

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A VOICE OF THEIR OWN:  
MUSIC AND SOCIAL COHESION IN  
TURKISH ALEVI LIFE

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This dissertation examines the role that music has played in the expression of identity and revitalization of culture of the Alevis in Turkey, since the start of their sociocultural revival movement in the late 1980s. Music is central to Alevi claims of ethnic and religious difference—singing and playing the *bağlama* (Turkish folk lute) constitutes an expressive practice in worship and everyday life. Based on research conducted from 2012 to 2014, I investigate and present Alevi music through the lens of discourses on the construction of identity as a social and musical process.

Alevi musicians perform a revived repertoire of the ritual music and folk songs of Anatolian bards and dervish-lodge poets that developed over several centuries. Contemporary media and performance contexts have blurred former distinctions between sacred and secular, yet have provided new avenues to build

community in an urban setting. I compare music performances in the worship services of urban and small-town areas, and other community events such as devotional meetings, concerts, clubs, and broadcast and social media to illustrate the ways that participation—both performing and listening—reinforces identity and solidarity. I also examine the influence of these different contexts on performers' musical choices, and the power of music to evoke a range of responses and emotional feelings in the participants.

Through my investigation I argue that the Alevi music repertoire is not only a cultural practice but also a symbol of power and collective action in their struggle for human rights and self-determination. As Alevis have faced a redefined Turkish nationalism that incorporates Sunni Muslim piety, this music has gained even greater potency in their resistance to misrecognition as a folkloric, rather than a living, tradition.

A VOICE OF THEIR OWN: MUSIC AND SOCIAL COHESION  
IN TURKISH ALEVI LIFE

by

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## Guide to Pronunciation and Conventions

Modern Turkish uses three diacritical marks—the cedilla (ç), the umlaut (ö and ü), and the soft g (ğ)—and a dotted (ı) and dotless (i) letter I. Words from Arabic and Persian may contain a circumflex (û, â, or î), which elongates the vowel and may add a “y” sound preceding that vowel. Vowels have a single sound (as opposed to long and short vowel sounds in English).

<b><u>Letter</u></b>	<b><u>Pronunciation</u></b>
A a	as <b>a</b> voir in French
C c	j as in <b>j</b> ustice
Ç ç	ch as in <b>ch</b> urch
E e	e as in <b>e</b> st
Ğ ğ	silent – lengthens the preceding vowel
I ı	io as in <b>cau</b> tion
İ i	e as in <b>seed</b> but shorter
J j	as <b>j</b> our in French
O o	as in <b>bol</b> t
Ö ö	as <b>könig</b> in German
Ş ş	as in <b>sho</b> e
U u	as in <b>pu</b> sh
Ü ü	as <b>ü</b> ber in German

Proper names, organizations and places are spelled in Turkish; the last two are followed by translations in parenthesis, as are Turkish terms.

In the dissertation, I refer to contacts by their first names followed by respectful titles such as *Bey* (equivalent to Mr.), *Hanim* (equivalent to Mrs.), and *Hoca* (teacher); for example, Cem *Hoca*. This is a common way of presenting names in Turkey—few people mentioned their surnames to me in interviews and conversations unless they were asked to do so. I use other common appellations such as *abi* (a contraction of *ağa bey*—older brother) and *abla* (older sister) that are used to address or refer to older siblings, persons older than the speaker, or to those in authority in certain situations such as a bus driver, or secretary.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

“How did you become interested in the Alevis?,” many people have asked me. A course I took at the University of Maryland on the music of Turkey and Egypt sparked my initial curiosity, and a Turkish folk song about Dersim, a province in Anatolia, that I heard in that class, led me to research the Dersim uprising of the late 1930s and more of the history of the Alevis who were involved. As I began to learn about the difficulties Alevis have faced in making claims as an ethnic-religious minority, I wanted to investigate their case further in part because of the struggles of numerous ethnic and religious minorities in the United States. Although I had considered conducting research on Alevi communities in diaspora locations, several scholars advised me that I would find more people to work with on a regular basis in Turkey.

The name Alevi, “followers of Ali,” in use since the nineteenth century, is a self-identifying term for a number of loosely connected regional groups in Turkey whose music and beliefs combine influences from the shamanic practices of Central Asia and Anatolia, Shi’ite tendencies in the worship of Imam Ali derived from the sixteenth-century Safavid dynasty, and an affiliation with the Bektaşî dervish order (Markoff 2002a: 822). Historically, Alevis have been regarded with suspicion by the Ottomans and later by the Turkish government because of local uprisings against suppressive rule, ritual practices that incorporate music and sung poetry, and men and women worshipping together as equals.

Population estimates vary widely since census data do not take account of different beliefs among Muslim Turks: some sources indicate that Alevis comprise about



twenty-five percent of Turkey's population, or fifteen to twenty million people.<sup>1</sup> Before urban migration began in the 1950s, the majority of the (Turkish-speaking) population was found in central Anatolia with subgroups in the Aegean and Mediterranean areas of the country, as well as Kurdish-speaking Alevi in Sivas, Maraş, Malatya, and Erzincan. The pioneering work of Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (1989), determined over forty distinct ethnicities in Turkey based on language and religion, different definitions by insiders and outsiders, and change over time.

*Alevilik* is more than a philosophy or religion; it is a way of life. I use the term “*Alevilik*” instead of “Alevism” since Turkish scholars associate “-ism” with Western constructs. Social music making is a central feature of Alevi life and involves singing and playing different sized instruments in a family of plucked lutes called *saz*. The *saz*, considered a sacred musical instrument, is played in the worship service, *cem* (assembly), as well as in other gatherings of musical exchange (*muhabbet*). Sung poetry and sacred movements called *semah* performed in the *cem* play an important role in achieving spiritual unity with God.<sup>2</sup> Alevi speak of being “on the path” (*yol dayım*) of personal accountability, self-improvement, and ethical behavior and are guided by the mystical and folk songs of dervish-lodge poets and contemporary poet-musicians.

An Alevi sociocultural revival movement that had been gathering momentum in Turkey and Germany was launched in the late 1980s-early 1990s with published manifestos that called for the open expression of Alevi identity as a human right. The movement was a response to a complex of factors including the relaxing of laws banning

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<sup>1</sup> “Freedom of Religion in Turkey – the Alevi Issue” 24 January 2014. European Policy Center. [http://www.epc.eu/pub\\_details.php?pub\\_id=4093](http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?pub_id=4093) (accessed March 11, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> The *saz* is also called *bağlama*, from the verb *bağlamak* (to tie), referring to the frets that are tied onto the neck of the instrument.

associations and publishing in non-Turkish languages (that is, Kurdish), renewed interest in Alevi cultural and religious heritage, and the military's coup and oppressive three-year control of the government (1980-83) that redefined Turkishness with a more (Sunni) Muslim point of view. The 1990s saw the sudden rise of Alevi associations, a flood of scholarly, religious, and popular publications about Alevi history, culture and beliefs, and a boom in music and media production specifically for Alevi audiences.

The Alevi case is compelling for several reasons. First, in the Middle East region, where Arabic and Persian literary traditions feature poetry as the main repository of history, genealogy, epic stories, and expressions of love and other sentiments, Alevi practice emphasizes the integration of poetry and music in performance that combines instruments and voices and draws particularly on Sufi influences from the Bektasi dervishes. Second, unlike other minority traditions that distinguish between sacred and secular spaces, Alevi music and performance blur the distinctions between these spaces with certain types of songs performed in a variety of contexts. Also, unlike some religions that consider only the word of God to be holy, *dedes* consider the words of Alevi poet-musicians to be sacred, and music to be an indispensable part of the journey to unity with God.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in view of the Alevi history of regional differences in worship practices, life ways, and musical style, the Alevi case presents a challenge to the ways that ethnomusicologists and other academicians define the terms minority and ethnicity. Similarly, determining a repertoire of music that is distinctly Alevi within the large and regionally diverse body of Turkish folk music presents a parallel challenge.

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<sup>3</sup> One important example is Şah Hatayî, the pen name of Shah Ismail (1487-1524), the founder of the Persian Safavid dynasty, who was believed by Alevi to be the direct descendant of İmam Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammed).

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Determined to learn about Alevi music in all its forms, I arrived in Istanbul for the first time in the summer of 2012 to make initial contacts with Alevi *dedes* (spiritual leaders) and musicians, and to find a *bağlama* (Turkish folk lute) teacher.<sup>4</sup> The weather was terribly hot, much like a summer in Washington, D.C., and while upscale hotels and restaurants in tourist areas had air conditioning, neighborhood shops and most private residences did not. People walked slowly on sidewalks and took their time to board buses, irritating the drivers who wanted to be on their way. That evening I went out to a nearby produce market to buy some fruits and vegetables, and noticed that a breeze had started up, cooling the humid air somewhat. After making my purchases I walked along the Bosphorus Strait where outdoor cafés were crowded with patrons drinking hot tea and Turkish coffee and smoking cigarettes. It was surprising to see a fair number of women wearing headscarves and cotton coats among other women dressed in light summer clothes. As I walked back to my apartment I wondered why some women would choose to wear so much clothing—and probably be so uncomfortable—in the summer heat.

At 5:30 a.m. the next morning I was awakened by the *ezan* (*adhan* in Arabic), the call to prayer that begins “*Allah hu ekber*” (“God is great” in Arabic). The call to prayer is a single line of melody chanted by a *müezzin* (one who calls Muslims to worship) and is broadcast from a mosque (*cami*) outfitted with speakers around the minarets—the tall spires of the mosque. Depending on one’s location in Istanbul, several broadcasts of the

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<sup>4</sup> Different sizes of *saz* have specific names; *bağlama* refers particularly to the short-necked and long-necked sizes.

chant can be heard at the same time, since there are so many mosques in the city. Well, not exactly at the same time: I heard a second chant begin about fifteen seconds later, and a third one a few seconds after that, with an echoing effect. The *ezan* was broadcast several more times that day, in fact five times in all, with the last one occurring at about 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. Daily prayer is one of the one of the five pillars of Muslim practice along with the declaration of faith, fasting during Ramadan, giving alms, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca once in one's lifetime. Sunni Muslim practices are both audible and visible in Turkey's landscape, and mosques pervade urban and rural landscapes. Large and small, with and without courtyards, every few blocks one can see a mosque or the minarets of one rising above other buildings on city streets.

On my first Friday—the Muslim holy day—in the city I came out of a restaurant across the street from Teşvikiye Cami after I had eaten lunch. The courtyard of the mosque was packed with rows of men seated in their stocking feet on small prayer rugs, participating in mid-day prayers.<sup>5</sup> Other men who could not fit into the courtyard were crowded together on their prayer rugs, on the adjacent sidewalks. The public address system carried the sound of the *imam*'s preaching throughout the neighborhood. Given what I had read about the differences between Sunni Muslim and Alevi worship practices and other attitudes, I wondered just how much Alevis felt like outsiders and how they negotiated their experiences as a minority in Turkey's Sunni Muslim culture.

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<sup>5</sup> It is particularly important for men to go to the mosque on Fridays, the holiest day of the week for Muslims, and the lunch hour is convenient for many who work.



Figures 1.1 and 1.2 Friday prayers at the Teşvikiye Cami.

When Alevi worship practices went public in the 1990s, large assembly houses, *cemevis*, which did not exist prior to the sociocultural revival movement, were built to be centers of urban religious and social life. Umbrella associations like the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği) and the Alevi-Bektashi Federation (Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu—ABF) connected Alevi communities in Turkey to their counterparts in continental Europe and the United Kingdom.



Figure 1.3 Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (St. Hacı Bektaş Anatolia Culture Foundation), Okmeydanı.

In the initial enthusiasm of the 1990s, Alevis felt more comfortable declaring their identity, yet twenty-five years later many still feel that they are not accepted as a faith-based group. Ideally they would like their beliefs and practices to have equal status with those of Sunni Muslims and a *cemevi* to have equal status with a mosque. Yet, while contending with compulsory religious education classes and other discriminatory state policies, Alevis continue their lives and cultural practices, and find inspiration in the music and words of their poet-minstrels.

#### THE HACI BEKTAŞ FESTIVAL

To get more of a sense of Alevi concerns, and to make contacts with Alevi spiritual leaders and community members, I attended the Hacı Bektaş Festival, held yearly in the small town of the same name (located in Nevşehir Province about 140 miles southeast of Ankara), honoring the thirteenth-century mystic and humanist revered by Alevis.

A Turkish friend in Ankara offered to accompany me to the festival and help with translation. On the eve of the festival we attended a *sohbet* (conversation)—an Alevi group meeting with singing and discussions of faith. Dertli Divani *Dede* (hereafter, Divani *Dede*), an Alevi-Bektaşî spiritual leader and the emcee of the program, is perhaps the most well-known living *dede* and musician in Turkey. The others who performed with him, Erdal Erzincan, Tolga Sağ, and Gani Pekşen, are also famous *bağlama* musicians and teachers. The next morning I interviewed scholar-musician Gani Pekşen about the songs I had heard at the *sohbet*. His comments about the loss of regional

differences and a trend toward homogenization of Alevi music and worship through the work of popular leaders and revivalist musicians helped me to formulate more specific questions to investigate the transformations of tradition in urban areas and small-towns.

That afternoon, the festival got into full swing. Busloads of arriving visitors toured the Hacı Bektaş museum and cultural center, formerly a dervish lodge, and headed for vendor tables of souvenirs, crafts, and clothing. I noticed paintings and other images of Turkey's founder and first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (meaning the father or teacher of the Turks), along with those of Pir Sultan Abdal and other historical Alevi saints and teachers. The cultural center's auditorium featured a program of speeches about possible changes to the Turkish constitution, followed by traditional folk music performances.

Later we went to a worship service at the Hacı Bektaş Veli Garip Dede Kültür ve Konuk Evi (Saint Hacı Bektash Garip Dede Culture and Guest House). There were two groups of assistants helping the *dede* to carry out the parts of the service, one group dressed in all-red and the other in all-white costumes; each member wore color-coordinated ribbons around their waists and heads. Their *semah* movements—the sacred dance that completes the main part of the service—were executed in perfect synchrony.



Figure 1.4 *Semah* assistants at the Hacı Bektaş Veli *cemevi*, Nevşehir.

At times the *dede* who led the worship service called out emphatically to the congregation, “cry for İmam Hüseyin!” The brightly colored garments of the assistants and the *dede*’s dramatic exhortations made this service seem more theatrical than one I had attended in New Jersey the previous spring.<sup>6</sup> Comparing the two services raised many questions about the kinds of practices I would find at different *cemevis* and whether they indicated personal or regional practices. I wondered why some *dedes*, like the one who led the service in New Jersey, sing and play the *bağlama* while this *dede* did not. What differences would I find in the musical repertoires and performances at different *cemevis*?

Back in the town square I met Güzel Erbağ *Dede* from Çorum (hereafter, Güzel *Dede*), who quickly began to give me other contacts and places where I could find the best *cems* to observe. He, my friend Bayram, and I watched as a group of festivalgoers started a spontaneous *semah* in the middle of the square. Güzel *Dede* vigorously expressed his critique of the participants for their lack of spiritual preparation and for the

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<sup>6</sup> Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associates USA, founded in 2010, is the first Alevi association in the United States. <http://pirsultanusa.com/new/> (accessed April 2011).



speed of their movements—for him, the whole *semah* just wasn't *otantik* (authentic).<sup>7</sup> This *semah* and the one I had just seen performed in the worship service at the Hacı Bektaş *cemevi* raised more questions; for example, was Güzel *Dede* correct? If these *semahs* were touristic as a result of the festival situation, then what were the proper conditions and atmosphere for a “genuine” *cem* and *semah*? What would other *dedes* say when asked their opinions and how much consensus or variation would I find regarding ideas of authenticity in worship practices?

