traditional long-necked lute, the *saz*. As Salcı explains below, the *saz* is considered sacred by Alevis. PK]

^{*11} [The full text of this *nefes* by Sersem Ali Baba (died c.1551) is included in Sadettin Nüzhet, *Bektaşî Şairleri* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1930), 337. PK]



This *nefes* is at the same time a prayer [*dua*] sprinkling, drop by drop, the reverence and grace of the morning and consuming the swollen, faithful hearts. It is only possible to sing and play this *nefes* with this prayer in that assembly [*meclis*]. Thus, in this there is such a dignified style and striking expression; the finest nuance of the piece being the rising and exuberance of the whole sound, undulating and deflating, returning from afar with a rapid striking, then naturally receding in the maturing of the sound.

Even those Bektashi who were Divan literati of the 18th and 19th centuries greeted with respect the mystical *aşık* literature and music that they encountered in Bektashi *cemler*, and regarded it as the literature of collective belief; they found it unnecessary to graft the foreign onto its particular pure and clean structure. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Istanbul Bektashi lodges began to lose this noble and dignified character, and in a very short time latched onto 'the Istanbul class of music' [*İstanbul zümre musikisi*], a florid, syrupy type of oriental [*şark*] music; and for this reason their music, which was originally folk music, became a form of urban secret dervish lodge music. In response to this unjust and ungrateful assault and attack, we see *aşık* and folk literature submit and retreat. Mehmet Ali Hilmi Dede Baba, his emerging followers and other Bektashi *Divan* literati cooled towards those they formerly held in regard and participated among themselves in the attacks and ingratitude. This happened in music as it did in literature. Finally, the composition of urban Bektashi lodge music was debased, breaking off from the true, living and historic Turkish spirit and losing its dignified expression in favour of the indolent, dawdling motifs and preludes of oriental music. This debasement began slowly, but gaining momentum, it continued to frequently step up its attack. After this, the stubbornly convoluted and syrupy *nefesler* of Mehmet Ali Hilmi Dede Baba's direction began to dominate.



The text to this melody reads:

The heart fell without word to the shelter of an obliterating mirage
Returned my body with grief to the crescent moon

Amid the wine banquets while the beloved's face perspires
An embrace as if dew fell on the rose in the rose garden

Let the wandering vagabonds make a kiss
With wine-filled cup the cupbearer bids forth

Can you see to what condition my beautiful Turkish literature, my beautiful
Turkish music, has been brought?

Henceforth, city folk, having got into a rut, relinquished the clean *aşık* and folk music branch of Bektashi literature. The two-volume work '*Bektaşî nefesleri*'^{*12}, collected and disseminated by the '*Tasnif ve Tesbit Heyeti*'^{*13} at the Istanbul conservatory, contains nothing other than this hybrid, urban class of music.

Where secret music and literature is made and played: '*cemler*' and '*muhabbetler*'

Secret music is the music of secret literary compositions [*besteleri*], passed on by secret sects [*mezhep*] for centuries in the Alevi '*cem*' and '*muhabbetler*'. To recite *nefes* and to play and sing music outside *cemler* and *muhabbetler* is a great sin. This is something no Alevi would or could do. From a religious perspective, it is absolutely forbidden. In regard to *cemler*, it is principally for two reasons. Firstly,

^{*12} [See note 43 below. PK]

^{*13} ['Classification and Determination Committee'. Regarding the founding and activities of the conservatory in the early 20th century see John Morgan O'Connell, "Fine music: controlling Turkish taste at the Fine Arts Academy in 1926," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 32 (2000): 117-142. PK]

as the name implies, it is '*ayni cem*'^{*14}. *Ayni cemler* are the ceremonies held at night where a person enters into *Alevilik*^{*15}. This they refer to as being 'initiated', becoming Alevi or Bektashi. On that night, they direct the one seeking initiation [*talip*] according to the ceremonies and religious principles [*erkân*].

The second reason for doing the *cem* is the *muhabbet*. *Muhabbetler* mean to perform piety [*ibadet*]^{*16}. This relies upon the vow [*adak*] and votive offerings [*nezirler*]. Whichever Alevi, whatever their work, they make the vow to perform *muhabbet*. This vow of *muhabbet* continues to a great degree, particularly in the villages. Even if there is no vow-giving, they certainly do not pass a week without a gathering of neighbours and *muhabbet*. Even in winter there are *muhabbetler*. Villagers give the name 'neighbourhood [*mahalle*] *muhabbet*' to this. Receiving contributions from neighbours, they gather crops; and with the money they get from selling them, they make the *muhabbet*. At Nevruz and Muharrem the *muhabbet* of grieving [*matem*] is one of the most emotive of *muhabbetler*.

Whether in the *ayni cem* or *muhabbetler* there are certainly no incidents of '*mum söndürmek*'^{*17} that we hear about from vulgar, ignorant people. This is a vile and very shameful slander against Turkish custom and tradition. The fault belongs to those religious bigots who take pleasure in casting slander against every civilised activity.

Whatever *muhabbet* is under way, a *nefes* is sung to declare the beginning of the *muhabbet*. In order to perform the ceremony, this *nefes* is sung three times in succession, for love of the trinity^{*18}. After this, the course of the *muhabbet* proceeds. *Muhabbetler*, if they happen in villages, continue in a state of modesty and instruction. Though *rakı* and women are present, there is no activity that runs counter to morality^{*19}.