## MEETING CEM ÇELEBI

I had heard of Cem Çelebi and his music school through an ethnomusicology student at New York University who was doing research in Turkey. Late one afternoon I took the bus to Okmeydanı, a section of Istanbul where the school was located. Two Turkish women on the bus pointed out the stop called Anadolu Kahvesi (Anatolia coffee house), got off with me, and walked me to the building. I walked up three flights of stairs to a painted metal door that squealed loudly as I pushed it open into a large, central hallway with an office and classrooms along the sides. A man with a ruddy, round face and thick, graying moustache came out of one of the classrooms to greet me and made a cell phone call to his younger brother, Cem, to come over now that I had arrived. While we waited the older brother, İmdat Çelebi *Dede* (an Alevi spiritual leader, hereafter, İmdat *Dede*), took me to sit in on a lesson he was giving. Even as a bystander I was rather

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<sup>7</sup> Scholars disagree on the use of the term *otantik*; some say it is a business or tourist-trade term (Bates, personal communication March, 2016) while others (Markoff 2008) equate it with the English word “authentic.” Native Turkish terms for the sense of authentic include *asıl* and *gerçek* as found in the *Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: SEV Yayıncılık Eğitim ve Ticaret A.Ş. 2013).

intimidated by all of the “tsking” noises İmdat *Dede* made at his student who was struggling to play a few phrases on the *bağlama*, and wondered what my lessons would be like should I decide to study at this school.

I didn’t have too much time to ponder the question as Cem *Hoca* arrived quickly with his wife, Aliye, and I was greeted warmly by both of them.<sup>8</sup> After introductions and a short conversation they took me to the local restaurant to eat. Over lentil soup and *lahmacun*—spicy Turkish pizza that you roll up with onions, lettuce, and sprinkles of lemon juice—I began to ask my first questions about performing Turkish folk music. I wanted to know whether it is important for a song to sound the same from one performance to the next, and if not, then what was important to express? Cem *Hoca* said it would be boring to play a song the same way each time, and that what comes from your heart, from your soul, is most important in a performance. This first exchange was an important perspective from which to begin my understanding of Turkish folk music performance.



Figure 1.5 Cem Çelebi Müzik Eğitim Merkezi (Music Education Center).

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<sup>8</sup> *Hoca* (teacher) is the proper way to refer to any teacher, or “*Hocam*” (my teacher) in direct address, but Cem was uncomfortable with the title.



Figure 1.6 Classroom at the Cem Çelebi Müzik Eğitim Merkezi (Music Education Center).

Two days later I got a call from İmdat *Dede* inviting me to the Sini Türkü Evi (Turkish folk song house) where Cem Hoca would be playing that evening. The türkü house was in Taksim, a major tourist area, but several streets away from İstiklal where the main shops and restaurants were located, and not easy to find after sunset. Once I arrived the owner seated me at a table right in front of stage—a low platform in a smallish alcove—where another performer was finishing his set. Cem *Hoca* showed up about fifteen minutes later, greeted the few patrons in the audience, and did a sound check after the first performer finished. As he began with a short set of songs I watched and listened intently, trying not to be put off by the very loud volume of the amplifier (typical of this type of venue). In this dingy, dark place where the patrons were drinking, talking, smoking, and apparently ignoring the performer on stage, Cem *Hoca* was playing and singing as though they were all paying attention to him. He skillfully executed long scale runs and complex melodic sequences, and sang with great emotional intensity, from his heart, as he had expressed to me earlier. When Aliye and her friends came by later on,

she performed a duet on stage with her husband. Cem *Hoca* is a virtuoso (*usta*), she told me, and it bothers her that patrons don't really listen to him. There were only a few patrons that evening because of Ramadan, the month of mourning for Sunni Muslims when entertainments are avoided, but she explained that even when the venue was more crowded people still don't pay attention (conversation, August 1, 2012). The evening was intriguing for me and generated many questions that I began to scribble quietly in a notebook on my lap as the concert continued: how much could I find out about the lives of professional musicians, how did they define the Alevi music repertoire, and how does it intersect (or not) with Turkish folk music in general?

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FIELDWORK PROCESS

My dissertation examines the role that music has played in the expression of identity and revitalization of culture in the years since the start of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement and that was launched in the late 1980s. I focus on the different types of music that Alevis play and the contexts in which they are performed. I also investigate the ways that participation—both performing and listening—in music events builds community identity and solidarity, and the ways the music may evoke a range of responses and emotional feeling in the participants. I discuss three main theories that frame the dissertation: ethnicity as a social construction, ritual participation and solidarity, and sociomusical processes that form community. I also discuss history, folklore and nationalism, Sufi mysticism and its relationship to Alevi faith practices, identity politics, authorship and ownership of Turkish folk music and arrangements, and

analyze several types of Alevi sung poems and compare them to larger body of Turkish folk music.

As early as my first trip that summer of 2012, I began to see that the Alevi community is not of one opinion with regard to beliefs and practices, and that music was performed in several different contexts with different audiences and expectations, realizations that led me to refine some of my initial research questions. I wanted to investigate the ways in which music is a part of the lived experience of Alevis rather than focusing on degrees of assimilation or preservation in expressive and religious practices. Conducting research in a variety of locales, including urban areas and small towns, would enable me to make those discoveries.

I refined my research questions to address the following: first, what constitutes the body of today's Alevi music, including different styles, aesthetics, and contexts for performance, and how is this music useful in constructing and negotiating Alevi identity inside and outside the community? How has the Alevi sociocultural revival movement over the last quarter century contributed to the current state of music and practices? Second, are there similarities and differences between the repertoires and practices of musicians in different contexts—those who play professionally and those who perform as musical assistants in *cems*? Third, in what ways does music contribute to the formation of community—or communities—and to music's place in it as a potent symbol of meaning and action for Alevis? In the process of conducting my research, I began to consider the relationship between music and spirituality, and the factors that might account for

different levels of the congregation's participation in the *cem*.<sup>1</sup> Finally, How does Alevi music contribute to the socio-political sphere, particularly in relation to a nation that embraces Sunni Muslim views and practices?

This dissertation is the result of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Turkey between 2012 and 2014. I went to Turkey for the first time in the summer of 2012 to establish contacts for research and locate a *bağlama* teacher. I had spent the previous year preparing for my research by starting Turkish language study in the U.S. and joining a group of Turkish émigrés in the Washington, D.C. area who meet to socialize and perform folk songs on the long-necked *saz*. This group gave me my first opportunity to experience Turkish culture. On this first trip to Turkey, in addition to meeting Cem *Hoca*, who later became my *bağlama* teacher, I met Ulaş Özdemir (b. 1976) (hereafter Ulaş *Bey*), who performs the traditional music of Maraş and also writes, arranges, and performs music for his fusion band Forabandit. By following their activities and conducting several interviews over the course of my research I gained a sense of the repertoire and career interests of two very different professional musicians. Özbek Üçar's *saz* workshop was a place for me to learn about building and repairing instruments, and to meet Alevi musicians who regularly come to spend time at the workshop, exchange songs, and talk about music and beliefs while sharing tea, snacks, and cigarettes. In Ankara and at the Hacı Bektaş Festival I met other research contacts including *dedes*, Alevi cultural association directors, and scholar-performers.

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<sup>1</sup> Spirituality is defined as “*spec.* the study and practice of prayer, esp. as leading to union with God” (italics in original). *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993). *Dedes* whom I interviewed used terms such as *ruhsal* and *manevi*—more recent vocabulary for spirituality.

The main research for this dissertation began in the winter of 2013, during which time I was based in Istanbul and began studying *bağlama*. Through twice-weekly lessons with Cem *Hoca* I quickly learned basic playing techniques and some beginning-level *türkü*s and *deyiş*. In Istanbul and Ankara I participated in several *cems* and community education meetings for young adult Alevi. Attending these events helped me to get an initial sense of the range of urban worship and devotional practices and different approaches between institutional and non-institutional *dedes*. I conducted my first interviews with several *dedes*, some of whom became my main informants, and made audio recordings and photographs of the worship services I attended.

I traveled to Çorum, a small town inland from the Black Sea, to attend the *cems* for the Hızır (a religious figure in Alevi and Shi'a belief) observance with the Hubyar Alevi community, and returned several weeks later for the Nevruz (New Year) *cems*. As the guest of one *dede* and his wife, I was able to participate in worship services and other related customs such as the preparation of the *kurban* (sacrificial meal) and visiting other families' homes on the first day of the New Year.<sup>2</sup> It was challenging to be a guest in terms of old-style Alevi hospitality and be expected to eat large quantities of food at each of the four homes we visited in one day. In working with the *dedes* to identify the types of sung poetry and other rituals I noticed several differences between urban and small-town *cems*, and these differences would form a basis for analyzing and comparing worship practices and music repertoire.

In the fall of 2013 I returned to Turkey to conduct my longest period of research—through the spring of 2014. I was based again in Istanbul and attended weekly

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<sup>2</sup> The *kurban* ritual involves blessing and killing a sheep, cooking its meat, and sharing it with the community.

*cems* at three locations, including those presided over by İmdat *Dede*, my *bağlama* teacher's older brother. I conducted interviews with several *dedes* regarding their views on change and continuity in religious practices, and with the regular *cem* musicians in each location to understand their views on Alevi music in various contexts. The presidents of these *cemevis* were happy to share their perspectives as Alevi lay leaders on the multi-party political system in Turkey as well as their concerns about compulsory religious education and the future for the greater Alevi community.

It was an adventure to find *cemevis* and other places in Turkey. Even in a cosmopolitan city like Istanbul there is a neighborhood sensibility among people; very few are used to thinking in terms of maps or precise distances. When I asked where to find a particular street, for example, I was told, "You go ahead and turn left. It will take you ten minutes to get there."<sup>3</sup> There are also "old" and "new" numbering systems for many addresses that only a few people seemed to know. My most successful navigation strategy was to ask several people as I walked ahead toward my destination; older, local shopkeepers seemed to know the area best and give the most accurate directions.

In weekly *bağlama* lessons with Cem *Hoca* I worked on developing my musical skills and continued to ask questions about his repertoire, techniques, and musical activities. I also met several more times with Ulaş *Bey* to discuss his perspectives on Alevi activities, his musical career, and his ethnomusicology studies. I attended a wide variety of concerts, benefit events, social clubs, and *türkü* houses (night clubs where

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lewis describes measuring distances in time and motion in the Middle East. The distance between two villages is "one cigarette" or the time it takes one to smoke it equals the time it takes to travel between them (2002: 120).



regional folk music is performed) in order to investigate the music performed at events other than *cems*. I conducted interviews with young musicians at various *cemevis*.

During this period I returned to Ankara to meet with two leaders whose approaches to *Alevilik* appeal to younger generations. Cevahir Canpolat's story is intriguing because she and a small group of Alevis had taken over an abandoned restaurant, without municipal approval, to use it as a *cemevi*. When I first met her in the winter of 2012 she was facing the possibility of a jail sentence. Now I was eager to learn the outcome of the situation and continue our conversation. I was also particularly interested in talking with Divani *Dede* (hereafter, Divani *Dede*), an Alevi-Bektaşî about his education and music programs in Turkish and European cities. I was curious about his perceptions of sacred and secular when I saw his students perform a *semah* on a municipal stage rather than in a *cemevi*. Talking with these two leaders was one of the most interesting parts of my research, since they are both different from more conventional Alevi leaders in urban *cemevis* who see their missions as largely faith-based. After finishing in Ankara I made another trip to Çorum to conduct follow-up interviews with *dedes* and musicians. On this visit I learned more about Alevi-Bektaşî poetry and the young *dede* who will inherit the leadership position of the Hubyar Alevi community.

The last segment of my research was conducted in the fall of 2014. Once again, I was based in Istanbul and made a trip to Fatsa, a small town on the Black Sea in Ordu Province, where my *bağlama* teacher grew up. In this region some *cems* are accompanied by chanting rather than by *bağlama* music. I attended a *cem* led by my teacher's father, Ali *Dede*, and had the opportunity to visit him and his wife at their village home where

they reside for part of the year. Fatma *Hanım* still makes homemade cheeses and preserves, and cooks over an open hearth.

Unkapanı is the section of Istanbul where many recording and film companies are located, including those that feature Alevi artists. I conducted a follow-up interview with Hasan Akkiraz, whom I had met the previous year. He and his sister, a professional Alevi singer, co-own the company that features recordings of rural *dedes* along with those of Alevi performers and popular rock music stars. I also spoke with personnel at Yön Radyo, a station in the Okmeydanı neighborhood that plays Alevi music as part of the larger body of Anatolian folk music.<sup>4</sup> These interviews provided another dimension to my sense of the place of Alevi music and musicians in the public media.

My research combined music study, personal interviews and conversations, and participant observation in events. The data I collected—audio and video recordings and photographs of many *cems*, concerts, social events, and personal interviews—constitute the material on which I base my analysis and argument in the dissertation. Each person I met made great efforts to answer my questions or to connect me with someone who could answer them. Although I was not able to include in the space of this dissertation every conversation and discovery I made, I will retain these materials for my future work.

## STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS

The dissertation examines the role that music has played in the expression of identity and revitalization of culture of the Turkish Alevis, who have claimed status as an

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<sup>4</sup> The station uses the term “Anatolian” (Anadolu) to refer to older folk performance models.

ethno-religious minority since their sociocultural revival movement in the late 1980s. My inquiry focuses on how and why the Alevi repertoire of mystical and folk songs has become both a symbol of power and collective action, and a source of moral inspiration as Alevis face a new Turkish nationalism incorporating Sunni Muslim piety. Chapter Two frames the theoretical thoughts, approaches, and issues that arose from my research pertinent to a case study of Alevi music. I present and discuss three theories—social participation within a cultural framework, musical revival, and *communitas* and the music collective. Additional literature in this chapter covers such issues as music and folklore, Sufi practices and contemporary media publics, and selections from the large body of Alevi studies. I also include sections on music and expressive practices in Turkey that give a broader context for Alevi music, and some case studies from other cultures with relevance to the Alevi case.

Chapter Three provides a sociopolitical overview of the Alevi community's relationship to the Turkish state and a Sunni Muslim majority citizenry. I discuss modernity, minority, and ethnicity, concepts that shed light on both the Alevi sense of identity and ongoing negotiation of Alevi identity with the government. Folklore collection in the early decades of the Republic is highlighted for its role in building a national consciousness and for the ways that the collectors modified or eliminated regional variation to produce a unified national music literature. I also explore the ways that the identity politics has shaped both (Sunni) Muslim and Alevi attitudes and actions, particularly the Alevi sociocultural revival movement of the late 1980s.

In Chapters Four and Five I turn to musical analysis. Chapter Four begins with a description of *bağlama* playing techniques and performance practices, and then

introduces the first of three types of musical pieces: the *duvaz imam* (prayer to the Twelve İmams). In Chapter Five I analyze and discuss examples of the other two types: *deyiş* (song of mystical love) and *türkiis*. In each category I compare the performances of several different musicians to illustrate the influence of context on musical choices. Before discussing the Alevi worship service (Chapter Six) and other kinds of musical events (Chapter Seven), I believe it is essential to first describe and analyze a selection of the types of music and specific pieces frequently performed by Alevi musicians.

Chapter Six begins with a basic description of Alevi beliefs followed by a comparison of practices in past, rural settings and current urban *cemevis*. Through ethnographic descriptions and analyses of two worship services I demonstrate how the *duvaz imam* and *deyiş* analyzed in Chapters Four and Five fit into the *cem*. I also explore issues of music and spirituality based on different levels of participation observed at different urban *cemevis*. I discuss factors such as the pace of the *cem* and neighborhood environments that may account for such differences. I also present music and worship practices in Alevi communities outside of the *cemevis* in Istanbul: first, that of a female *cemevi* president in Ankara whose approach to *Alevilik* appeals to young Alevis, and then those of two small towns in the Black Sea region: a Hubyar Alevi community in Çorum, and a Güvenç Abdal community near Fatsa. Finally, I describe a recent people's court *cem*, an older ritual that resolves a dispute in contemporary urban life.

Chapter Seven presents contexts for music performances outside of the *cem* including *muhabbets* and *sohbets* (devotional meetings to discuss Alevi beliefs and play music), commercial concerts, benefits, performances at social clubs and bars, and informal gatherings. These events cannot be characterized as either sacred or secular

contexts, but represent points on a continuum between the two. I argue that music making is a participatory event that serves to build community, and even devotional feeling for Alevi. I include a discussion of surface and hidden meanings of one mystical poem to illustrate the presence of Sufi images and metaphors in Alevi poetry, and interviews with *zakirs* who discuss their ideas of faith and community.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, there is an ethnographic account of a musical evening with Cem Çelebi and a section on the issues of authorship and ownership of folk music as oral tradition clashes with modern music and arts copyright laws in Turkey.

In Chapter Eight, I tie the chapters together and draw conclusions based on the major themes of the dissertation, and discuss topics for further research including audience participation and reception, contemporary musicians in diaspora locations, and the canonization of urban Alevi religious practices. I attempt to make some observations about ongoing tensions and future relations between the state and the Alevi community as Turkey tries to navigate some of its concerns in the Middle East region—the continuing arrival of Syrian refugees, the ambivalence of the current government in recognizing Alevi, and fears of Kurdish nationalism.

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<sup>5</sup> The term *zakir*, a musician who plays in an Alevi worship service (usually an amateur), is derived from the term *zikir*, the Sufi ritual of chanting the name of God.

## CHAPTER TWO THEORETICAL FRAMES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### MAJOR THEORETICAL FRAMES

This dissertation investigates the ways that music is a locus for people to negotiate and express daily life as individuals and in collective identity. In this context I present several important theories with which to explain Alevi culture and expressive practices since the late 1980s: sociocultural participation within a cultural framework as set forth by Fredrick Barth; music revival as discussed in the scholarship of Tamara Livingston and Philip Bohlman; and constructions of community including Victor Turner's paradigm of *communitas* and Kay Kaufman Shelemay's recent work on the collective in music. I then connect writings from history, social anthropology, political science, and Alevi studies to these frames to illustrate the role of music in Turkish nationalism, Alevi ethnicity, identity, and religious difference, and Turkish folk music practices. A few cases from other cultures that reflect similar controversies are also included.

Along with theorizing the concepts above, I include several ideas critical to the process of establishing and developing nation-states, such as the concept of modernity, ideas of the folk and folklore, and national identity formation. The early twentieth-century European model of modernity as linear movement toward a secularist nation-state society has shifted to a postmodern, pluralistic view of groups and individual subjectivities. In urban Turkey, secularism was increasingly challenged by both the rise

of Islamist political parties after 1970 and subsequently the Alevi sociocultural movement—beliefs and ritual practices expressed as identity politics.

For the purposes of clarity in the dissertation, I will use the term “musical revival” when discussing music and the term “sociocultural movement” when discussing the sociocultural, historical, political, and religious dimensions of Alevi rediscovery although these aspects are mutually embedded. It has become common parlance to refer to the declarations published in during Alevi Culture Week in Hamburg (1989) and Turkey’s Cumhuriyet newspaper (1990) as the birth of the Alevi sociocultural movement: but clearly there was activity in advance of this point in time on a number of fronts, musical and otherwise.

### Social Participation Within a Cultural Framework

Although Fredrick Barth later expanded and repositioned his ideas on social interaction within cultural context it is useful to revisit some of his earlier criteria for boundary maintenance in the introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969). While he later acknowledged that his work did not address ethnic groups in relation to the state, several observations are valid. Claims of difference based on ethnic identity and cultural practices have been used by Alevis as a tool for boundary maintenance and identity politics since the start of the sociocultural movement, and have been problematized by scholars for their constructed rather than sociobiological claims (Van Bruinessen 1996; Vorhoff 1998). Barth posited such key concepts as the persistence of boundaries “despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories” (Barth 1969: 10). Alevi claims of difference operate socially as “structuring relations of loyalty”

(Sökefeld 2008: 115). Of Barth's four criteria that define an ethnic group the third and fourth can be seen as social constructions that carry forward to his later work:

3. makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.  
(Barth 1969: 10-11)

These two criteria also play an important role in building an imagined community in the sense that the members of the group will never know most of their fellow members, yet “the image of their communion” lives in all of their minds (Anderson 2006: 6). At the same time these criteria also reinforce boundary maintenance and concept of community through concrete and real face-to-face personal interactions and shared knowledge. The field of communication and interaction encompasses a huge variety of activities that reinforce Alevi identity within the community and in opposition to the Sunni Muslim community. Alevis may attend *cems*, concerts, and annual festivals, gather to engage in music making, and tour regional museums and shrines. They may display pictures of Atatürk and İmam Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammed, revered by Alevis) in their homes or wear gold necklaces featuring a small replica of İmam Ali's sword, Zülfikâr. Furthermore, personally remembering and formally commemorating violent and discriminatory acts reinforce individual memory in a discursive social context.<sup>1</sup> The imagined Alevi community is also connected through Alevi umbrella associations and their branch *cemevis*, print media such as magazines with religious content and academic

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<sup>1</sup> See Fentress and Wickham (1992).



research journals, broadcast media directed at Alevi audiences, websites, and other Internet information.<sup>2</sup>

The fourth criterion—“a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others”—is linked to the most critical feature of Barth’s theory: the understanding of ethnic identity as an aspect of social, rather than cultural, organization: thus, ethnic boundaries as socially rather than culturally constructed. As such, Alevi membership constitutes “self-ascription and ascription by others” (Barth 1969: 13). Self-ascription involves signals, signs, and moral values that are significant for the actors themselves.

In *Balinese Worlds* (1993), Barth presents a tripartite model that posits a relationship between events (as experienced by actors), acts (human behavior), and their interpretation within within a cultural system of meanings.<sup>3</sup> By foregrounding individual intentions and interpretations he advances beyond the idea of ethnic identity as merely a social construction. Barth presents a nuanced relationship between institutional rules, patterns of behavior, and their interpretations: that is, traditions of knowledge, or the cultural system of meanings, are seen as both an integral part of individual lives and embedded in particular social settings within which they must be understood.

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<sup>2</sup> See Sökefeld (2002) for a discussion of Alevi websites.

<sup>3</sup> Barth cites Max Weber’s distinction between events (behavior) and acts (human behavior interpreted).

Some of this occurs as a social process in its own right, a discourse

with sympathetic or critical others . . . In the process, we must expect the materials to become increasingly conventionalized and shared, and thus domesticated into cultural forms, though some will be culture-in-the-making, requiring the creation of new images to accommodate new (aspects of) events as experience. In the opposite direction, analytically retracing the emergence of events from intentions and planned acts, connections lead back to the actor's ideas of instrumentality, values, goals, and identities (Barth 1993: 159).

The constant reference by scholars to the Alevi manifestos mentioned above, that launched the sociocultural revival movement, can give the impression of a unanimous minority demanding its rights in Turkey and in European cities. Moreover, books and articles about Alevi identity politics writ large and the relationship between Alevi organizations and the Turkish have dominated the literature. Barth's model with its emphasis on individual intentions and interpretations allows us to perceive the ambivalence and fragmented positions of different factions within the Alevi community and how those factions negotiate different positions at different times in the face of a Sunni-based cultural system of meanings. In more recent years scholars of Alevi matters have begun to focus on individual lives in their ethnographies (Neyzi 2002; Sökefeld 2002a; Markussen 2005).

## Musical Revival

Tamara Livingston's theory of musical revival (1999) incorporates early investigations in ethnomusicology as well as her own research. As she writes, a musical revival is "any social movement with the goal of restoring and preserving a musical tradition which is believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past" and whose characteristics include:

1. an individual or small group of "core revivalists"
2. revival informants and/or original sources (e.g., historical sound recordings)
3. a revivalist ideology and discourse
4. a group of followers which [*sic*] form the basis of a revivalist community
5. revivalist activities (organizations, festivals, competitions)
6. non-profit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market.

(Livingston 1999: 68-9).

Philip Bohlman describes revival as "an act of authentication" in which a specific time and place is identified for a particular folk music, and whose supporters are primarily concerned with recreating its "value-laden context" (1988: 130). Contemporary meanings—new symbols masquerading as the old—are created through the collapse of time and space (*ibid.*: 131). Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984) explain tradition as a symbolic construction and an interpretive process that embodies both continuity and discontinuity. Their case studies of the revived cultural practices of Quebecois and Hawaiians illustrate the simultaneous persistence of tradition and modernity (1984: 273).

In *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* Neil Rosenberg (1993) describes how concepts of authenticity have changed during the twentieth century from considerations of texts that could be dated much like archaeological remains to a

more contemporary approach encompassing the relationship between text, performance, and context (1993: 16). Bert Feintuch (1993) sees the 1970s revival of interest in the Northumbrian small bagpipes as a musical transformation. With a codified repertoire, sanctioned styles, and its own selective view of the past a revival “makes constant reference to the music it derives from, [yet it is not] *of that music*” (Feintuch 1993: 192; italics in original). Revivalists create their own “historically conditioned and socially maintained ‘artistic paradigm’” as a result of these processes (ibid.: 191; quotes in original).

The musical dimensions of the Alevi revival exhibit many of the criteria in Livingston’s model and other works mentioned above. Through a series of cassette recordings in the 1980s entitled *Muhabbet*, four Alevi revivalist musicians—Muhlis Akarsu (1948-1993), Musa Eroğlu (b. 1946), Arif Sağ (b. 1945), and Yavuz Top (b. 1950)—“succeeded in transforming the practice of traditional Alevi music on the *bağlama* from the isolated activity of a few individuals into a popular form of “remembrance” in cultured urban Alevi society” (Erol 2008: 112; quotes in original). The recordings featured *deyiş* (mystical songs), *duvaz imams*, hymns, and *semahs*, authored by twentieth-century Alevi poet-minstrels such as Aşık Veysel, Aşık Daimi, and Davut Suları, as well as those by dervish-lodge poets Pir Sultan Adal (sixteenth century) and Karacaoğlan (seventeenth century), among others. By combining traditional instrumentation, new musical settings of the poetry, and several new mystical songs by Muhlis Akarsu (about fourteen in total), these musicians revitalized and claimed Alevi music for Alevis, since much of it was unknown to the general public and was not included in state folk music archives. These musical innovations also necessitated

renegotiating the aesthetic code of balance between individual innovation and stylistic norms long upheld by the folk musician community (Markoff 1986: 143-144; 1990; see Irene Markoff [1986: 284-311] for a discussion of innovation and tradition in Ali Ekber Çiçek's composition "Haydar").<sup>17</sup>

Various programs and activities help to spread knowledge of and appreciation for Alevi music, including festivals, concerts, devotional meetings, and the opening of new Alevi cultural centers and *cemevis*. In addition to donating their time to Alevi community events, revivalist musicians are involved in various commercial enterprises such as recordings and films, and also teach and research regional music styles. Alevi-supported research centers and cultural foundations invite religious leaders and academic scholars to symposia on Alevi music, ritual, and history.

Historical connections and time-depth are critical factors for authenticity in music revivals. In some cases music of the "folk" is constructed by revivalists or nations as representing music from a long-ago rural past, and anonymously handed down via oral tradition. Alevi music has regional associations much like the broader body of Turkish folk music; however, the hymns and sung poems in use today, authored by dervish-lodge poets across several centuries, can be identified by the appearance of the *mahlas* (poet's pen name) in the final verse. Further, these poets were men of mindful, mystical reflection, which contradicts the general assumption of revivals that romanticizes folk music as "owing more to nature than conscious art" (Feintuch 1993: 189).

As Livingston points out, musical revivals are a middle-class phenomenon and carry the aesthetic of educated individuals. This point is borne out by the wealth of

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<sup>17</sup> See also Hesselink (2004) for a discussion of innovation and fidelity to traditional musical models in the *samul nori* ensemble.

recordings—on cassette and later, CD—by Alevi musicians, many of whom may be conservatory-trained performers or have studied in associations or private music schools. Their albums, geared for a sophisticated listening audience, showcase a clear, refined sound and precise instrumental and vocal arrangements carefully mixed and edited by recording engineers in the studio.

Similar to other revivals, the Alevi music revival is both a product of and a reaction against modernity. This duality is manifest in the use of technology and even popular musical techniques and styles, while at the same time maintaining what revival musicians believe to be the traditional ethos of Alevi music. Thus, historical references and tradition on the one hand, and modernity on the other, play a role in defining and re-imagining Alevi music and its authenticity.

### *Communitas* and the Music Collective

The paradigm of *communitas*—a dialectic between structure and anti-structure—was coined by anthropologist Victor Turner as a result of his fieldwork with the Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia. In ritual space, normally operative societal structures and hierarchies are disregarded. Turner describes the passage from structure to anti-structure as limen, a term borrowed from Arnold van Gennep’s description of the temporary phase in the latter’s model of three-stages in rites of passage. In the separation phase, individuals enact symbolic behaviors signifying their detachment from social or cultural conditions. In the margin phase of liminality the status of the ritual participants becomes ambiguous, “betwixt and between all fixed points of classification” of a previous state or

state to come (Turner 1974: 231-32). The final phase is aggregation or reincorporation, when the ritual is completed and individuals reenter the social structure.

*Communitas* occurs in the liminal stage where the social status and hierarchy of normal society disappears and individuals bond on an equal level by virtue of the common experience of the rite of passage. According to Turner, the liminal areas of time and space, “rituals, carnivals, dramas and latterly films,” exist in the gaps and interstices of societal structure helping to reinforce and define it (Turner 1974: vii). Turner extended his paradigm to the industrial world in order to describe its non-religious, leisure-based rituals: for example, the hippie counter-cultural movement of the 1960s.

Turner’s ideas on process, *limen*, and *communitas* provide a useful scheme to explore both the religious ritual of the Alevi *cem* discussed in Chapter Six and the devotional and non-religious types of music events discussed in Chapter Seven, such as Alevi education sessions, public concerts, and gatherings at social clubs. Ideally, the liminal moment of separating from one’s regular societal status prepares both the congregation in the *cem* ritual and the audience in a concert to experience the ritual in a state of fellowship and unity, and leads participants to experience a different mental and emotional space. Turner suggests that ritual can only be effective where a high level of *communitas* already exists in the society—generic bonds that exist beneath any differences and oppositions (1974: 56).

Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2011) reexamines notions of community and collective in relation to music and social processes. She notes music’s ability to generate social bonding in transitory ways like Turner’s idea of *communitas* as well as over time.

Building on the ideas of other scholars Shelemay offers a broad definition of musical community:

A musical community is, whatever its location in time or space, a collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/or performances. A musical community can be socially and/or symbolically constituted; music making may give rise to real-time social relationships or may exist most fully in the realm of a virtual setting or in the imagination.

A musical community does not require the presence of conventional structural elements nor must it be anchored in a single place, although both structural and local elements may assume importance at points in the process of community formation as well as in its ongoing existence. Rather, a musical community is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves. (Shelemay 2011: 364-5).

The last sentence incorporates Christopher Small's idea, "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening . . ." (Small in Shelemay *ibid.*: 365).<sup>18</sup>

From this point of view, Alevis who gather for all kinds of music events can be seen as part of the musical collective. Social interaction is integrated into the music event: greeting and talking with friends prior to the start of the event, singing along with performers, commenting to each other in between musical numbers, taking videos of performances, and taking photos with the performers. Experiencing the music together is as important as experiencing the music itself. I observed several of the same behaviors in *cems* and *muhabbets*, although attendees were more subdued given the devotional nature of the events. I observed varying degrees of participation—sitting quietly, moving to music, singing along with musicians—at all of these events. In addition to face-to-face

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<sup>18</sup> See Blacking (1995) who argues that listening to music is a type of performance.



interaction at conventionally structured gatherings, Alevis also engage with music accessible in the virtual realm of broadcast and social media and can participate at nearly any time or way they choose.

Shelemay discusses collectivity in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, illustrating the ways in which music plays a central role in ritual and in forming a worship community. A particular commonality between the Ethiopian Christian and Alevis cases is the way that sacred music has provided a strong framework in migrant communities abroad. For Turkish Alevis, urban migration to Turkish cities and then to continental Europe in search of work opportunities began in the 1960s, whereas Ethiopian Christians were forced to migrate abroad following the 1974 military coup that overthrew the monarchy (many went to U.S.) (see the section on Alevis Abroad later in this chapter).

## WRITINGS ON HISTORY, NATIONALISM, AND MODERNITY

In this section I discuss works that contribute to an understanding of Turkish nationalism, including invented traditions, ethnicity, Islamist mobilization, and the state's managing of minority difference.