In the *muhabbet*, depending on how crowded it is, a number of *sofra*^{*20} are set up, as necessary. The *mürşit*^{*21} is at the head of the table. In Istanbul, in the

^{*14} [Ayin refers to the *cem* as a sacred ritual, ceremony or act of worship. PK]

^{*15} [Confirmation of their inclusion in the community of Alevi or Alevi-ness. PK]

^{*16} [Shankland describes the *muhabbet* based on his later ethnographical research and provides a definition: "lit. peaceful, friendly interaction. Used also in Sufism, and particularly by the Alevi, for drinking sessions that may verge upon the holy. May also imply divine love, or collective worship of the divine," in David Shankland, *The Alevi in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 190. PK]

^{*17} [Literally, 'to extinguish the candle'. This is a slander against Alevi that asserts that during their evening ceremonies, at which both men and women participate, they extinguish the lights and orgies take place. PK]

^{*18} [That is: Allah (or Hak), Muhammed, Ali. PK]

^{*19} [*Rakı* is the strong, aniseed-flavoured liquor common and much loved in Turkey. For a concise and clear exploration of the role of alcohol consumption and ritual inebriation in the context of the *muhabbet* phase of the *cem* ceremony, as a test of inner integrity and soundness, see Nicolas Elias, "The Drinking Dervishes. An Enquiry into Ritual Inebriation Among a Bektashi Congregation," in *Aesthetic and Performative Dimensions of Alevi Cultural Heritage*, ed. Martin Greve, Ulaş Özdemir, and Raoul Motika (Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag, 2020), 33-44. PK]

^{*20} [Literally a small, low table. However, in Alevi-Bektashi context it originally referred to a circular leather spread that could be rolled up and used to carry food and then spread on

big dervish lodges, there is a *saki*^{*22} at every table. This *saki* remains on duty until the end of the *muhabbet*. Every time a libation [*dem*] is presented, that is, whenever *rakı* is poured, it begins with the *saki* that is at the table of the *mürşit*. There is no distinction or preference as to whether *saki* are men or women. They are selected from the youth and those who possess good grace. But at no time is this with any intention to act contrary to morality.

In the villages, at the order of the *mürşit*, the *saki* change at each exchange of *rakı*. According to how crowded it is, two, three or four *saki* present the libation at the same time. These *saki* distribute the libation while standing. In the *muhabbet* the chanting of *nefes* also follows this procedure. To begin with, a *nefes* is chanted from the table of the *mürşit*. Those at the other tables participate in this. In the central parts of the *muhabbet*, sometimes the *mürşit* says to a man “come my son, sing a *nefes*”. That man, in obedience, sings, and everyone there, including the *saz* players, joins in the singing of the *nefes*. Sometimes, if someone wishes to sing a *nefes*, they cry out “*hü dost – havalet ya şah*”^{*23}. This call is to ask for permission from the *mürşit* and the *ayni-cem sakiler*. According to the rules of the *muhabbet*, they begin to sing the *nefes* having permission to do so without waiting for an answer from the *mürşit*. *Nefes* are considered very sacred. While *nefes* are being sung, there is no conversation or smoking. If anyone is speaking, they are hushed. There is no frequent rising and coming and going from the *sofra*. If it is necessary to go outside for a compelling reason, supplication [*niyaz*] is made to the *sofra* and they go and return saying “*havalet ya şah*”. If the *mürşit*, or someone acquainted with the knowledge, starts a speech or relates a narrative, all those at the *sofra* listen to them.

The *aşık saz* used in the *muhabbet* is very sacred. The most esteemed of their musical instruments is the *aşık saz*. In the *muhabbet* of the urban lodges, instruments like the violin, *kanun* and *ud* have later appeared. But village Alevis accept no musical instrument other than the *saz*. The *saz* is considered so sacred that the twelve strings of the large *meydan saz* have come to represent the twelve imams; this belief is established in the ideas and principles of all Alevi branches. To take their belief further, there are those who claim that the twelve modes [*makamat*] form the basis of musical theory. In a *müseddes*^{*24}, a great Sufi poet of

the ground to serve as an oval shaped ‘table’, for the sharing of food. Now, the term ‘*sofra*’ is more commonly used to refer to the partaking in the feast itself, rather than the implement. On the *sofra* and the ritual meal more broadly, see Mark Soileau, “Spreading the Sofra: Sharing and Partaking in the Bektashi Ritual Meal,” *History of Religions* 52, no. 1 (Aug. 2012): 1-30. PK]

^{*21} [Spiritual guide or teacher. May also refer to the *dede*, the spiritual leader in the *cem*. PK]

^{*22} [The *saki* or cupbearer is one of the twelve ‘services’ (*hizmetler*) in the *cem*. As Salci explains here, the role of the *saki* is to manage the distribution of libations, whether water or alcohol. PK]

^{*23} [This could be rendered as something like: ‘O Friend – here’s to the Shah’. *Hü* is an invocation (of God) or greeting; *havalet* refers to taking permission from, or assigning credit to, one qualified in the way (*yol*). PK]

^{*24} [A form of poem with six lines to a stanza. PK]

the nineteenth century, Edirneli Süleyman Rüştü, accounting for the twelve says, with mystical language:

Behold, twelve are the constellations and heavens
Still twelve are the months and phases

The turning of time ever in the design is twelve
Twelve are the modes of music to follow

After speaking thus, he brings into unity the twelve and all those counted as sacred, saying:

Four books, copied in writing, twelve categories, the mystery one
Four corners, seven regions, the way is twelve, the architect one

In this regard, the holiness of the *saz* is increased, and to play the *saz* becomes a manifest interpretation of a genuine piety. In a *nefes*, the poet Sulhî^{*25}, explaining what occurs with some pride, has this to say about playing the *saz* as worship:

Guidance is from Muhammed Ali
From God to us is every breath of grace
To play the *saz* is to worship Allah
From the Prophet David we have the *rabab*

So, in the playing of this *saz* there will doubtless be distinct features. The basis of these characteristics is, again, folk music. It is understood from our researches that this type of music, just like western [*garb*] music, passed through a period of active maturing to arrive at its current state^{*26}. Except for some secondary differences, secret folk music is very close to open folk music; and we can explain the important differences of musical style in the playing, there being a clear, serious and dignified tone in the sound of the *saz*.

Regarding intervals, it is not a case of semi-tones and greatly expanded tones chasing after each other. Just as there are no stupefying [*uyuşmuş*] and effeminate [*kadınlaşmış*] songs, there is nothing of a playful or fast-moving character. In order to apply their characteristics, the *nefes* singer or the *saz* poets – even women and girls – while not using their natural voices, give force to their voices, pushing to the limit (in a dignified manner) the ‘tenor’ [*tenor*] sound, so that there is a booming quality [*gürleyişleri*]^{*27}. Made-up song interludes and variation are not acceptable. No opportunity is given to flexible syncopations or jumping offbeats [*kontratan*]. Flightiness and playing around is not prominent on the *saz*. They even regard the hymns [*ilâhiler*] of other dervish orders [*tarikatlar*] as flippant, and do

^{*25} [I have not been able to trace this text or confirm the identity of the poet Sulhî, although this is perhaps a reference to the 17th century poet Mehmet Salih. PK]

^{*26} [The translation is uncertain here and remains speculative and based on context. Salcı uses the unfamiliar terms *deşan* and *pelenşan* which would appear to be his constructions, ostensibly Turkish renderings derived from the French. They do not appear in the standard dictionary of the Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Society), nor any other I have consulted. PK]

^{*27} [This and the following sentence echo Borrel’s earlier description, in, E. Borrel, “Sur la musique secrète des tribus Turques Alévi,” *Revue des Études islamiques* 8 (1934):241-250. PK]

not wish them sung in the *muhabbetler*. In the great reverence they have for their *sazlar*, there is a latitudinous [*rindelik*] and virile animation [*zendelik*], and thus a gracefulness [*zarafet*] is seen^{*28}. Even in their prayers of entreaty and proclaiming, there is the quality and character of one giving command.