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* ([1983] 2006) puts forth two concepts critical to the spread of nationality and the processes that created such communities: print-capitalism and the use of vernacular languages in the print medium. Using mechanically reproducible languages "created unified fields of exchange and communication" that could not be achieved with regional dialects (2006: 44). Books and other printed materials lent a new sense of time depth to language while at the same time those dialects more amenable to printing gained power and currency in popular and

administrative contexts (ibid.: 45). Anderson's theory foregrounds the idea of the nation as socially constructed, in contrast to Max Weber, who views nationalism as the result of political and economic struggles in the competition for power in a globalized world. Scholars of Alevi studies frequently cite Anderson (much like a tag-line) in describing the imagined community of Alevi whose individuals will never meet each other, but much less often refer to the ways that the rapid dissemination of print materials within the community, such as pamphlets, magazines, and books on Alevi beliefs, and research publications by clerical scholars on important teachers such as Hacı Bektaş (as well as broadcast and Internet) also create an imagined ethnic community, and a rhetoric that carries administrative power among Alevi organizations, similar to the formation of nation states (later I discuss print materials about *Alevilik* for a other audiences). As Hobsbawm writes,

“Invented tradition” is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1984: 1; single quotes in original).

The author cites such traditional practices as folk singing, festivals, and physical contests that are modified, ritualized, and institutionalized for new national purposes. In the old context these practices were socially binding whereas in the invented context they take on vague and unspecified associations with the values, rights and obligations of group membership. The critical factor for Hobsbawm is the “invention of emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership” for example, a national flag that commands respect and loyalty, and reflects national thought and culture (ibid.: 11).

The Alevi sociocultural and music revivals infused new meaning into old practices. Worship services, once conducted as custom in past times in rural areas, were reconstructed and became a symbol of Alevi identity in an urban setting, and the *cemevi* (a newly invented building) established the physical presence of Alevis in Turkish society. Sung poems attributed to Bektaşî dervish-lodge poets were imbued with the values of contemporary Alevi beliefs and provided a sense of historical continuity for formerly loosely affiliated Alevi groups across the regions of Anatolia.

In *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2010) Thomas Hylland Eriksen investigates ethnicity as a dynamic and shifting aspect of social relationships. In the chapter “Identity Politics, Culture, and Rights”, the author examines dilemmas of ethnic diversity, and the dynamic relationship between minorities and a majority. “If the state stresses equal rights and duties, minority members may feel that their cultural distinctiveness is not being respected” (Eriksen 2010: 175). Alevis were much less concerned about their distinctiveness in the Kemalist era when Turkish citizenship was emphasized over religious affiliation. From the early 1980s onward, when Turkishness was redefined in terms of Muslim piety, Alevis began working toward negotiating their identity, and religious and cultural distinctiveness on their own terms. Negotiations for this power continue with a state that has changed its political agenda, sometimes emphasizing commonalities with, and other times stressing differences from, Alevis. The Turkish government has more recently tried to manage Alevi identity and practices through nonrecognition.

Jenny White’s book, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey* (2002), chronicles the grass-roots momentum of the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), its demise, and

reformation as the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) during the 1980s and 1990s. The author argues that community networks and face-to-face interactions among neighbors, rather than Islamic dogma, were responsible for the party's success. Populist, personalized support among Muslims overrode conflicting political attitudes and class differences that had resulted from the change from a state-run to a world-market economy. White attributes the lack of success among secularist groups working in local neighborhoods to a failure to express their message in ways that appealed to those they worked with.

Urban Alevis remain conflicted with regard to faith practices and political stance: a history of small, independent tribal groups in Anatolia without central figures of political or religious authority (the congregation confers authority upon the *dede* whereas the mosque *imam* studies at a religious school and is ordained) may be a factor, as well as a long-term laicist political orientation.<sup>19</sup> The urban Alevi community offers a different kind of support than that of the Islamist network described by White: associations provide free meals on the weekends, and those who need help with personal, medical, or legal issues seek out institutional *dedes* for connections or advice. Perhaps Alevis must see more of their commonalities than their differences to feel empowered to challenge a government that lets them know that Alevi difference is still unwelcome.

In the extensive work *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, Carter Vaughn Findley (2010) recasts the traditional Western scholarly view of Turkey as “progressing” from an Islamic empire to a secular republic, by demonstrating the ways that secularizing and Islamically committed currents alternately clashed and merged in shaping late-

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<sup>19</sup> Laicist is defined as pertaining to nonclerical, secular (Oxford English Dictionary Online), implying that religion is subordinate to the state. <http://www.oed.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/view/Entry/105119?redirectedFrom=laic#eid>

Ottoman and modern-day eras. The author's inclusion of important religious movements and literature that constructed new ideas of modernity and subjectivity in the Turkish imagination challenges pre- and Cold War Era scholarship emphasizing Turkey's development in the image of the European nation-state.<sup>20</sup> This work illustrates that even though a nation-state may privilege a given political agenda and societal identity, personal and group subjectivities may or may not align with that agenda, and of necessity, seek other methods of expression.

An article by Bayram Ali Soner and Şule Toktaş (2011) profiles the actors, issues, and processes in the “Alevi Opening,” a series of dialogues with Alevi leaders initiated by the Turkey's majority Justice and Development Party (AKP). Seven workshops took place between June 2009 and January 2010 and concluded with an official report that the authors argue addressed Alevi concerns for political-religious recognition particularly in terms of Alevis as a heterodox group. Murat Borovalı and Cemil Boyraz disputed such conclusions in a presentation at the Alevi Identity Revisited conference in Istanbul (2014). The authors maintain that the dialogues instead became a referendum on whether or not *Alevilik* is within Islam by discussing ways that AKP leaders used theological arguments to maintain their conservative position and eliminate critics from different Alevi factions who were perceived as threats to the process. The Turkish state's position that there can be only one interpretation of Muslim faith enables the continuing misrecognition or nonrecognition of Alevi claims to religious difference. Turkish Alevis

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<sup>20</sup> See Bernard Lewis. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* ([1961] 2010 Oxford: Oxford University Press) considered the classic text on Turkey's rise to modernity.

continue to press their case based on the success of Alevi communities in European cities and Turkey's desire for accession to the European Union.

Jenny White's recent book *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* (2013) is a sequel to her book on Islamist mobilization (2002). White addresses "conscious" Muslim identity as part of new constructions of Turkishness expressed more in a romanticized Ottoman past, economic networks, and lifestyle than in religious practice. At the same time, competition between community obligations and individual choice creates instances of "code-switching" for example, as when the Turkish state supports universal human rights and also curtails free speech.

Kabir Tambar's (2014) book on pluralism examines ways that the Turkish state governs religious differences through the performance of *semah* and in mourning rituals. The author conducted his fieldwork at a Shi'a mosque in Çorum where worship services were led by preachers trained in an Iranian seminary—an unusual situation for Turkey. Although there are quotes from interviewees (whose names were changed to protect their privacy), the work lacks enough ethnographic description of the town, the people, and the actual ritual practices to give a palpable sense of time and place, and lend credibility. He does not compare these same practices with those in urban *cems*, which would help the reader understand exactly what he means by state "governance" and "domestication." There is also no comparison of ritual among different Alevi subgroups—the Hubyar for example—in Çorum or other towns, or with Shi'a groups in other countries such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, who are only mentioned in the Introduction.

## Nationalism, Folklore, and Music

This section includes articles that illustrate the impact of the Turkish state's political ideology on music and folklore and its efforts to control them from the early years of the Turkish republic to contemporary times.

Ilhan Başgöz's (1972) article chronicles the effect of changing political attitudes on folklore and collection projects in Turkey. In the 1910s-20s social theorist Ziya Gökalp made folklore the engine in the struggle for a homogenous national identity, and, along with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, spurred the founding of historical societies, folklore publications, and archives. Epics and poetry in the vernacular—not Ottoman—became a source of national pride.<sup>21</sup> The scholarly, objective approach of folklorist Peter Boratav conflicted with the idea of folklore in service to nationalism. State policy reversals and the rise of right-wing extreme nationalists resulted in attacks on those deemed leftist academics including Boratav, and the elimination of the folklore department at Ankara University in the late 1940s; later efforts in the 1960s and 1970s to re-establish a folklore institute and bring scholars together were only minimally successful.

Arzu Öztürkmen (1994) discusses the People's Houses (Halkevleri) of the 1930s and 1940s, whose objective was to promote local folklore research as a contribution to the nationalist project; regionalism was considered an enriching, integral component. The organizations developed cadres of amateur folklore collectors from among teachers, professionals, and municipal administrators who also wrote monographs about local

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<sup>21</sup> Alevi and Bektāşi poet-minstrels, ignored during Ottoman times, were championed as national heroes and they lent strong ideological support to Atatürk's policies.

village life that contributed to a new Turkish historical consciousness.<sup>22</sup> By the mid-1940s, Peoples' Houses became less effective because of greater bureaucratic control and fewer resources, and came to be seen as inseparable from the CHP (Cunhuriyet Halk Partisi or Republican Peoples' Party) once Turkey made the transition to a multiparty political system. The two articles above illustrate ways that constructions of Turkish culture and identity were mediated through state-run political processes and institutions and were later abandoned in favor of new processes and institutions to fit shifting political agendas.

A more contemporary account of the legacy of representing Turkish folk music through the *bağlama* can be found in Martin Stokes's (1997) article about three Black Sea musicians who renegotiate the assumed supremacy of the *bağlama* (developed during the twentieth century) when they are invited to give workshops and performances in Northern Ireland. The three musicians—a singer, a *kemeçe* (Black Sea region fiddle) player, and a *bağlama* player—developed strategies to accommodate each others' expertise and the expectations of their new audiences.<sup>23</sup> The antagonism between the *bağlama* and *kemeçe* players was attributed, in part, to the cultural association with the *bağlama* as the main instrument of Turkish folk music, whereas the *kemeçe* sound is believed to be meaningful only to Black Sea people. There is perhaps a parallel issue in that the anonymous *türkü* is still perceived to be the true folk music of Turkey, whereas Alevi music recordings that include *deyiş* and *semahs* with esoteric references and

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<sup>22</sup> In the mid-1930s Béla Bartók was invited to Ankara to lecture on collecting folk music. Kurt Reinhard also conducted extensive fieldwork in Turkey (during the 1960s) and expanded on his predecessor's analytical and typological methods (See Bartók (1976) and Kurt and Ursula Reinhart (1984).

<sup>23</sup> The *kemeçe*, particular to the Black Sea region of Turkey, is a box-shaped fiddle, whereas the *kemane* is a spiked, gourd-shaped fiddle.



meanings are less marketable to general Turkish and global audiences. Some recordings by Alevi artists are deliberately marketed as Sufi, exotic, or ancient.

Turkish ethnomusicologist Ayhan Erol (2010a) discusses the construction of the state monopoly over the representation of Turkish folk music in the 1920s and 1930s. Songs were collected as “a result of the desire to identify the national characteristics of ‘invented culture’” (2010: 150; quotes in original). Criteria of authenticity in line with state ideas of modernization were formulated to guide public taste, and in the process, folk songs were stripped of their regional attributes in order to conform to a devised standard that radically altered expressive culture during the early decades of the Kemalist regime.

This article illustrates the top-down decisions made by the young Turkish state in representing musical taste as a reflection of Turkish society. Ziya Gökalp, sociologist and promulgator of Turkish nationalism, argued for the merger of Western musical style—seen as modern and progressive—and Anatolian (Central Asian-derived) folk music—the nation’s new common heritage. The Turkish musicologists who created these national standards did not see the contradictions between their actions upon the existing folk repertoire and criteria for authenticity that stipulated that folk songs be old and anonymous, and have been handed down in oral tradition by rural, uneducated people.

## MUSLIM PRACTICES AND MEDIA PUBLICS

As its title suggests, this section is divided into two parts. The first part includes classic and contemporary studies on Sufism and ways to study and interpret the ecstatic experience. The second section gives an overview of the impact of technology on

contemporary Muslim practices and identity construction in the age of global media and social networks.

### Sufism and the Mystical Experience

In this section I include works on Sufi ritual practices (some of which are situated in countries other than Turkey) and poetry. One item concerns the Kurdish Ahl-i Haqq of Iran, even though they consider themselves neither Alevi nor Sufi.

*The Bektaşî Order of Dervishes* by Kingsley Birge ([1937] 1994), provides an in-depth account of the organization of this Sufi brotherhood historically associated with the Ottoman janissary corps: its origins, historical developments, and religious tenets. Short sections compare Bektaşî beliefs with those of other Sufi orders and other faiths and highlight shared practices between the order and village Alevi. The work provides a way to compare Birge's description of the Bektaşî *cem* at that time with today's urban *cem*: one noticeable difference is that the dervish order ceremony includes a poem about wine and intoxication of the spirit (Birge 1994: 200-201). References to (and consumption of) alcohol in public *cem*s were apparently eliminated in an effort to give Alevi respectability in the eyes of Sunnis, whose official practice is to avoid alcohol. Like other European scholars and travelers of his day, Birge engages in a simplified comparison of Bektaşî rites and Christian practices, reporting that Bektaşîs say that the Twelve İmams "stand also for the Twelve Disciples" (Birge 1994: 217). As I note in the upcoming section, Alevi Case Studies, contemporary scholars are revisiting prevailing assumptions about Alevi and Bektaşî practices.

Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975) delineates the

theosophical foundations of Sufism including such concepts such as the path (*yol* in Turkish) symbolizing the never-ending quest for God, and the limited reality of the human world (*yalan dünya* or *fani dünya* rendered in English as the false or material world)—tenets also fundamental to *Alevilik*. Her chapter on Persian and Turkish mystical poetry, which includes some information on masters of Bektaşî poetry, is helpful in understanding the poetic images in Alevi *deyiş* (songs of mystical love). Classic images include the heart (*dil*), representing a garden in which the nightingale (*bülbül*) and the rose (*gül*) are united as manifestations of the soul and God, respectively.

Regula Qureshi (1986) investigates the performance process of *Qawwali*, a popular form of Sufi music that produces ecstatic states in listeners. She found that a critical efficacy of the event rested on the ability of the lead chanter and chorus to respond to audience needs by mediating the musical and textual framework of the performance. The reader is referred to Chapter Six for a comparison of music practices in *Qawwali* and the *cem*.

Victor Vicente's dissertation (2007) focuses on three aspects of Sufi ritual: the relationship of movement and music, the function of music in religious worship, and contemporary activities of Mevlana worshippers.<sup>24</sup> Vicente provides a picture of contemporary Sufism that includes listeners and devotees as well as performers of Sufi music and dance, and a broader range of musics that evoke the emotions and concepts of *tasavvuf* (Sufi mysticism). Sufi and Alevi practices are forms of audition (*sama'* in Arabic) that cultivate ethical thinking and moral action.

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<sup>24</sup> The dissertation is now published as a book (Vicente 2013).

One important difference between Sufi and Alevi mystics is that the former strive for annihilation in a union with God, while the latter associate the spiritual unity of the forty (*Kırklar*), who first executed *semah*, with human community.<sup>25</sup> Hege Markussen (2005) argues that a concern with human relationships is considered a special feature of *Alevilik*. Contemporary Alevis interpret this trait as an ahistoric narrative that connects threads of shamanism and mysticism to their beliefs (Markussen 2005: 84). Along the same lines, Caroline Tee (2013) writes about Ozan Seyfili, an Alevi poet who appropriates Sufi images to describe a longing for the Alevi community (rather than for God) that was lost during urban migration of the 1960s. In the Alevi *deyiş* “Şaha Doğru Giden Kervan” (The Caravan Going Toward God), the poet expresses both pain and joy at leaving the material world to follow a spiritual path toward God. One stanza of the *deyiş* is devoted to leaving the material world and its pleasures behind, for example, being a busy bee and going from flower to flower. Chapter Five contains a more detailed discussion of the poem.

Partow Hooshmandrad’s (2004) dissertation investigates the religious practices of the Kurdish Ahl-i Haqq community in the Kermanshah Province of Iran.<sup>26</sup> This group sees themselves as neither Muslim nor Sufi, although as in Sufi and Alevi practice, the integration of text, singing, and instrumental accompaniment with long-necked plucked lutes (*bağlama* for Alevis, and *tanbūr* for the Ahl-i Haqq) are central to worship. Like the Alevis, the Ahl-i Haqq assert the primacy of İmam Ali, and follow the mystic teachings of revered leaders (fifteenth-century Sultan Shahak for the Ahl-i Haqq). The author’s work gives the impression of a body of religious practices that had not been urbanized

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<sup>26</sup> The author also published a compact disc (2013).

when she conducted her research, but, without an explanation of the actual sequence of any of the rituals, or information about the community to lend a sense of context, the work is more difficult to follow.

Jonathan Shannon (2006) analyzes *dhikr* (in Arabic, *zikir* in Turkish), a ritual in which the name of God is invoked through prayer, song, and movement, as an embodied practice that produces temporal transformation. The combination of musical, kinesthetic, and sensory elements condition bodily memory as a vehicle “for the realization of spiritual states as well as for the formation of moral selfhood within the Muslim community of the *dhikr*” (Shannon 2006: 381). In Chapter Six I will compare aspects of this ritual with the Alevi *cem*.

Ali Racy’s book (2003) *Making Music in the Arab World* explores the emotional dimensions of Arab music called *tarab*, a concept encompassing ways of performing, listening to, and responding to music in ways that produce ecstasy (Racy 2003: 11). *Tarab* is a special domain of culture that includes artists, repertoires, attitudes, and behaviors of performers and audiences. Racy considers the parallels between ecstasy in both sacred and secular traditions, and the question of whether *tarab* embodies efficacy (as in ritual) or entertainment (as in aesthetic enjoyment). In the end, the great detailing of musical elements and training of *tarab* singers makes a stronger argument for a ritual based on aesthetic enjoyment than for spiritual efficacy, although these are overlapping domains.

### Muslim Media Publics

The widespread use of mass media—television and radio, audio and videocassettes,

and the telephone and Internet—and the information disseminated through it in the last decades of the twentieth century has enabled new publics and led to debates on how to live in the Muslim world. Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson (1994) suggest that new media reconfigure audiences as communities, breaking down barriers between senders and receivers, and between producers and consumers. Yavuz (1999) argues that new media have helped to provide spaces for identity creation and a generation of cultural entrepreneurs such as journalists, talk-show hosts, and fiction writers who disseminate reimagined Alevi and Kurdish identities (Yavuz 1999:194-195). Cultural entrepreneurs in media replace *dedes* in Alevi communities and the *ulema* (religious scholars) in Sunni Muslim communities. Perhaps *dedes* who appear on television programs can also be considered entrepreneurs of a sort, in that, like other media personalities, they have the potential to attain star quality.

Martin Sökefeld (2002) surveys the virtual Alevi community on the Internet, citing and describing numerous web pages developed specifically by Alevi individuals and organizations. The author argues that although Alevis constitute a physically interacting community on a local level, they are mainly a virtual community “*in Anderson’s and Balibar’s sense because its scope as represented by its members goes far beyond the actual range of interaction of these members*” (Sökefeld 2002: 107; italics in original; Anderson 2006; Balibar 1991). It is problematic to discuss Internet media in more than general terms—determining the community even for a single website is difficult since members do not see each other and only have access to each other through posted comments. In addition, individual members can remain anonymous by using a nickname.

In his study of the practice of listening to cassette-recorded sermons in Cairo, Charles Hirschkind (2006) found a public arena that connected discourses of Islamic piety and the demands of national citizenship. The use of the tapes served a moral-ethical function in reinforcing “social responsibility, pious comportment, and devotional practice” (Hirschkind 2006: 5). In Chapter Six, I discuss the ways that embodied listening is realized in cassette-sermons and Alevi and Sufi rituals.

## ALEVI CASE STUDIES

Although there exists no formally established field of Alevi studies, the amount of scholarship addressing political, religious, sociocultural and identity issues written since the start of the sociocultural movement has created the category by default. This part of the review provides an overview of writings on those topics, beginning with several works that have become standard reference materials for Alevi case studies. It should be mentioned that some scholars currently use both “Alevi” and “Alevi-Bektaşî” interchangeably.

Peter Alford Andrews’ *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (1989), based on studies by European and Turkish scholars from earlier in the century, was the first English-language publication to comprehensively map ethnic, religious, linguistic, and sociocultural groups across the entire country. An updated supplement containing articles and reference works on Alevis and Kurds was published in 2002. To illustrate the complexity of ethnic identities in Turkey, there are, for example, Turkish and Kurdish Alevis, Turkish and Kurdish Sunnis, and Alevi and Sunni Zaza speakers (a subdialect of Kurdish). Kurdish and Zaza are part of the Northwest Iranian language family. Perhaps

the main difficulty with the work is the author's assumption that an individual's identity can be discovered through research, when, in fact, identities are not real, but ambiguous and flexible—negotiable according to the situation, actors, and audiences.

Andrews and Hidir Temel, the son of a well-known *şeyh* (sheik; the title for a Hubyar religious order head) in Tokat, collaborated to produce two articles on the Hubyar Alevi (2010; 2013), among the few English-language studies on subcultural groups within the larger Alevi community. The first article provides a comprehensive look at the group's current distribution across regions of Turkey, their origins and hereditary lineage, Hubyar customs and beliefs, and the organization of the *cem*. The second article presents a selection of seven translated and annotated *deyiş* (sung poems) from Hubyar religious ceremonies. Temel (2010) also compiled a photographic essay on the Hubyar, *Tekeli Semâha Durunca (Holding the One Semah)*, a visual complement to the aforementioned articles but not widely available. Together, these three works provide an interesting comparison to Alevi practices in urban areas and indicate that urbanization has perhaps had fewer assimilating effects on the Hubyar.

David Shankland's book *The Alevi in Turkey* (2003) consolidates his fieldwork from the late 1980s and subsequent research. He compares the social organization and function of Alevi and Sunni rural villages and attempts to explain each group's successes and failures in retaining their beliefs and practices after urbanization, and in negotiating their relationships to the Turkish state. Although he conducts fieldwork at a time when village residents are in the process of moving to urban locations, there is little ethnography to balance the book's heavily theoretical orientation; Shankland misses the opportunity to interview Alevi still living in the village he studied and those who moved



to Istanbul. He also neglects to define important terms such as modernization and nation-state, and does not consider the decline of Kemalism in trying to account for the failure of Alevis to unify politically.

Shankland's (2010) article on maps and ethnic groups in Turkey, modeled on Andrews' 1989 work, illustrates the population distribution of Alevis by language (Turkish, Kurdish and Zaza). The author speculates that the difficulty in studying heterodox groups within Islam stems from the tendency to see cultures as a unified whole rather than as complex and changing. I suggest that either the article was written much earlier than the publication date, or the premise is out of sync with other scholarship of the time that theorizes multiple, shifting, and contextual Alevi identities.

Articles written by social anthropologists in the late 1990s, the early years of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement, illustrate controversies and differing perspectives about Alevis and *Alevilik*. Martin Stokes (1996) discusses the opening of an Alevi cultural center in Hatay, a Turkish province on the Syrian border, as a political strategy to overcome social and class differences. Anatolian Alevis who came to Iskenderun as state bureaucrats and industrialists saw Arab Alevis—mainly farmers and migrant laborers—as Sunnified, since some of them attended prayers in the mosque and read the Qur'an. In contrast, Arab Alevis were uncomfortable with the participation of women and the use of musical instruments such as the *saz* in the *cem*. The center enabled these groups to assert a new unity of purpose in ritual with a flexible and creative framework. This article is important for its discussion of managing the contradictions between different views and practices of *Alevilik*, but particularly its focus on border issues when the bulk of literature in the first decade of the sociocultural revival movement addressed differences between

rural and urban practices of Alevi and the Turkish state. The study also raises the question of culture versus ethnicity when defining the term Alevi.

Martin van Bruinessen specializes in writing about Kurdish Alevi identity, an issue that complicates Alevi identity politics. In one article (1996), he describes moments in the interplay of shifting attitudes and allegiances among the state, local police forces, Sunnis, and Alevi that have resulted in different outcomes; for example, the start of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement, the 1993 hotel fire in Sivas, and the 1995 drive-by shootings into teahouses in Istanbul's Gazi neighborhood. In a second article (1997), the author examines Kurdish Alevi identity in the area of Dersim in Anatolia, arguing for an ethnic origin—Dersimi (those from Dersim)—separate from other Kurdish Alevi based on language (Zaza, a subdialect of Kurdish) and regional history. This article contributes to a more nuanced view of Kurdish Alevi, who were forcibly resettled among Turkish Sunnis in the Kemalist era, and have been linked to violent activities of the separatist Kurdish Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan or PKK).<sup>27</sup> Currently, government rhetoric against terrorism may be used to vilify the “others” of the Turkish nation, including Kurds and Alevi. Since Ottoman times, the state has had greater tolerance for cultural than political differences.

Karin Vorhoff (1998) presents a detailed account of the political dimensions of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement. Framing her argument based on Weber's idea of the construction of ethnic groups as an outcome of social processes, the author illustrates how Alevi have created an unbroken historical narrative (in spite of contradictory evidence), drawing heavily on charged symbols—events like the battle at

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<sup>27</sup> See McDowall (2004) concerning the Kurdish nationalist revival in Turkey (1946-79) and the rise of the Kurdish Workers Party.

Karbala and figures like Hacı Bektaş Veli—to legitimate *Alevilik*.<sup>28</sup> Although spokespersons represent Alevis as united in one faith and ethical system—as in Hobsbawm’s idea of a reimagined community (1992)—internal controversies and dual claims of universalist values and particularist rituals reveal the ambiguous and constructed nature of the bonds of lineage, culture, tradition, and language.

In the article above, Vorhoff reveals the polarizing narratives put forth by Alevis spokespersons, emphasizing “our culture” and “our tradition” in opposition to “them” (intolerant Sunnis or Arabs, for example; Vorhoff 1998: 249). Since the early years of the sociocultural revival movement, official rhetoric has focused more on specific issues that will move the Alevi case forward. On a local level, I attended an Alevi-sponsored outreach concert attended by Sunnis, and interviewed young Alevi musicians whose non-Alevi friends expressed interest in *Alevilik*, and I knew from congregation members at various *cemevis* that Sunni friends occasionally attended *cems*. It appears that while broad generalizations and separatist rhetoric continue to be expressed on a political level, some person-to-person changes are slowly occurring.

In another article, Vorhoff (2003a) surveys scholarly and popular literature written about Alevis and Bektaşis. The publications represent a broad range of politicized views, from liberal intellectuals to religious conservatives, and should be seen in the context of this social dynamic. This article captures the debates of Alevi identity politics,

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<sup>28</sup> At Karbala in 680 A.D., the Umayyad caliph Yazid I defeated *İmam* Hüseyin, grandson of the Prophet Muhammed, and his band of warriors, who refused to pay Yazid allegiance. [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/karbala-SIM\\_3928](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/karbala-SIM_3928) (accessed May 31, 2015.)

and the bibliography includes the most informative, scholarly works in Turkish and European languages at the time of publication.

Perhaps the most useful and thorough primer on Alevi historical, cultural, and political issues is Marcus Dressler's (2008) online article "Alevi." Succinctly written sections cover genealogy, history, beliefs, practices, and modern developments, with references conveniently organized by topic. The author articulates the ongoing narratives of oppression and violence that unite Alevis, as well as the controversies that divide them—questions of *Alevilik* as a religion, culture, or philosophy, and its position with regard to the Sunni Muslim view.

Articles written by Turkish scholars in the edited volume *Alevi Identity* (2003) analyze different aspects of identity politics in the Alevi sociocultural revival movement. Reha Çamuroğlu (2003) outlines the factors that contributed to the Alevis' "rediscovery moment," including urban migration, disillusionment with socialism after the fall of the socialist bloc, successive military coups in Turkey, and issues of Kurdish nationalism. The author also recounts the community's internal debates over *Alevilik*'s relationship to (Sunni) Muslim views, and its concerns about state policies and assimilation. Fuat Bozkurt (2003) describes *Alevilik* as a social and religious system of rural life that eroded after urbanization. He delineates the contradiction of Turkey's official position as a secular (I believe laicist is meant here) state and policies of (Sunni) religious expansion by building mosques in Alevi villages, and compulsory religious education (2003: 95). The two articles provide important assessments of the Alevi situation in 1998, when *Alevi Identity* was first published. Just two years later, the recognition of an Islamic organization in Berlin as a religious community provided a new strategy opportunity for

Alevis in Germany and Turkey to lobby for recognition as a religious community, as discussed in the section on Alevis abroad.

Studies focusing on the relationship between the state and Alevi associations include Aykan Erdemir's dissertation "Incorporating Alevis" (2004), which investigates interactions between the two types of institutions. The author examines deeply embedded biases and sectarian values, termed "cosmologies," held by both Sunni state functionaries and Alevis that color their interactions. Erdemir argues that through negotiations, both state control of religion is challenged and Alevi beliefs and practices are permanently altered. In a later article the author explores Alevis' perceptions of "tradition" (*gelenek*) and "modernity" (*çağdaşlık*) (Erdemir 2005) through the locus of a dramatic performance staged during the month of Muharrem, the month of mourning for Alevis and Shi'a Muslims. The author's observations and discussion reveal that the two terms are not perceived in a binary opposition, as is more prevalent in Western scholarly thinking, but may be invoked simultaneously in different contexts. Erdemir points out,

it is striking that in the field of Alevi studies, where the emic terms are so unfixed and elusive, and where most scholarly works include lengthy sections on modernity and tradition, only a handful of scholars have so far investigated how Alevi subjects define, interpret, perform, and embody these concepts. (2005: 942)

While the extreme perceptions described in his dissertation may continue in some form, both of Erdemir's works raise the question of ambivalence. Scholars of Alevi studies take great pains to delineate multiple discourses and factionalism within the Alevi community, raising the question of exploring internal Sunni differences in relation to Alevis.

In a master's thesis on the emergence of the *cemevi* in the 1990s, Murat Es (2004) describes controversies surrounding the multiple significations of the building. The

author argues that the trend of standardizing Alevi worship practices is motivated by the anxieties of sharing public space with Sunni Muslims and representing “‘proper’ manifestations of Aleviness” (Es 2004: iii). This thesis is another illustration of ritual transformation under public scrutiny and the *cemevi* as a site of contested perceptions and practices.

Alevi festivals have played an important role in reinforcing identity and encouraging participation in reenacting cultural heritage. Elise Massicard (2003a) discusses the Hacı Bektaş festival, established in the mid-1960s, that honors the eponymous thirteenth-century mystic and teacher. Disparate constituencies can unite in the assertion of Alevi community, since Hacı Bektaş indexes many different symbols and affiliations including religious devotion, progressive thinking, and those who identify as Alevi or Bektaşî. Mark Solieu (2005) characterizes Alevi festivals as adaptations of cultural heritage to the modern context. The communal experience and physical interaction of participating in Alevi ritual—sharing food and performances of music, poetry, and sacred dance—make Alevi identity real for the participants (Solieu 2005: 104). The two articles above describe Alevi festivals as sites in which the reenacting of traditions such as performances of music and rituals (adapted for the stage) reinforce solidarity and identity. In addition, they are localities for political displays such as speeches by local and national representatives and dernek presidents, and for commerce as souvenirs and symbols of Alevi culture are sold. All of these activities can be seen as contributing to Alevi identity formation and shared values, whether one sees *Alevilik* as a religion, a culture, an ideology, or a way of life.

Research perspectives on Alevis and Alevi identity have changed from the early years of the sociocultural revival movement to the present time. Hamit Bozarslan (2003) problematizes characterizations that previously drove research on the Alevis: a religious minority historically oppressed by the Ottomans, allies of the Kemalist regime in opposition to Sunni policies and theocracy doctrine, and, more recently, opponents of the state in the post-Kemalist period (Bozarslan 2003: 3). He advocates, instead, a sociological perspective that sees discontinuities and changing group strategies among Alevis, Kurdish nationalists, and political Islamists as they have competed for economic, political, and symbolic resources since the 1960s.