Below, as an example, I present a melody and text together. But in observing the amorous text of the *nefes*, one ought not to surmise that these are the entreaties of two young lovers. This is a *nefes* of the '*erenler*'^{*29}. This text in Edip İsmail Habib's 'History of Turkish Literature Reform'^{*30} demonstrates Turkish folk poetry at its most lyrical^{*31}.

If only I were the staff in the hands
Of those going on God's path
If only I were destined for the tongues
Of those praising the saint and the sage

If only I were apprentice to the master
Had that which is remote become certain
If only they made my bone a comb
For the beloved's lock of hair

If only they directed my way to truth
If only they should dry my bones
If only they should winnow me as harvest grain
To the winds of the great love

We are the seed of the body
Grandchild of a grandfather
If only I were the weapon in the hands
Doing battle with the unbeliever

Seyrani^{*32}, raise your finger
It is time you stood for truth
If only I were a drop in the torrents
Of the river flowing to the ocean

^{*28} [Again, the translation is somewhat uncertain owing to Salcı's use of unfamiliar or obscure words (or perhaps typographical errors), in this case in respect to *rindelik* and *zendelik*. I read *rindelik* as the abstract noun from *rind* with a sense of *gönül eri* (a tolerant or sensible person). In translating *rindelik* as 'latitudinous' I follow Talat Halman who, writing of the debate of opposites in *Divan* poetry, places *rind* in opposition to *zahid* - in his words, 'latitudinarian' versus 'zealot'. *Zendelik* is probably *zindelik* meaning 'life' or 'animation'. Regarding '*rind*' see, Talat Halman, *A Millenium of Turkish Literature: a Concise History*, ed. Jayne L. Warner (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 47. PK]

^{*29} [*Erenler* refers to those fully initiated and spiritually mature and on the true path. Also used as a form of address among initiates. PK]

^{*30} [İsmail Habib. *Türk Teceddüd Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Maarif Velâketi Neşriyatı, 1340 [1924]). Published in Ottoman script. PK]

^{*31} [For clarity, I have ordered the text in the now more common manner of four-line stanzas for this type of folk lyric in *koşma* form rather than the split lines, as presented by Salcı, which was common practice in early 20th century publications in Latin script following the convention used in Ottoman script. PK]

^{*32} [The attribution of the text as indicated by the *mahlas* is Everekli Seyrani (1807-1866). A similar version of this poem can be found in Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Alevî Bektâşî Nefesleri* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1963), 155-156. PK]

This is the melody for this *nefes*.



In the collective singing of *nefes* like this, a universal musical culture catches the eye. Considerable regard is given to the rhythm. No wavering back and forth occurs. The degree of historical refinement of Turkish literature and music is revealed in these musical works and in the playing of the *saz* poets; true Turkish music appears far removed from foreign artificiality and, as a movement, in accordance with the universal techniques of today.

'Harmony' in secret folk music - activity and traces

Leaving aside city Alevilik, not one of the village Alevi Turkish tribal groups knows for sure the Islamic observances, the ritual performance of prayer and prayer *suras*. Their ritual observances [*namaz*] are salutations [*niyaz*], their worship is the *cem* and *muhabbet* and their prayers and *suras* are Turkish 'recitations' [*tercemanlar*^{*33}] and Turkish '*nefesler*'. For centuries these Turkish Alevi tribal groups, living within and outside the Ottoman Empire, while confronting the extreme and cruel religious bigots of the times (that they have witnessed throughout history) continuously and amply maintained their folk [*milli*] worship and *cem* ceremonies [*ayinleri*]. The *cem* ceremony includes women, alcohol, the *saz* and song from beginning to end, and is therefore a literary and musical form of worship. Even Christians do not conduct their worship with as great an amount of music as this. I came across a tribe in Thrace who, in their *cem* gathering, after drinking three bowls of wine [*şarap*] each, then raised up the *rakı*, sang *nefes*, played *saz* and danced [*oyun oynuyorlardı*] until the morning. Among other tribes, following a prayer in Turkish that can go on for a barely half an hour, and upon finishing the salutation [*niyaz*] on a prayer of a true nature [*namaz mahiyetinde*], they drink *rakı*, play *saz*, sing *nefes* and dance³⁴ until morning - what they call the *cem* banquet [*cem bezmi*]. Regarding this, is it possible not to think of these

^{*33} [A type of prayer in verse form recited at the beginning of a service in the *cem*. The word *terceman* or *tercüman* implies 'translation' or 'interpretation'. PK]

³⁴ I will publish separately a pamphlet about these dances. [This is in reference to Vahit Lütfi Salcı, *Gizli Türk Dini Oyunları* (Istanbul: Nümune Matbaası, 1941). PK]

prolonged ongoing gatherings as literary and musical associations? In such circumstance, polyphonic [*çok sesli*]^{*35} musical activity naturally occurs in this musical gathering, conducted with belief and faith, and with no awareness of wrongdoing. If we take into account the particular circumstances in which they live in Turkey, and the fundamental fact that they don't favour urban music and urban literature, it is understood that they are not therefore influenced by oriental [*şark*] music and literature connected to *Divan* literature, and that they have reached maturity in their own characteristic conditions. Again, it is not hard to guess that there could be polyphony^{*36} in their art when their musical activities are not under those confusing and murky influences.