Ayfer Karakaya Stump (2010b) gives an overview of the contents of two types of Alevi documents: those kept by *dede* families between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and accounts of Alevi beliefs and rituals in manuscript form called the *bb*. First made available in the mid-1990s, these materials enable the comparative study of Alevi hereditary lineages once thought to be only orally transmitted, and potentially change the thinking about “heterodox” Muslim communities. In a presentation at the Swedish Research Institute’s Alevi Identity Revisited conference in 2014, Stump called for a re-examination of dominant assumptions about Alevi-Bektaşî history—as a purely oral tradition, as a syncretic religion, and as a folk religion in a “high–folk” dichotomy of Islam.

Both Bozarslan and Stump are, in effect, advocating a postmodern approach to Alevi studies—one that privileges relational knowledge and local perspectives in articulating truth rather than “either-or” dichotomies. Twenty-five years after the start of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement additional paradigms are being used to examine

the Alevi case: networks, opportunity structures, and communicative praxis (Şahin 2005), ambivalence (Erdemir 2010), and memory and the psychological mindset (Köse 2014).



## Alevi Religious Practices

Works in Turkish that describe Alevi religious practices are Tur's (2002) *Erkânname. Aleviliğin İslam'da Yeri ve Alevi Erkânları* (Basic Principles. The Place of Alevism in Islam and Alevi Fundamentals), and Yaman's ([1998] 2003) *Alevilik'te Cem* (The *Cem* in Alevism). Tur's large compendium includes sections on the development of Islam, the Twelve İmams, the spread of *Alevilik*, its important teachers and belief system, and explanations of prayers and rites, all from a liturgical viewpoint. The section on the *cem* includes several types of worship services including those that resolve community disputes and pair young males or married couples for mutual moral support. The work does not mention other contributing authors or sources, or regional differences in practice. *Alevilik'te Cem*, written by Mehmet Yaman *Dede*, resembles the *cem* manual by one of my informants, Binali Doğan *Dede* (2013).<sup>29</sup> Korkmaz's (2005) *Alevilik-Bektaşilik Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Alevi-Bektaşî Dictionary of Terms), proved to be a helpful resource for brief explanations of the parts of the worship service and identifying important figures and historical events (that were mentioned by *dedes* in their answers to my questions, but sometimes not explained).

## Alevis Abroad

Scholarly literature on the Alevi community outside of Turkey is a continually growing body of literature and cannot be fully covered in the space of this dissertation; a few articles are mentioned here. Sociological and anthropological interest in Turkish citizens who began migrating to European cities in search of work in the 1960s produced

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<sup>29</sup> See also Binali Doğan *Dede* (2014).

general population studies and, later on, those that distinguished between Sunni and Alevi religious and cultural practices. As the term diaspora gained popularity in North American and European scholarship in the mid-1990s, ethnomusicologists began to investigate the “musical consequences of migration” (Hammarlund 1994: 306). These articles illustrate a mix of connection and disconnectedness between Turkey and other countries—the term transnational is less useful.

Leyla Neyzi’s article (2002) describes the upbringing and musical development of Metin and Kemal Kahraman, two Kurdish Alevi musicians and brothers from Dersim (now known as Tunceli). They work together to compose and produce the music of their elders, but live apart in Turkey and Germany, respectively, separated by the consequences of their former political activity as students. As educated Turks, each brother first rejected, and then returned to, his grandparents’ culture, seeing in it a model for pluralism (Turkish and Kurdish identity) not supported by the Turkish state. Neyzi’s investigation of the musician brothers links the Alevi music revival as a form of ethnic and religious identity to controversies of national identity in a post-Kemalist era, and to the emergence of an Alevi diaspora in Europe. It also calls attention to hybrid identities and to the multicultural heritage of Anatolia that has been ignored since the founding of the Turkish Republic.

Elise Massicard (2003b) describes the ways that institutional and political frameworks in Turkey and in Germany have shaped Alevi claims in different ways. Alevis have not gained recognition as a separate denomination, as the Turkish state recognizes only a Sunni Muslim beliefs and practices. In Germany, however, Alevis were given the status of a religious community in 2000, shortly after recognition of the Islamic

Federation of Berlin. The author attributes this move to political strategy rather than faith, since *Alevilik* in Germany had been constructed as cultural and political until this ruling. Alevi in Turkey have since sought to gain similar recognition, a status that in and of itself is more important to Alevi than how *Alevilik* is defined (Massicard 2003b: 178).

Ron Geaves (2003) described changes in an Alevi community in Northeast London since their arrival as migrants in the 1980s. Even though they had built a *cemevi* and held *cems* regularly, by 2001 expenses precluded employing the *dede* and holding weekly *cems*. Yet the *cemevi* was still used for social and cultural activities, and the youth of the community participated in cultural tourism by attending the annual Hacı Bektaş festival. The author concludes that for Alevi youth, the negotiation of modernity through a revival of culture is, in fact, connected to the Alevi legacy of the merger of community and religious practices, “the tolerance and heterogeneity of Alevi forms of Sufism” (Geaves 2003: 69).

Martin Sökefeld’s (2008) *Struggling for Recognition* is the first English-language book-length account of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement in Germany. The author emphasizes modernity as a key concept in Alevi politics of identity—Germans/Europeans are seen as progressive, while Sunni Islam is seen as antimodern. The German constitution’s allocation of rights for religious difference influenced Alevi toward a religious framing of cultural expression, illustrated by the reinstatement of *dedes*. In an earlier article (Sökefeld 2002b) the author examines the changes from *dede*-centered *Alevilik* in rural Turkey to an association-centered *Alevilik* in Germany through a portrait of three *dedes*. All three are described as relying on their spiritual knowledge from an upbringing in rural Turkey, but having little contact with religious leaders or

communities in their home country as adults, since they began to shuttle between various European cities to conduct *cems* for associations.

The works summarized above illustrate the paradox that while Alevi migrants have taken different approaches in different countries to claiming identity, being Alevi (at least in Turkey) continues to be presented as unified and undivided by national boundaries. Such divergent paths and strategies may be an indication that the transnational dimension of *Alevilik* is overstated.

Three articles below discuss Alevi music and identity outside of Turkey. The first, by Marvin Greve (2008), presents the difficulties in generating interest in and integrating instruction of Turkish music in German and Dutch cultural institutions. Some of the many impediments to implementing “intercultural musical competence” in music academies include German musicians and instructors with little knowledge of Turkish music styles or ability to judge their quality, and strong rivalries among Turkish musicians and their unwillingness to share information about each other or participate in competitions. (Greve 2008: 89). The author notes that a focus on artistic interests rather than social integration has produced better results in realizing a German-Turkish musical exchange.

Ayhan Erol (2010) writes about Alevis in Toronto, Canada, focusing on one cultural association that provides both ritual and secularized *semah* and *bağlama* instruction. The author’s Kurdish interviewees (twenty to thirty years of age) associated the *semah* with their religious identity, but Turkish Alevi parents who brought their children to the classes were more interested in “sustainable cultural expression” and resisting popular influences (2010: 383). This article illustrates multiple understandings

of identity among Alevi community members in Toronto.

Thomas Solomon (2015) theorizes the ways that musical practices contribute to diaspora both as a dimension of social formation, and as a force in destabilizing previous conceptions of diaspora that privileged the status of the homeland. Music is a powerful vehicle for creating a diasporic consciousness and sense of belonging through portable and digitized formats on the Internet, while music making invites communal sociability and the reassuring experience of community membership. The author uses the metaphor of a rhizome (with multidirectional roots and shoots) to illustrate that the homeland is merely another node in a network of alliances. Solomon promotes a more nuanced perspective of diasporic consciousness, in view of the term's popular use by academics and ethnic groups, and advocates more studies of music consumption and listener behaviors.

I obtained mixed results in applying Solomon's theories to the articles on music and identity, above. The article by Sökefeld (2002b) profiling the three *dedes* who traveled among different cities to conduct *cems* but have little contact with Turkey in their adult lives indicates that homeland is not so important to them. Other articles illustrated that Alevis in Turkey are still an important source of authenticity and authority. Erol's (2010) mentions that the Toronto association's *semah* teacher relies on recorded materials of performing groups in Turkey as the authority for authenticity. Moreover, the anniversary celebration of the association featured a *cem* conducted by Dertli Divani *Dede*. In Geaves's article (2003) the Alevi youth in Northeast London attend the Hacı Bektaş Festival as a cultural tourist activity, and I think, also as a way to experience authentic Alevi culture that might be more difficult abroad. In terms of Solomon's idea of music as

social solidarity in forming diasporic consciousness, I think there may be two types of consciousness: one that perceives the closeness of a group and group identity outside of Turkey, as Solomon asserts, and another that maintains a connection to Turkey in the circulating *dedes*, musicians, and materials that embody the authority of *Alevilik*. Diasporic consciousness can also be generational—children born to migrants frequently look for ways to distinguish themselves from their parents’ cultural expressions.<sup>30</sup>

## MUSIC AND EXPRESSIVE PRACTICES IN TURKEY

The articles and publications included in this section focus on Turkish folk music generally and Alevi music specifically, including sections on seminal works on art and folk music and more recent studies. Several articles address how performers and other practitioners continually reinvent fidelity to music of the past.

### Seminal Works

Laurence Picken’s (1975) monumental compendium, *Folk Musical Instruments of Turkey*, increased awareness of Turkish music and expressive practices in European musicology.<sup>31</sup> The author follows the Sachs-Hornbostel classification system to organize a vast array of instruments in cities and rural regions. The nearly one hundred pages devoted to the *saz* family enabled me to compare what I learned about types, sizes, and construction of instruments, tunings, and basic playing techniques with Picken’s information, indicating change and continuity over time.

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<sup>30</sup> See Diethrich (1999-2000) on dance music in Indian youth culture.

<sup>31</sup> See also Béla Bartók (1976) and Kurt and Ursula Reinhart (1984).

In *Sufism, Music and Society* (2011), Walter Feldman links the *semâ'î*, a section of the Mevlevi liturgical cycle that accelerates in tempo, to its counterparts in courtly genres, Turkish military music, and the vocal music of Bektâşi *aşîks*. Ottoman court musicians and composers were often also dervishes, and significantly influenced a Turkish preference for composed instrumental forms over the improvisation (*taksim*) that is prominent in Arabic style music.<sup>32</sup>

Irene Markoff's dissertation (1986) is a landmark study of professional *bağlama* musicians. In a thorough examination of *bağlama* playing techniques, aesthetic preferences, and musical analysis she illustrates how professional Turkish folk musicians balance personal innovation and preservation of idealized, regional musical prototypes in the folk song repertoire. Although music revival was not yet an area of investigation in ethnomusicology scholarship, Markoff studied with and interviewed musicians who were creating a revivalist repertoire, and whose influence is still strong in subsequent generations of professional and amateur *bağlama* players. The author concluded that in spite of superficial changes Turkish folk music culture was resistant to outside influences. Markoff is one of a handful of North American and European scholars who have conducted musicological investigations of Alevi music and musicians.

In another article (Markoff 1990/91), the author describes the ideological conflicts between the Turkish government's vision of a pan-Turkic folk music style and the concerns of urban, professional folk musicians who fear the loss of regional creativity as a result of standardization. Guidelines for acceptable musical practice include maintaining regional features and variations with discernable connections to the past.

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<sup>32</sup> See also Feldman (1996).

The article aptly illustrates the discourse of national trajectory versus local meaning.<sup>33</sup> In more recent work Markoff (2008) looks back on a quarter-century of change and continuity in Alevi musical expression. She characterizes collaborations of conservative Alevi and popular music artists as part of a hybridizing process on Alevi musical culture and identity (Markoff 2008: 33) and illustrates different the ways in which musicians' varied projects and agendas drive their musical decisions. Although there may indeed be hybridizing processes at work on Alevi musical culture and identity, like Erol, Markoff, and other scholars, my research found that authenticity is also redefined over time, and Alevi musicians continue to assert that they maintain the essence of Alevi and Anatolian repertoire.

*The Arabesk Debate* (Stokes 1992) is an important study illustrating contradictions in the existence and performance of *arabesk*, a popular urban musical genre centering on themes of loneliness, self-destruction, and fate. While the Turkish state created a rhetoric of distance by associating the genre with cultural degeneration and slum immigrants, studio professionals used sophisticated techniques to mix and produce it, and many who were respectable, state-employed musicians by day performed this music in bars by night. Stokes combines anthropological and musicological analysis with popular music frames to present a complex and nuanced view of *arabesk* narratives embedded in Turkey's political, social, and everyday life. A critical part of Stokes' introduction to the book discusses the emotional world of sentiment (*duygu*) and the heart (*gönül*) that *arabesk* music evokes, and the ways that such discourses oppose a Middle Eastern male selfhood (Stokes 1992: 12). There is perhaps a connection between those

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<sup>33</sup> See also Markoff (2002a, 2002b, 2005).



who are moved by *arabesk* music and Alevi at urban *cems* who cry during the remembrance of the slaughter of İmam Hüseyin at Karbala. As laments are sung and the story is retold, people begin to shed tears: urban *dedes* associate the ability to cry with a high state of spiritual emotion—a new practice of urban environments, since I observed no crying during this part of the service at *cems* in small towns (see Chapter Six).

### More Recent Studies

Eliot Bates (2008a) writes about the *derleme* (a notated score or music recording collected in rural Anatolia), an important source of authority in recording Turkish folk and ethnic music. The author explores the considerable leeway given to what constitutes a *derleme*, and musical and technological fidelity to that source. A similar concept operates in the circulation of “original” sheet music on several Internet sites used by amateur musicians both as memory prompts and as authority for songs, illustrating the ongoing intersection of written and oral tradition. The article is an example of the ways that the precedent set by folk music collection projects in the early Turkish Republic still influences current music practices. Contemporary revivalist musicians believe they are treating original sources with more sensitivity than the musicologists of the 1930s who sometimes made significant changes to folk music in the name of creating national standards, but there may be a different perspective in the longer term.

*Music in Turkey* by Eliot Bates (2011) is a short, undergraduate-level survey that provides informative and well articulated musical information—transcriptions, listening examples, and analysis of musical/structure features of Turkish folk music—and their realization in contemporary studio arrangements. An analysis of one piece by Dertli Divani *Dede* is an illustration of the similarities between the Alevi music repertoire and

Turkish folk music. The chapter on Anatolian musics perhaps covers too many topics in a small space—Alevi ethnicity, language groups, ritual, and performers—and the author neglects to define, or at least problematize, the terms sacred and secular in his discussion of Alevi practices.

In a more recent article, Bates (2012) argues for the centrality of musical instruments in sociomusical interaction as exemplified by the *saz*. The author describes social and affective relationships centered around the instrument: being moved to tears by the sounds of the *saz*, its role in music making at Alevi *cem*s and *muhabbets*, anatomical and (Alevi) religious imagery applied to its physical parts, and its ubiquity in recordings of contemporary Turkish folk and popular music. The article raises some interesting questions with regard to the Alevi case. First, strong associations with the *saz* as the national instrument of Turkey (built over decades through public media projects) may make it difficult for the general public to perceive Alevi music as different from Turkish folk music in general (musical characteristics are discussed in Chapter Four). Second, emotional reactions to singing and *saz* playing are comparable to the part of the Alevi *cem* in which participants cry as they remember the martyrdom İmam Hüseyin (see Chapter Six for a discussion).

Ayhan Erol writes about Alevi music and identity in both Turkish and English. In one article (2008), he distinguishes between an original monophonic texture of singing and playing *bağlama*, and the subsequent development of polyphonic and harmonic styles, both of which draw on a vocabulary of Western functional harmony and instruments. The author frequently refers to religious and non-religious music or genres, but never seems to clarify them with examples. The unqualified use of such terms is

problematic given the range of contexts in which the Alevi musical repertoire is now performed.