It ought to be noted that, while writing for some years on the signs [*işaretleri*] of harmony in secret folk music, I use the expression 'traces and signs' [*alametler ve işaretler*]. The reason is in order to speak accurately. Because, to use 'harmony' in any musical work, and to recognise and apply it entirely as described by science, would be to have acquired this knowledge systematically. However, villagers are deprived of acquiring this scientific technique. Because in reality, wherever the making and singing of this music comes from, even though it does not fully accord with the theoretical, history and science will not be able to ignore these activities and signs; and even if they are played and sung incorrectly it would be highly appropriate to call these things 'harmony and choral markers and activities' [*armoni ve koro alamet ve hareketleri*].

While the notated example of singing in two parts among some Alevi Turkish tribes that appeared in 1938 in the April issue of the journal *Ülkü*, concerning 'folk harmony and counterpoint'^{*37}, was greeted well by esteemed musicians and renowned scholars, a colleague who was uninformed about this type of secret music very disrespectfully and unjustly criticised inaccuracies remaining in the notation. However, the error was not mine. Those errors were originally that way. In any manuscripts that we have come across in the course of folklore-collecting activities, if you see that the folk poet's verse is written incorrectly, do you correct it?^{*38} My understanding came from checking the piece on phonograph - not once

^{*35} [Salcı uses the phrase '*çok sesli*' throughout to refer to the simple (two-part) polyphonic music that is the subject of much of his study. He also uses the phrase '*tek sesli*' (single-voiced, monophonic) music to refer primarily to what he also describes as *şark* (eastern or oriental) music, by which he clearly means what would now be called Ottoman *sanat* (art) music, and which - somewhat confusingly - does not necessarily include monophonic folk music. His implication is that this monophonic 'oriental' music, based on elaborate modal (*makam*) forms, is influenced by Persian and Arabic culture. PK]

^{*36} [The original has '*polikoni*' here, which I have read as a typographical error for *polifoni*. As noted above, Salcı more commonly uses the phrase '*çok sesli*' to refer to polyphony. PK]

^{*37} [*'Halk armoni ve konter poan'*. The publication he refers to is Vahid Lutfi Salcı, "Belâ Bartok'un Konferansları - Gizli Halk Musikisi," *Ülkü Halkevi Dergisi*, 11, no. 62 (Nisan 1938). PK]

^{*38} [A rhetorical, if also prescient, point by Salcı: that is precisely what was to occur in respect to the collection and publishing of such materials in Turkey. Considerable effort has been made to impose order (and correction) upon collections of folk literature, particularly in the matter of authorial attribution. On this topic see Koerbin, "I am Pir Sultan Abdal". This issue also leads to matters of 'correcting' folk materials in the

but several times – and checking among several groups. It must be remembered that it is a villager playing and singing this. Can we wait for them to sing like a conservatory choral society? It is enough that they strive to sing in this manner; if there are mistakes in their singing, so be it. It is enough that the historic presence of harmonic activity in Turkish music can be confirmed with evidence. Reading what was dishonestly written of me, the Paris-based French expert Eugene Borrel said in a letter I received from him, “had you published that piece having made corrections to it, then we would have been suspicious of its correctness and your words”. But what can we do when it is common practice to criticise those among us who are striving hard?

Now again, by way of example, I present below a piece of polyphonic secret music. Analysing this will further clarify our subject and proposition very nicely.



I have had this notation for very many years. I checked it many times wherever I travelled, and I have passed it through a good amount of filtering. Finally, I was completely satisfied that it was sung in this form. Excepting, that in the second, lower part of the sixth measure from the beginning, at the passing ‘si’ quaver, they again repeat a quaver on ‘la’. Then the first part reconciles with them, or the second parts catch up to the first. In addition, the second part that is in the lower position in the ninth measure is sometimes performed as it is written, and sometimes performed as shown in the lower second part in the twenty-second measure.

In singing this *nefes*, it is not sung by means of obliging everyone to be allocated a part; those present who are familiar with all the parts sing the upper or lower part as they wish, among themselves. The *mürşit*, being a person like a ‘conductor’ [*şef*] in the gathering, directs the singing and the rising and falling

movement of the parts. I ought to say about this that the villagers singing the *nefes*, and others like it in this manner, do so without knowing the theory or the art of this way of singing. They sing it in a way that is normal and customary, while giving the piece the importance of the monophonic *nefesler*. Young people instruct one another in this manner of singing. Certainly, not every Alevi tribal group knows this way of singing. The villagers of the group that sings in this manner have known that the villagers of other groups do not know how to sing like this. Therefore, the people of the tribal group who don't know polyphonic singing are astonished when they see and hear this type of singing in the *cemler*. Whenever some jealous rivalry appears among the tribal groups, those who do not know this way of singing criticise the group that does know how, saying,³⁹ 'they even sing *nefes* like infidels [*gâvurlar gibi*]'.

Although the Istanbul Bektashi and Alevi are the most educated group, polyphonic singing is not known among them. As I have explained previously, while putting trust in their having become civilised, they make imputations with some boorishness, against this type of music and with a fervent fanaticism believe in and conform to monophonic oriental [*tek sesli şark*] and set, programmatic musical performance [*fasıl musikiciliğine*]⁴⁰.

We understand that some Alevi groups see this manner of singing some *nefesler* in polyphony as being appropriate to mysticism [*tasavvufa*]. This again is applied to the *saz*. In this way, they build associations with the construction of the *saz*. They liken the body of the *saz* to Ali, the low sounding string [*bam*] to Muhammed, the twelve strings to the twelve imams, and their tones to the fourteen innocents [*on dört masum*] of the imams^{*41}. This issue of polyphonic music is also explained in their literature.

A friend of mine, a Turkish Alevi *saz* poet by the name of Süleyman Gülşeni, who lives in Çavuşlu village in a devout district of western Thrace, corroborated all these symbols and behaviours in a letter that he wrote to me. At the same time, he sent me a verse composition concerning this. That verse runs thus:

My *saz* with the long neck
Is covered with fine nacre
Hypocrite, on this don't dissemble
Its speech is sweeter than nectar

³⁹ Among Alevi tribal groups there are some trifling differences in matters of prayer and salutation, and method and principles. While each group claims that their own system and fundamentals is suitable to basic principles, one side says the other side is making mistakes. Because of this there is some resulting rivalry among them. Therefore, they interact in such a way while gossiping about each other.

⁴⁰ There are examples of this form in the two volumes of *Bektaşî nefesleri* published by the Istanbul Conservatory. [These volumes were published in 1933 under the direction of Rauf Yekta as *Türk Müsîkîsi Klasiklerinden Bektaşî Nefesleri*. Eighty-seven of the notated pieces were later republished in Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Alevî Bektaşî Nefesleri*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: İnkilâp Kitabevi, 1992), 277-367. PK]

^{*41} [On the fourteen innocents see John Kingsley Birge *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac Oriental, 1994 [1937]), 147-148. PK]

Refrain

My Ali, my Ali, smile my Ali
 Smile upon me once my Ali
 If you don't smile^{*42} upon me
 Sing as the nightingale my Ali

My *saz*, my *saz*, get my *saz*
 Come and rest at my breast, my *saz*
 Even if I am sleeping
 Don't you ever stop – play, my *saz*

Running and rushing I came
 I went in pain but in joy I came
 Fill it, pour it and give it up, cupbearer
 By a far and distant road I came⁴³

Your neck is the strength of trees
 Your voice it is twos and threes⁴⁴
 Whoever speaks ill of you
 Is a sinner, in the beyond unseen

Thus, it appears, as I said at the beginning of my book, that the subject is inexhaustible, and the trove of sources remains obscured. Up to now, it has been believed the world over that polyphonic music does not exist in Turkish music; and the baselessness of this opinion, as actually recorded in history, will be understood the more we work on this treasure trove of sources. Once again, one ought to consider that secret literature passed through a stage of doubt and hesitation in recent times almost right before our eyes, did it not? Twenty-five years ago, had we seen Pir Sultan Abdal, Emrah, Gaygusuz, Kul Himmet, Kul Hüseyin, Mirati, Seyrani, Türibi and the mystical literature of their comrades? And were we not astonished to see it over this period of time? There is no doubt that this beautiful literature will also have music. As we said, this literature and its music established itself centuries ago among the tribal groups, as mystical folk [*halk tasavvufi*] belief itself. However, this secrecy continues to greatly accumulate and increase since the folklorists could not get to where they wanted and set up their phonographs for the purpose of gathering materials.

Because the source of this music is the musical history of the Turkish tribes, it is necessary to work much harder to collect these things. If this is done, it will be understood that 'harmony' has existed in Turkish music for centuries, and beside raising the reputation of our music in respect to the civilised world, not only today's but future generations of Turkish composers will be given thematic subjects for the great works they will write. But the means must be determined and established to find and research this subject matter and sources. We believe

^{*42} [The original has *hülmez*, which I have read as an error or misprint for *gülmez*. PK]

⁴³ How similar are these two lines of this poem to Samih Rifat's poem that he wrote for İzmir. [Salcı is referring to the poem by Samih Rifat (1875-1932) titled 'Akdeniz Kıyılarında' ('On the Mediterranean Coast'), also known, with a musical setting, as the 'Gelibolu Marşı' ('The Gallipoli March'). PK]

⁴⁴ Is this not describing polyphonic music? [I have translated *ses* as voice here, but it can also mean 'sound'. The Turkish here reads: *sesin iki, üçlüdür*. PK]

very strongly that the state of research today cannot successfully do this and will not be able to so. This work will certainly not be achieved by making summer holiday excursions here and there. If it is necessary to collect the open part, it is essential to collect the secret part.

If conducted with good intent, there will be nothing lacking.

The true character of secret folk music is not connected to religion

According to the opinion I have gained up to now from my close examination, these are the main types of music used and practiced in Turkey.

1. 'Oriental music' - having an Ottoman passport, stamped with a Turkish visa.
2. 'Occidental music'.
3. 'Open urban dervish lodge music' - like the Rufai and Kadiri and, most prominently, Mevlevi orders use.
4. 'Secret urban dervish lodge music' - that used by urban Bektashis that is affected by oriental music.
5. 'Village dervish lodge music' - a more basic form of the oriental music of the affiliates of village Mevlevi, Rufai and Kadiri orders.
6. 'Open folk music' - being very closely connected to our subject and dwelling at the heart of pure Turkish music.
7. 'Secret folk music' - that expressing our argument and subject matter.
8. 'Folk music that is a mixture of oriental and occidental music (bands)' - although having come to us later, with its national airs has made all of us weep from time to time with much gratitude and thanks.
9. 'Jazz music' - like a sweet little devil that afterwards haunts our mind.

From these, even if it appears at first sight that secret folk music may be seen to be like dervish lodge music, this view is wrong. Secret folk music is Turkish Alevi, Bektashi and Kızılbaş^{*45} music; it is the fellow and companion of open folk music,

^{*45} [Salcı does not clarify his use of the term Kızılbaş, but seems to use it to refer to Anatolian Alevis specifically. The term originally referred to those tribes that aligned themselves politically with the Safavid cause in the 16th century, and who pursued an antinomian course in Ottoman Anatolia. But the history of the Kızılbaş in the context of Alevi history more generally is complex and opaque. Karakaya-Stump provides the most detailed examination of the socio-political history of the Kızılbaş and presents a compelling argument for their progression from pre-Safavid formation around Sufi and dervish networks, through the consolidation of identity by their Safavid alignment and their subsequent persistence in Anatolia as a closed and secret community. See Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). For a discussion of the signification of the designations Kızılbaş and Alevi, particularly in the context of nationalist and Islamic discourse in the late Ottoman period and republican Turkey, see Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). PK]

expressing the same manner and form, and differing significantly from the other types. Other dervish orders give names to their literature and musical pieces according to the forms, like *nutuk*, *semaî*, *ilahî*, *gazel* and *devriye*. The most well-known of these forms is the *ilahî*, and the most prevalent form of these *ilahîler* is the *semaî*. Secret folk music also takes names, organised independently in their own way. The foremost and most famous of these are the *nefesler*. These *nefesler* have names and divisions such as *oturak*, *dört köşe* and *şahlama*. They call the slow, dignified *nefes* '*oturak*'. This type of *nefes* has a slow tempo [*usul*] and is sung while sitting down^{*46}. They call *nefes* that are a little animated and lively '*dört köşe*'^{*47}. These are customarily in a somewhat playful [*oynakça*] rhythm^{*48} and are sung in the more emotive periods of the *muhabbetler*. They call the more spirited, fast-moving *nefes* '*şahlama*'. This form is a dance *nefes*. It is sung, played and danced while performing the *sema*^{*49}. All of these exhibit exactly the characteristics of open folk music. Although its literature appears religious, it is an independent and unique kind of folk literature, not resembling the literature of other dervish orders and lodges. *Nefes* are commonly in *koşma*^{*50} form. There are some in *semai*^{*51} form. In village secret folk literature and music, the *ilahî* of other dervish orders are not sung and played. The singing and playing of them is considered a sin [*günah*]. They do not use the *gazel* form, that syrupy style of *Divan* literature, even if it incorporates meanings that speak and assert their own matters and instruction. Their only literary and musical form, being the only pure form of open folk music, is the *koşma*. These are also the *nefesler* that express their beliefs and all their trials and feelings – the human, the social, their life events and their narratives. And these have the quality of an 'argument in a case' [*dâvada bürhancılık*], not the extreme qualities of the religious or the dervish lodge.