In “Marketing the Alevi Music Revival” (2009a), the author discusses the commodification of Alevi music as it has become popularized and thus more accessible to a wider audience. The *türkü* house is one example of a new market and socio-economic center for the Alevi music revival where musicians, repertoire, and audiences interact.<sup>34</sup> The emphasis that the author places on Alevi musicians maintaining their marketability to a variety of audiences is counterbalanced, I believe, by their frequent, uncompensated appearances at Alevi community events and dedication to preserving the essence of regional folk models along with some musical innovation. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

The *semah*—ritual movements performed to sung poems at the culmination of the Alevi worship service—was been an object of study by Turkish scholars: interest by European and North American scholars developed as a result of the sociocultural revival movement. Turkish musicologist Okan Murat Öztürk (2005) provides a summary of the general characteristics of *semah* types, including vocal and instrumental ranges, modes, rhythmic patterns and meter, poetic forms, and the types of *saz* instruments used in performance. He divides *semahs* into eastern and western areas of Anatolia and discusses the details of regional variation. Neşe Ayışıt Onatça’s book (2007) focuses on the *Kırklar Semahı* (*semah* of the forty)—described in the Alevi liturgy as the original execution of the sacred movements—and its regional variations. Prefaced by chapters summarizing the Alevi-Bektaşî belief system, the worship service, and the types of music included, the

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<sup>34</sup> See Erol (2009b) for extended discussions of Alevi musical roots, revival, and identity.

author's findings reveal five major subtypes based on similar literary and musical features among provinces within a given area; for example, the Karadeniz, Marmara, and Southern Anatolian regions. These works attest to the continuing importance of regional variety in cultural and ritual practices in Turkish scholarship and, by attempting to locate the original and oldest versions of Alevi practices, provides evidence of Alevilik as a legitimate ritual practice.

Arzu Öztürkmen (2005) tells the story of an Alevi employee of Boğazıcı University, Durmuş Genç, who restaged the *semah* for the university's collegiate folklore club in the 1970s, making it part of the club's Turkish folkdance repertoire. Genç created a *semah* training course at the Karacaahmet Derneği (association) incorporating regional variants, thus creating a “ ‘national potpourri’ of the *semah* genres” (2005: 255). His pioneering imaging of the ritual based on the criteria of rehearsal, floor patterns, and bodily competence rather than spiritual involvement helped to create a new cultural form in a new social context. The article illustrates the repercussions of changing contexts and associations with the *semah*—as both an Alevi ritual and a folkloric dance—that continue in present-day Turkey. Incorporating regional variety and synchronized movements became standard practice in urban *cemevis*; and yet performance spaces, occasions, and appropriate demeanor are still contested. Öztürkmen's dissertation (1993) was the first English-language investigation of the *semah* and its changing contexts and associations.<sup>35</sup>

Münir Nurettin Beken (no date) presents the Turkish nightclub—*gazino*—as a social space where three types of musical styles converge: *alaturka* (Turkish style), *alafanga* (Western style) and *arabesk* (mentioned above). The music events at this

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<sup>35</sup> See also Öztürkmen (2012).

venue are both public for paying audiences and private, as musicians also play for each other backstage. The *gazino* owner plays an important role in determining aesthetic taste in both the venue's visual appearance and what music is performed: the latter is based on the owner's assessment of audience reaction to musicians' performances. The *türkü* house, where many Alevi musicians perform, is comparable to the *gazino* as a socioeconomic center as a microcosm of aesthetic taste and social values. Each provides a forum for musicians to try out innovative arrangements of tradition repertoire and reinforce their popularity and authenticity as representatives of Turkish folk (and Alevi) music while aficionados come into contact with revivalist musical ethos and aesthetic codes.

## CASE STUDIES FROM OTHER CULTURES

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to provide an extensive comparison of the Alevi case and the music and cultural practices in other cultures, but a few relevant studies are included here. I discuss music's role and power in shaping cultural policy and national identity.

John Baily (1994) describes the evolution of several kinds of popular music that came to represent a multifaceted Afghan identity. In the early twentieth century, radio was nearly the only means to impart a sense of , to multiethnic Afghanis, yet political changes interrupted government efforts to broadcast music that embodied this message. The article illustrates the ways in which expressive culture developed both on and off the airwaves.

Turkey and Afghanistan share a similar process in the creation of a national identity; establishing a common history, ethnic origin, and language, and employing elite musical experts who created pan-Turkish and pan-Afghani musical styles, respectively, to impart a message of national culture. Over several decades in Turkey, the Halkevleri (People's Houses), radio orchestras, and performing groups contributed to nationalizing the *bağlama* by creating a standard accompaniment ensemble for all types of regional folk music. The short-necked variety was popularized in the commercial recordings and performances of revivalist musicians, and it became the usual accompaniment instrument for urban *cems*.

Sonia Seeman's (2009) article discusses the power of cultural practices to affect the political realm in the case of the Roman people in Turkey. She describes the rise of Roma folkloric performing groups and associations in Turkey in the context of "cultural performance as a form of social work for political action" (Seeman 2009: 208). Such performances have raised the Roman profile and enabled negotiation on behalf of the community. Both Alevis and Romans have benefited from public cultural displays, but the added Alevi demand of religious recognition threatens the Turkish state's more recent definition of Turkishness.

Rachel Harris (2008) examines the twelve *muqam*, the canon of music and songs of the Uyghur minority in China, in the context of attempts by UNESCO and the Chinese government to recognize, unify, and fix the tradition. An in-depth musical analysis reveals variants, borrowings, and newly composed material, suggesting an idealized framework rather than a body of music representing only one regional repertoire of Central Asia. Like Uyghur *muqam*, the Alevi music repertoire can be termed a fluid, oral

tradition, since it shares many features with the larger body of Turkish folk music.

Notated music from Internet sources in wide circulation has not been vetted or codified, thus retaining intersections of oral and written practice.

In another article, Harris (2009) investigates the control of minority expressive practices through government projects of folklore collection and canonizing repertoires. Popular contexts and meanings have persisted in spite of Chinese government attempts, along with complicit Uyghur elites, to deemphasize religious associations during Uyghur *muqam* performances. In efforts to manage Alevi expressive practices, the Turkish state's Office of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has characterized them as part of the country's rich, cultural heritage, and the *cem* ritual is termed "behavior" (*davranış*) rather than worship (*ibadet*).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has described ways that music has been a site for Alevis to express individual and shared identity through the frames of sociocultural participation, musical revival, and the process of bonding through musical and ritual activity. These concepts were then connected to studies from the fields of history, social anthropology, political science, ethnomusicology and Alevi studies to illustrate the role of music in Turkish nationalism, Alevi ethnicity, identity, and religious difference, and in Turkish folk music practices in general. Studies that reflect similar controversies from other areas of the world were also included. Chapter Three explores specific events and political ideologies from the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 onward that influenced policies and

reactions to minority status, religious and cultural differences, both in Turkey and, after the start of the sociocultural revival movement, in Alevi migrant communities.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ALEVIS AND TURKEY'S SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

#### INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, I discussed three main theories that help to explain Alevi cultural and expressive practices since the late 1980s: social participation within a cultural framework, musical revival, and the music collective. In this chapter I contextualize these perspectives by discussing the Alevi community's relationship to the Turkish state and Sunni Muslim majority citizenry. Critical to understanding this relationship are changing discourses of modernity, minority, and ethnicity in different eras, their incorporation into state policy, and Alevi responses.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Alevis constitute roughly fifteen to twenty million, or about one-quarter of the Turkish population. More exact figures are difficult to determine since census data does not account for religious designations other than Muslim. Prior to urban migration, the majority of the population was found in central Anatolia, including Kurdish-speaking communities—Zaza, or Kurmanca—along with other subgroups in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions.<sup>1</sup>

Alevi and *Alevilik*, as modern concepts for the group in contemporary Turkey, did not come into use until the twentieth century. An older term, Kizilbash (Kızılbaş in Turkish, derived from the group's red hat with twelve folds) refers to militant Shi'a groups in residence in Anatolia since the thirteenth century. New scholarship has

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<sup>1</sup> Some Alevi subgroups retain names designating their tribal and linguistic origins, for example, The Tahtacı in the Aegean region, and the Çepni in the Black Sea region.

revealed a sixteenth-century influx of heterodox Muslim groups, such as the Vefa’I dervishes, from areas of Iran and Iraq, and genealogical evidence linking non-conformist Muslim practices to origins in Mesopotamia, rather than to Central Asia, as was previously thought.<sup>2</sup> Shah Ismail, the sixteenth-century founder of the Iranian Safavid Dynasty, and Bektaşî dervish orders also influenced the region in adopting practices and beliefs from Shi’a Islam that would develop into the tenets and beliefs and practices associated with contemporary *Alevilik*.<sup>3</sup> In the late Ottoman Empire, the term Alevi appeared in a series of articles focused on ideas of nationalism and portraying Alevis as preservers of Turkish language and culture. While these writings softened the negative connotations associated with Kizilbash, they also implicating marginalized Kurdish Alevis (Dressler 2008: 94).

The main worship service for Alevis is the *cem* (assembly): a *dede* leads the service and directs a group of spiritual assistants including a musician (sometimes more than one) who sings and plays the *bağlama*, the Turkish folk lute.<sup>4</sup> The use of music and sung poetry in the *cem* challenges orthodox Muslim beliefs that music (*musiqi* in Arabic) distracts one from devotion to God, and that the reciting (chanting) of the Qur’an is not considered music (even though reciters are musically trained and the recitation exhibits musical features).

Alevis have been regarded with suspicion by the Ottomans and later by the Turkish government for seemingly nonconformist and subversive activity. Suppression of

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<sup>2</sup> See Ayfer Karakaya-Stump 2010a; 2012-13.

<sup>3</sup> Shah Ismail challenged the Ottomans for control of Anatolia in a series of battles that ended with victory for the Ottomans, marked by the treaty, The Peace of Amasya (1555).

<sup>4</sup> Outsiders may see these “assistants” as leaders in relation to the congregation, but they defer to the *dede* who is given the authority by the congregation to lead the *cem*.

their culture during the Ottoman Empire led to the masking of Alevi identity by closing rituals to outsiders and limiting membership to blood lineage, with the result that many practices were lost through isolation and disuse. During the Kemalist era “Kurdish as well as Turkish Alevi were supportive of [the state’s] secular and populist ideals; many Kurdish Alevi voluntarily assimilated to Turkish culture” (van Bruinessen 1996: 8). Urban migration brought Alevi into wider Turkish society and in contact with conservative Sunnis, resulting in escalated tensions in areas with ethnically and religiously mixed towns and cities (*ibid.*). Polarizing social and political values and a brief period of military rule set the stage for the sociocultural and musical revival movements in the 1980s that redefined and reconstructed Alevi worship and music practices for the modern environment. Today Alevi seek government recognition of the *cemevi* as a legitimate place of worship (*ibadethane*), like the mosque, and the *cem* as genuine religious worship (*ibadet*) like that of Sunni Muslims.

## MODERNITY, MINORITIES, AND ETHNICITY

In historical terms, modernity can be characterized by moving toward a positive future “not just spatial motion, but qualitative improvement through reason and scientific experimentation” (Findley 2010: 15). From the late eighteenth century onward, the European modern nation-state became the model for the shrinking Ottoman Empire and ethnic groups that would declare their independence from the Empire. Governments formed under this model tried to transform their citizens by imposing a top-down, collective homogeneity, often by means of radical reforms such as forced resettlement. This type of unified identity was ruthlessly pursued by the Kemalist regime in building

the Turkish Republic after its founding in 1923. More recent historiography recognizes the interplay of different currents in Turkey's development, and a tension between the rationalization of state policies and the subjectivities of its citizens (Karpas 2000; Findley 2010; Üngör 2011).

An important concept in approaching any discussion of modern nation-states is that of the minority. Minority responses to state domination have included assimilation, secession, and active resistance—in cases in which minorities do not rule nation states, but there are exceptions. The Alawites, who represent roughly twenty percent of the population in Syria (and also constitute minority populations in Turkey and Lebanon), have, since 1970, led the political elite under the Alawite Al-Assad family.<sup>5</sup> Another instance is Afrikaners, who prior to 1994, controlled South Africa while representing roughly twenty-two percent of the population.

One complex dimension of any minority claim is that of ethnicity, a term that has been a subject of scholarly interest in anthropology and sociology since the 1960s, and appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in the early 1970s (Erikson 2010: 4). Ethnicity refers to aspects of relations between groups that consider themselves culturally distinctive, but may also evoke minority and racial issues. Very often an ethnic group's claim of identity "is made *against* the version of identity that is ascribed to that group by outsiders . . . the group then aims *Alevilik* at changing this ascription, at making it congruent with its self-ascription" (Sökefeld 2008: 34; italics in original). Alevi ethnicity is complex, because of the mix of Turkish and Kurdish language speakers, yet Alevis claim a separate identity from Turkish Sunni society by virtue of their religious and

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<sup>5</sup> Similar to *Alevilik* in Turkey, Alawite faith combines worship of the Twelve Imams and syncretistic elements, but Alevis do not see themselves as having the same faith.

cultural practices. Alevi have achieved greater visibility in the twenty-five years since the launching of the sociocultural revival movement through public *cem*s, festivals, and the media. The state's continuing refusal to grant them status as a legitimate, religious minority, however, makes it difficult, at best, for Alevi to counter both nonrecognition and misrecognition in Turkish society. In the following sections I will explain some of the history of the Turkish Republic, highlighting nationalist policies and their implementation in folklore collection and other projects.

## OVERVIEW OF TURKEY

### The Republican Years (1923-1950)

In the complex National Struggle (1919-1922), young Turkish leaders conducted a political war to create a united nationalist movement and military campaigns to recover western Anatolian lands from the Greek invasion and defend territory in the east. The Republic's future first president, Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938) (who later took the appellation Atatürk), rose to power in nationalist committees. The tactical skills that distinguished him as the most successful military Ottoman commander of World War I were also of great use in developing political policy (Findley 2010: 224). He established a base in Ankara that evolved into the nucleus of a national government that was first referred to as Turkey in 1920.

Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), ideologue and pioneer sociologist, envisioned modernity as laic and scientific. Influenced by French sociologist Émile Durkheim's concept of corporatism that cut across occupational and class lines, Gökalp crafted a

Turkish-Islamic culture that combined the reason and science of modern civilization. In *The Principles of Turkism* (1923), the primary influence in shaping the reforms of the new nation, Gökalp established that nationality, and thus identity, is based on ties of culture, not blood or race, and through his theories demonstrated how his readers “could be at once Turkish, Islamic, and modern” (Findley 2010: 238).

At roughly the same time, two different cultural perspectives were competing in the development of modernity. *Alafranga*, foreign style, and *alaturka*, Turkish style, referred to modes of dress, social habits, and cultural distinctions. While the former came to represent the progressive interests of an emerging middle class and a modern nation with a single ethnic composition like that of the modern European state, the latter became associated with a multicultural (and therefore chaotic), obsolete Ottoman past (O’Connell 2000). This discourse also reordered the ways that different styles of Turkish music were regarded. In service of the new nationalism, Turkish folk music and instruments were linked to Central Asian prototypes, whereas classical Turkish classical was disfavored, as it could not “conform to the ideals of ethnic purity enshrined within the rural tradition” (O’Connell 2000: 123).

In the first decades of the Republic, 1923-38, the state focused on domestic reforms. Atatürk’s pursuit of laicism resulted in the closing of existing religious institutions in order to bring religion under state control (Toprak 1981: 46). This included elimination of the caliphate (the supreme head of the Muslim community) and the closing of the office of the Şeyhülislam (head of the Ottoman religious hierarchy), religious law courts, and theological seminaries. In 1925, dervish brotherhoods were banned, and an amended clause (1928) to the 1924 constitution eliminated the designation of Islam as the

state religion. Mustafa Kemal also created a new Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri) under the prime minister.

Policies that effectively transformed Turkish cultural included the adoption, in 1928, of the Latin alphabet and European-style numbers that replaced Arabic script. National societies for language and history were founded: the former continued to purge Arabic and Persian from the spoken and written word, while the latter promulgated the Turkish Historical Thesis—the idea that Turks had Central Asian origins. “Kemalists did aim at revolution, both by excluding religion from public life and by making the Ottoman cultural heritage inaccessible to future generations through disruptive change in the language and alphabet” (Findley 2010: 256).