Don't be deceived by the pious ascetic whose words are false
By the bastard son in the form of some preacher
All his words are false and contrary to the Quran
So don't strive in vain for profitless gain

This one who speaks lies and rubbish for the ignorant
As if he were the heir of the prophet's path
God curse him, this purveyor of filth
For us from God comes the benevolence of wine

^{*46} [The word *oturak* translates as 'while sitting'. PK]

^{*47} [Literally meaning 'four-cornered' or 'square'. PK]

^{*48} [In musical terms, *oynak* can refer to a tune with a rhythm of nine beats, though that does not seem to be the specific meaning here. PK]

^{*49} [While Salcı uses the term '*sema*', this is now more commonly written as *semah* or *samah* when referring to the Alevi mystical dance, thus orthographically distinguishing it from the Mevlevi *sema*. PK]

^{*50} [A syllabic, rather than metred, form of folk lyric, usually arranged in strophes of four lines, each primarily composed of 11 syllables, in the form 6 + 5 or 4 + 4 + 3. There is also a standard rhyme structure, usually *abab* for the first strophe, followed by *cccb*, *dddb* etc for the following strophes. PK]

^{*51} [Similar to the *koşma* form, but with lines of 8 syllables. PK]

Would that this crude preacher a more mature soul
 Would that religion been more agreeable to Harabi
 Would that he had become a Muslim
 For a prayer mat washed with wine^{*52}

Come my beautiful one, don't run from us
 We are not outlandish, we are companions
 We are brothers on the same path
 We are the way within the liturgy

We travel from one condition to the next
 Together we fall into utterances
 Let us leave and pass from place to place
 We are the freshly opened rose

Whether it is within or without
 Appearing in every aspect
 We are the jewel with the moneylender
 Ignorant of the valuable coin we are

I am Pir Sultan, for what do you cry?
 Tears of blood fall from your eye
 Is it for fire you hope from us?
 We are the rose burned in the fire^{*53}

If these two examples are examined closely, they have no strong character of the dervish lodge and in that respect, it is rightly called an unrelated but striking folk literature, accepting and assimilating western culture and unrestricted in its struggle with fanatical Sufis.

Further, let us take an example from Emrah^{*54}, a magnanimous, independent and untrammelled poet:

Let the one renouncing and carousing come
 We have our cup with the wine of love
 From the truthful sage let him take support
 We have the assembly equipped and ready

Come Sufi, don't be deceived by cheap baubles
 Be your own means of remedy for yourself
 Don't dilly-dally and delay for the beloved's brow
 We have our prayer rug placed and prostrate there^{*55}

^{*52} [This *nefes* is by Harabi (1853-1917), one of the most forthright and renowned Alevi-Bektashi poets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A longer version of this *nefes* can be found in Dursun Gümüsoğlu, *Ahmed Edîb Harâbî Dîvânı, Yaşamı ve Tüm Şiirleri* (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 2013 [2003]), 200. PK]

^{*53} [Beginning with the version published by Sadettin Nüzhet in 1929, most published versions of this *nefes* render this line as '*yanmış üfrülmüş külüz biz*' – 'we are ashes of embers blown and burned'. See Sadettin Nüzhet. *XVII inci asır sazşairlerinden Pir Sultan Abdal* (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1929), 70-71. In keeping with Salcı's view that we should not try and correct assumed 'errors', I don't propose this as suggesting an error, but as an example of the received variant interpretive expression of the work. PK]

^{*54} [Erzurumlu Emrah, active in the first half of the 19th century. For a fuller version of this *nefes*, including the attributive *mahlas* verse, see Orhan Ural, *Ezurumlu Emrah, Yaşamı, Şiirleri* (Ankara: Özgür, 1973), 117-118. PK]

Again, let me give a *koşma* of the folk and *saz* poet called Aşık^{*56}. This *koşma* is a clearer example of what I have called the perspective that is free of the dervish lodge. The poet is addressing both his beloved and his patron saint [*pir*].

Don't turn away from us, o rosy beauty
We are not without right or our patron saint
There is a dark-haired beauty among us
We are not without a beloved to proclaim our state

We don't speak about just anyone
We don't censure the people of truth
We don't give our heart to every captivating one
We are not shameless, we are the people of conviction

May the Lord God grant you justice
O beautiful rose – why don't you bloom?
My hope was a kiss you still have not given
We are not thieves to steal it while you sleep

Aşık – his very breath is a prayer for truth
We get tidings from those finding truth
Like Selman Baba, possessor of the miracle
We have our liturgy – we are not without the way

This *koşma* in some manuscripts is ascribed to Gevheri. Mr Sadettin Nüzhet ascribes it to him in his book titled *Gevheri*^{*57}. There, in place of 'Selman Baba, possessor of the miracle' is written 'Hacı Bektaş, possessor of the miracle', so that now it is necessary to see both as admissible and probable^{*58}. Whichever one, the *koşma* is a document showing that the folk poet does not have a strong relationship to the perspective of the dervish lodge and the religious sects. The words of the most genuine Kızılbaş poet we know, Pir Sultan, even leap off the printed page^{*59}:

They said God does not accept what you give
What should I do – he took what he gave to me

Above all, in this there is nothing of Arab religion or Arab culture. There are a great many such hidden examples in this type of literature. The music of these is yet more devoid of the religious and the Arabic. It is entirely Turkish music. Let us give an example concerning this.

^{*55} [*Bizim o mihrabda seccademiz var*. This line qualifies the previous line's reference to the 'beloved's brow' (*ebrü yare*) and evokes the Alevi concept of the direction of the prayer niche (*mihrab*) as being located at the forehead between the eyes, and thus directed within oneself. PK]

^{*56} [Little is known about Aşık (or Aşık Dede), but it is believed he died in the second half of the 17th century. PK]

^{*57} [Published in 1928 in Ottoman script by Ahmet Kamil Matbaası in Istanbul. Gevheri was a *saz* poet active in the eighteenth century. PK]

^{*58} [This again goes to the point Salcı makes above: that we should work to understand what we receive as expressed culture, rather than trying to correct assumed errors. PK]

^{*59} [Literally, 'flew off the offset printing plate' (*kayıt çenberinden fırlamıştır*); an interesting evocation by Salcı of the actual process of producing the monograph itself. PK]

In the previous section, titled ‘Harmony’ in secret folk music – activity and traces’, I gave as an example a polyphonic composition with the words of the famous Pir Sultan. The melody of this is the same as that of the folksong ‘Çavuş’, sung by everybody in Istanbul a great many years ago and still remembered now by most of us. In this piece, instead of ‘why does the gloom over Yıldız Mountain not leave’ [*niçin gitmez yıldız dağın dumanı*], they sing ‘the wildly swaggering bayonet flies from your waist’ [*çok sallama kasatura fırlar belinden*]; the second time it is sung, they sing ‘from your waist Sergeant, from your waist, from your waist’ [*belinden çavuş, belinden, belinden*]; and, usually they sing it three times and the third time they say ‘I was hurt Sergeant, I was hurt by your hand’ [*yandım çavuş, yandım senin elinden*].

In the research I made among Anatolian Alevi groups about the text of the Yıldız Mountain poem^{*60}, the following tale is found among their elders.

As the story goes, Pir Sultan, pursued by Hızır Paşa, who is seeking to hang him, went to Yıldız Mountain^{*61} with his sister Elif. The poet, afflicted by the pain of the situation, both pours out his grief and takes inspiration from the heights of the mountain. So, at that time he sang this *nefes*:

Since I have come, I will seek a little news
Why does the gloom^{*62} over Yıldız Mountain not leave?
I will get news from the true initiates
Why does the gloom over Yıldız Mountain not leave?

The seal is of the scarlet red stone
In the garden is the nightingale-voiced bird
I don’t know what is the cause of your misfortune
Why does the gloom over Yıldız Mountain not leave?

My Shah is swathed in scarlet red
He who does not see the friend’s face is the enemy
Ali appears through the grace of the guide
Why does the gloom over Yıldız Mountain not leave?

I know that you are the mightiest of mountains
Your great heights are a place of refuge
You are Abdal Pir Sultan’s place of pleasure
Why does the gloom over Yıldız Mountain not leave?
(The gloom Elif, the gloom, the gloom)

Pir Sultan both sang this *nefes* and addressed Elif. The line in the poem ‘why does the gloom over Yıldız Mountain not leave?’ is repeated; addressing Elif, he says ‘the gloom Elif, the gloom, the gloom’. All Alevi groups sing it in this way. In this

^{*60} [The full text of this poem was first published in Sadettin Nüzhet, *XVII inci asır sazşairlerinden Pir Sultan Abdal*, 47. PK]

^{*61} [Yıldız Dağı, literally ‘Star Mountain’. This is the majestic mountain (2,552 metres) whose perfect profile can be seen commanding the skyline to the northeast from the perspective of the heights (Ziyaret Tepe) above the village of Banaz, the village in Sivas-Yıldızeli province where Pir Sultan Abdal is believed to have been born and lived. PK]

^{*62} [The word here is *duman*, which commonly means smoke, mist, haze or fog, but also has a sense of a bad or hopeless state or condition, which has influenced my choice of ‘gloom’. PK]

regard it expresses a characteristic unity with the folk song 'Çavuş', both in the manner of singing the melody and in the text. While the melody of the 'Çavuş' folksong is frequently associated with open folk music, on account of the Yıldız Mountain melody and *nefes* being older, one would not regard it as strange that it was influenced by the Yıldız Mountain composition. Many secret folk music compositions like this, despite not having seeped to the outside and been heard, at least in those times, are understood to have advanced together, from the perspective of character, with open folk music.

Concluding word

As a kind of preparation for my book in three volumes that will come out after this, titled *Kızılbaş Şairleri*⁶³, I saw the publication of this pamphlet as a means to put forward a partial explanation and argument to address what I saw as some wrong interpretations of articles that I wrote regarding the subject, that were not immediately understood. I believe this is sufficient to explain the purpose of the subject and brevity of this book.

It is apparent that for centuries in Turkey there was a great abundant current of 'secret music' flowing forward, without trickling to the outside world. I have explained and proved this in part, with the necessary scholarly evidence and with historic cases and events. There is some oral evidence that even surpasses written and scientific evidence in value. That is, after the contents of this pamphlet, if anyone should still doubt whether or not a secret music has existed for centuries in Turkey, I can recommend at the same time oral and living proof to all of them. As evidence of this: today, when you read this book to anyone who has lived as a Bektashi or Alevi, they will immediately bear witness and confirm it. But the people to be asked must be from the educated, who closely understand the matters of local knowledge: in other words, not those who continue to hold back from speaking and hesitate on the claims regarding 'secrecy and mystery' [*gizlilik, sır*]. There is in circulation a great amount of evidence – in the millions – of secret music.

Upon coming to the problem of finding living witnesses and evidence in matters of polyphonic music, because this type of music is made only in some sections of the village Alevi tribal groups, city dwellers and some groups of village folk can never know it. For this reason, it is necessary to see it performed.

Folklore organisations ought to find this. But the difficulty in this work is this: together with all the dervish orders, this type of Alevilik is forbidden, and seeing these things is dependent upon the *ayin* ceremony being conducted and viewed. Thus, this task has the peculiarity that if you find any who know of it, they

⁶³ This work of mine has begun to be serialised in the *Halk Bilgisi Haberleri* magazine published by the Istanbul Eminönü Halkevi. [The proposed publication in three volumes does not appear to have ever materialised. However, Salcı did publish at least a dozen articles in the *Halk Bilgisi Haberleri* magazine under this title, between 1940 and 1941. PK]

cannot explain these things to you and cannot sing outside the *ayin* ceremony itself.

These, as I explained, are the reasons for insisting in the articles I wrote that importance be given to folkloric music's secret part, because these highly valuable materials are at the point of being lost. Men of science will be able to attain these things by finding openings and special contacts. The gathering of folklore materials means to work, struggle and wear oneself out with toil. Traveling around in automobile excursions from city to city, collecting a few songs popular with boys and girls, or five or ten Koroğlu^{*64} tunes, may be something, but it is not skilled. In this work it is necessary to follow a method, 'to prioritise the most urgent matters'.

The folklorist that I recognise ought to go around on foot, utterly wearied, while shivering and freezing in the snow in winter and sweating in the summer sun. They must hear the *kaval* of the shepherds in the countryside. They must hear the cheerful and tearful songs of the ruddy-cheeked girls coming to get water, singing songs while concealed at the fountains and springs in the villages. They must record the legends and adventures from poor elderly men while guests in their houses. Among Alevi, they must become a genuine Kızılbaş; among Sunni they must be meticulous in their religious observance. I don't get the idea of going by automobile to a city, gathering tunes sung and brought from prisons, and organising archives, intending that future generations will listen to them. So it is that I am not one of those who sees sincerity at all in this.

All our official and private institutions, being organised in cooperation on the topic of music folklore, ought to work to find both open and secret folk music, all the while with a profound understanding. We must take possession [*benimsemeliyiz*] of our folk music, to the extent that no foreign element remains. We ought to be so jealous in this regard that the foreign oriental music that has chronically worked away at our minds for centuries is erased, and we can then claim the time to comfortably make the musical reform that we want. But I am fearful of the claims and opinions that our musicians currently have. While wishing to make polyphonic music, they don't want to touch it so long as they continue to talk about the beauty of monophonic oriental music. They assert, as proof of their claims, that in literature Fuzuli and Nefi cannot be refuted^{*65}. Fuzuli and Nefi are not refuted in fact, and will not be able to be refuted. But has not their art and style been able to be abandoned? We do not make their type of art now. Certainly they employed their genius in that style and were successful. For this, we do not refute them; and we value them. But we no longer pursue their art. There is no

^{*64} [A bandit poet of considerable legend. Thought to have lived in the late 16th century and participated in the Celali rebellions. His heroic songs are popular among the singers of Turkish romance (*hikaye*). See İlhan Başgöz, *Hikâye: Turkish folk romance as performance art* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2008). PK]

^{*65} [Fuzuli was born in Karbala and lived in the first half of the 16th century, spending some time attending the tomb of the Imam Ali in Najaf. Interestingly, while Fuzuli is regarded as one the greatest Ottoman poets and wrote in Persian, Arabic and Turkish – the point Salci makes here – he is also recognised as one of the seven great poets (*yedi ulular*) by Alevi, although his lyric works appear much less frequently than the Kızılbaş poets Hatayi, Pir Sultan Abdal and Kul Himmət. Nefi, renowned as a satirist and classical lyricist in the Persian style, lived in the late 16th to early 17th century. PK]

denying the beauty of İtrî's musical compositions [*karlar*] as masterpieces^{*66}. However, that art holds no place in our music anymore. If it remained, we could not make the polyphonic music we want to produce. Both do not advance at the same time. There is a great example right in front of us. Did we use the art of Fuzuli and Nefi in constructing the plain language of our present language reform? Have we not abandoned them? Why are the compound words of Persian and Arabic texts not used? What became of that beautiful *Divan* literature? We are able to understand polyphony with a lot of listening. How beautiful! What does one make of a lot of listening to monophony? That monophony that worked into our soul for centuries, and that we have loved so dearly. Because of the love for it, even as I write these lines, my description causes me pain. But this is the truth of it – so what should we do? What is the sense of listening to polyphonic folk music while radios shrilly scream monophony and stir up our original habits?

This work has no tolerance for deception. Everyone can love a Katerina, but not everyone can become a Baltacı^{*67}.

Yes, we can accept that mature people can digest both monophony and polyphony. However, the revolutionary spirit cannot accept this. Because the reform to be made is not of the individual [*ferdi*], but of the community [*cemi*].

If we wish to make it familiar and accustom the masses to it, establishing polyphonic music in our minds, why are we defending the opposite in monophonic music? We are not denying this. But while our esteem remains for those like the İtrîs, the Yusuf Ağas, the Fuzulis and Nefis, let them be put to one side.

Exactly like our language reform, just as we removed and threw out the language of the Enderun^{*68} and replaced it with a national people's [*halk*] language, we ought to remove and throw out the more turgid Enderun music and replace it with folk music.

^{*66} [Buhûrîzade Mustafa İtrî was one of the most renowned early Ottoman composers of Turkish religious (*dini*) music, as well as secular works. He lived in 17th to the early 18th century. PK]

^{*67} [This is a reference to a legendary incident in the campaign at the River Pruth in 1711, when the Ottoman Grand Vizier, Baltacı ('Axeman') Mehmet surprised and surrounded the Russian czar, Peter the Great. With the Russians at his mercy, Baltacı did not push his advantage, instead accepting terms that were surprisingly favourable to the Russians. The story goes that Peter's wife Catherine met secretly with Baltacı and presented her own jewels to secure the favourable terms. Salcı's point seems to be that we can be tempted by baubles, but we don't all have to be influenced by them. On the Pruth campaign, see Stanford J. Shaw, 1976. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Volume 1: Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280-1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 229-231. The legendary involvement of Czarina Catherine is mentioned in Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1977), 372. PK]

^{*68} [A reference to the Enderun or Ottoman Palace school and curriculum, which included Islamic studies along with the Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages and study of the arts, including music. The school was noted for educating the Ottoman managerial, bureaucratic and military classes. So, in both practical and symbolic terms, it stands for the continuation of Ottoman education, culture and sensibilities. PK]

Our colleagues and friends who take responsibility for making and disseminating both music folklore and music reform ought to think hard about these things.

As one of our notable politicians^{*69} said: those wielding a sharp sword should beware of false attacks.

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^{*69} [A reference to Ahmet Ferit Tek (1887-1971), politician, academic and diplomat and first president of the *Türk Ocakları* organisation. The quote is from his article concerning political Turanism titled “Türk Ocakları” published around 1914-15 (Rumi 1330) in the Ottoman language yearbook *Nevsal-i Millî*. PK]