The transition from an Islamic empire to a secularist Turkish nation-state stirred up past differences for Kurds, who were divided by tribe, sect (Sunni, Alevi, Syriac and Yezidi), and language (Zaza and Kurmancı), and whose tribal lands were now divided by new national boundaries. Kurdish Alevis were in favor of a laic republic, while Alevi tribal landlords were more willing to work within the new nation than to entertain ideas of Kurdish nationalism or foreign interference. Still, in the name of progressivism the government carried out an agenda of controlling Kurdish, Georgian, Laz, and other populations considered to be the “non-Turkish elements” of society (Üngör 2011: 142 quotes in original). The deportation and resettlement took place in several phases with the goal of scattering the ethnic groups among so-called pure Turkish populations in order to assimilate them within the span of a single generation.

One major challenge facing the nation was the mass education of a largely rural, illiterate population. Village Institutes (Köy Enstitütleri) were founded in 1940 with the

goal of promoting nationalism and Kemalism, and Turkifying the peasants in language, tradition, and spirit. Trained community leaders taught villagers new skills to improve rural life with academic, agricultural, and technical subjects. Student travel to institutes in other parts of the country increased national awareness, and their participation in folk dances created a national repertoire. Criticisms and accusations of communism leveled toward the institutes a decade later resulted in their merger with teachers colleges.

### Folklore Collection Projects

In the decades prior to the founding of the Republic, Ottoman elites were interested in the language of common people in “pure Turkish and unspoiled by foreign influences” (Başgöz 1972: 163). European-educated poets, novelists, and playwrights began to publish short stories, plays, and novels incorporating folk themes and proverbs. In the early twentieth century, folklore became the basis for generating nationalist feeling and separated the emerging nation-state from its former Ottoman heritage and the crumbling empire that had been termed “the sick man of Europe”.<sup>6</sup>

Gökalp believed that the true, national music of Turkey would be found in a synthesis of Turkish folk music and musical techniques from Western civilization, and collecting folksongs was one way to discover and disseminate a national invented culture. To that end, the Ministry of Education created a Department of Culture to collect folklore and folk music and to establish archives and museums as repositories. In 1927, the Folklore Association began a nation-wide collection project using amateur members who

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<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of folk themes in late Ottoman literature was similar to the use of folk music material in European classical music during the same time frame (Pisani 1998).



were trained in folklore theory and fieldwork techniques. In addition, Turkish Hearth associations (Türk Ocakları) sponsored nationalistic publications and economic development projects.

People's Houses (Halkevleri) were founded in 1932 to emphasize a cultural, rather than political, orientation, and took over both the collection projects of the Folklore Association and the publications and development projects of the Turkish Hearth Associations (Öztürkmen 1994: 162). Nation-building activities extended to village development, language-history-literature, and fine arts—including folk music. Diyarbakir province in southeastern Anatolia became reified as a center of folk tradition, yet nationalist publications, such as *Diyarbakir Folk Songs*, were “devoid of any ethnic or alternative cultural connotations . . . Turkish songs were sprouting from regions where Turkish was hardly known or spoken, let alone sung” (Üngör 2011: 191). In Diyarbakir, the process of Turkification erased what had been, in Ottoman times, a greatly mixed socioethnic population, including tribal and non-tribal Muslim Kurds, Jews, Armenians, Arabs, Syriacs (of varying Christian sects), and Kizilbash who were Turkoman and Kurdish heterodox Shi'ites (ibid.: 13).<sup>7</sup>

In the new Republic, folk literature was a national source of pride; the poems of Alevi and Bektaşî minstrels, as well as Sunni bards (best known for recited epics and song duels) were lauded as preserving the “national” language—Turkish—and avoiding Persian and Arabic (although some words in these languages remained in spite of extensive editing). This poetry, known by uneducated, rural citizens for centuries,

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<sup>7</sup> Kizilbash (Kızılbaş in Turkish) is a derogatory term for Alevis, derived from the twelve-sectioned red hats worn by the militant followers of Twelver Shi'i Islam (those who worship the Twelve İmams) in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

bridged the gap between the ruling elite and the ruled (Başgöz 1972: 168). Live music performances in People's Houses celebrated the music of Aşık Veysel (1894-1973) and Aşık Ali İzzet (1802-1881), among others, and Alevi musicians were among those recruited to perform on state radio programs (Markoff 1990-1991: 49). As ardent supporters of a Turkish state free from religious domination, Alevis helped to ensure support of the masses and to bolster national identity.

In 1936 the state moved to control privately owned radio stations in Turkey in order to further spread a nationalist ideology. Some of the first talk shows from Ankara, the new capital, included discussions of folk dance. Selim Sırrı, an Ottoman intellectual and one of the Young Turks, adapted the Aegean folk dance *zeybek* for the urban elite salon, transforming it into a national dance (Ahıska 2010: 135).<sup>8</sup>

In the 1930s, musicologist and teacher Muzaffer Sarısözen (1898-1963) worked with the National Education Director to found the Folk Poetry Preservation Association (Halk Şairlerini Koruma Derneği), and published articles on Anatolian folk music and dance. He and his colleagues collected some 5900 folk tunes and dances from across Turkey's regions and produced radio broadcasts on both Turkish folk and classical music. At the same time that Sarısözen and his colleagues were trying to preserve Turkish folk music, they stripped folksongs of "local nuances and those characteristics that signify regional variations in order to arrive at a 'standard'" (Erol 2010: 151). This new material— "rural melodies 'invented' by the state as Turkish Folk Music"—was used in European classical music settings by a new generation of Western-trained Turkish

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<sup>8</sup> The Young Turks was an early twentieth-century political reform movement of secular-oriented elites from the Ottoman Military Academy who favored replacing the Empire's absolute monarchy with a constitutional monarchy. They rebelled against the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908, ushering in a period of multi-party democracy.

composers (ibid.: 152). Sarisözen initiated and led Yurttan Sesler (Voices from the Homeland), an ensemble of male and female singers accompanied by instrumentalists playing Turkish folk instruments including various sizes of *saz*, wind, and percussion instruments.<sup>9</sup> Eventually Sarisözen developed national touring groups of folk music and dance and is listed as the collector for many folk songs on several Internet websites.

Turkey and Afghanistan share a similar process in the creation of a national identity; establishing a common history, ethnic origin, and language, and employing elite musical experts who created pan-Turkish and pan-Afghani musical styles, respectively, to impart a message of national culture. Kiliwali, a form of Afghan popular music that combined local texts and regional and international musical styles, was developed with the collaboration of composers and master musicians. From the 1920s until the 1950s, Kabul Radio was the primary vehicle that promoted Afghan folklore and national spirit, among other aims (Baily 1994: 57).

In 1938, İsmet İnönü, who favored many of the same policies as his predecessor, succeeded Atatürk as president and held office until 1950. As allies of Britain and France, Turkey remained neutral during most of World War II and entered only in 1945 on the Allied side as a founding member of the United Nations. Maintaining neutrality meant mobilizing a military defense (mainly composed of peasants): the state also enforced martial law and controlled domestic production, labor, and wages (Findley 2010: 266). By the end of the war, both peasants and urbanites felt alienated. A debate on land reform in the assembly spurred the eventual creation of the Democrat Party (Demokrat Partisi or

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed October 4, 2015). See also YouTube videos of TRT Yurttan Sesler in the Internet Websites section of the Bibliography.

DP), Turkey's first successful opposition party, in 1946. To compete with populist enthusiasm for the new party, the Republican People's Party (RPP) enacted liberalizing measures to win peasant support and held early elections to catch the Democrat Party off guard. In spite of both parties' similar Kemalist commitments to nationalism and the separation of religion and state, the Democrat Party won the election of 1950 by 13 percent and a huge majority of seats (408 of 477) in the formerly single-party assembly. The Democrat Party ruled through the 1950s under Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, but, riding high on its election success, created political and social unrest through the suppression of opposition politics and criticism by journalists, in the midst of growing economic hardship.

### Democrat Party and Second Republic (1961-1980)

The military coup of 1960 set a precedent for armed intervention when civilian politics dissolved into chaos, and for a return to civil government after counteracting measures were implemented. The small group of officers that seized power called themselves the National Unity Committee (Milli Birlik Komitesi), but competition among ultranationalist factions resulted in the group's removal and a coalition government based on the remaining parties (the DP had been outlawed).

Reforms to the constitution in 1961 advanced citizen rights, separated executive, legislative and judicial state powers, and provided for a bicameral legislature. The early to mid-1960s were a time of multiparty politics with a military-instituted forced alliance between RPP and the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, or JP). An inability to work together led each side to seek out smaller, more extreme parties, further reinforcing their

differences. In the late 1960s, the influence of Marxist thought produced leftist movements and a more leftist RPP, while rightist student groups began to organize along with ultranationalists to launch the first version of an Islamist political party, the Milli Nizam (National Order) Party. From that time on, the Islamist party would be abolished by the state and restarted under various names.

In 1963, the Turkish government sanctioned a cultural festival in honor of Hacı Bektaş, the patron saint of the Bektaşî dervish order. The dervish lodge that had housed the order and had been closed since 1925 underwent a restoration process, and was opened in 1964 as a museum. Like the organizers of the yearly Mevlevi festival in Konya that honors Cellaleddin Rumi, the organizers of this event portrayed it as a tourist, rather than religious, event. In the 1970s, the festival became a site for disseminating leftist political views that were also reflected in the music of *bağlama* players (Norton in Massicard 2003: 126).

An economic downturn and violence committed by ultranationalist groups brought about a second coup in 1971 with a severe suppression campaign against so-called terrorist groups. Young, militant members of the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party, known as the “gray wolves” (*bozkurt*), attacked leftist groups. Alevis were particularly vulnerable because of their leftist sympathies; there were massacres in Maraş in 1978 and in Çorum in 1980. Rightist groups propagated slogans “that effectively consolidated a single axis of threat to the nation, by associating Alevis and Kurds with communists. In Turkish, the three groups were rhetorically united through the repetition of the consonant ‘K’: Kürt, Kızılbaş, Komünist” (Kurd, Kızılbaş, and Communist) (Tambar 2014: 87). Anatolian regions were divided along religious (Alevi-Sunni), ethnic

(Turkish-Kurdish), linguistic, and tribal lines. In 1980, a third military intervention and declaration of martial law put an end to political violence; military rule lasted until 1983.

Turkey's urban population grew significantly in the 1950s as rural dwellers came to cities in search of work, and by 1980 had increased fourfold, from 21 million to 45 million (Findley 2010: 331). Labor agreements with Germany and other European countries took more Turks abroad as guest workers in the 1960s. Many stayed in their new countries as part of immigrant communities when, after 1980, labor outsourcing began in Europe.

For most Turks, Islam had more to do with defining their identity here and now than did ideas about remote Central Asian origins. Islam also answered the great existential questions of life and eternity and defined the moral universals in terms of which Turkish migrants might hope to find their way in Turkish cities and diasporic communities abroad. (Findley 2010: 338)

Issues of identity for migrant Turks were not resolved, at least for their children who were born in the adopted country. Cousins from *Cem Hoca's* family, German residents who came to visit during my stay in Fatsa, described the complex identity issues they and their children face—appearing to be more like Germans to their Turkish relatives in country, while still being regarded as foreigners in Germany.

The 1980s were a time when Alevi culture gradually began to be celebrated in public. Student groups organized in Ankara and Istanbul and conferences were held to discuss secularism and Alevi rights. Concerts of Alevi music were held: Bozkurt describes one event consisting of poetry reading and musical performances by *aşıks* to honor Şah Hatayı, the pen name for Shah İsmail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty,

(2000: 80). These years also saw the opening of the first Alevi associations since their closure in the early years of the Republic.

### The Third Republic (1983 – )

The years after 1980 marked a turning point in Turkish politics toward identity issues along lines of difference—ethnicity, religion, gender, and personal situation. During the three years of military rule, 1980-1983, commanders and conservative intellectuals advanced a “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis” that redefined citizenship in terms of a Muslim identity and promoted “understandings of Islam in terms of Turkish national history” (Tambar 2014: 113). The architects of the synthesis aimed to delegitimize leftist opposition and to define a common national piety. To suppress opposition, newspapers were put on hold, liberal-thinking teachers were replaced with their conservative counterparts, and school curricula were changed on a national level.

This time, the return to civil government was more controlled than after previous coups. A new constitution greatly expanded presidential powers—even though the prime minister was head of state—including the ability to appoint the prime minister and the members of the constitutional court, to call general elections early, and to rule by decree in a state of emergency. The constitution also gave the National Security Council power to dictate policy to the cabinet without responsibility to the electorate or to the Assembly. One constitutional article guaranteed freedom of the press, but prohibited publications in non-Turkish languages (i.e., Kurdish)—those deemed to threaten state security or incited crime or rebellion.

Turgut Özal, Turkey's prime minister from 1983-1989 and president from 1989-1993, combined economic liberalism and Islamic values. During his term, greater municipalities (*büyük şehir*) for Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir were created to provide better services and new outlets for political participation. Özal increased cultural freedoms by revealing his Nakşibendi Sufi affiliation and by repealing the ban on printing or speaking in Kurdish languages. Turkey applied for membership in the European Economic Community (European Union since 1992). Educational gains included the rise of private universities (Bilkent was the first, founded in 1984), Anatolian high schools, and İmam Hatip (preacher) schools that expanded educational opportunities for girls.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Özal's Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi) expanded Islamic institutions and made way for increased Islamic discourse, with the result that the members of a religiously committed business-oriented sector of society came to power as policy makers, politically aligned in a center-right coalition.

Like Alevis in the early Republican period, many Kurds opted to work within the existing political system. Those who made it to cities escaped the hold of rural, eastern landlords, but faced discrimination and official denial of Kurdish ethnic difference. Like their urban counterparts, Kurdish Sunnis and Alevis in rural areas were more concerned with earning a living and supporting their families than engaging in the separatist politics of the PKK. Dissatisfied with leftist politics, the PKK formed underground parties in the 1970s: those on the borders with Syria and Iraq were a particular danger to the state.

In an attempt to target rural landowners who held political power over illiterate and unskilled Kurds, in 1984 PKK leader Abdullah "Apo" Öcalan attacked Turkish

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<sup>1</sup> Although girls could not serve in mosques, attending the schools gave them access to secondary education.



forces stationed in Kurdish rural areas. Fearing widespread Kurdish separatist activities, the state began deployed security forces and set up a system of village guards from among the clans opposed to the PKK. As the PKK's network increased, the government escalated its efforts by evacuating and resettling Kurdish populations. By the end of the 1990s, several thousand villages had been emptied while the populations of southeastern urban centers exploded. Öcalan was captured in Nairobi, Kenya, extradited to Turkey, and tried for treason: appeals to the EU reduced his sentence to life imprisonment. Findley notes, "the Kurdish conflict was only the most glaring case of the rigidity with which the guardians of Kemalism reacted to the rise of identity politics" (2010: 367).

### The Alevi Sociocultural Revival Movement

The Alevi sociocultural revival movement began its public life with the "Alevi Declaration" (*Alevi Bildirgesi*) published in the daily *Cumhuriyet* on May 6, 1990 (Sökefeld 2008: 16). Signed by well-known writers, artists, and journalists, both Alevi and non-Alevi, the statement declared that those who are Alevi must be able to say so openly as a fundamental human right. The declaration was based on a statement in the previous year made by the organizers of the Hamburg Alevi Culture Group and disseminated during the events of the Alevi Culture Week in that city, the first explicitly Alevi public event (ibid.). The movement was also marked by the relaxing of Turkish state bans on associations and publishing in non-Turkish languages, which resulted in the proliferation of Alevi umbrella associations connecting assembly houses (*cemevis*) across

Turkey and European cities, and a flood of publications purporting to describe and define Alevi history and their cultural and ritual practices (vanBruinessen 1996: 7).

From that time onward, the efforts of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement have been aimed at eliminating misrecognition and non-recognition of their differences from Sunni Muslim attitudes and practices. Although Alevi spokespersons put forth different positions and perspectives, “central for all is the claim for recognition. . . as *victims* that suffered violence and stigma by state and society” (Sökefeld 2008: 35; italics in original). Mutual misrecognition between groups is often constructed in terms of interpretations drawn from shared categories and conceptual frameworks—a cosmology—in which beliefs, values, and perceptions are interwoven. I will discuss Sunni and Alevi biases in a later section of this chapter. Alevi entered the public sphere to voice their claims in a self-conscious manner, to reinscribe “categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves” (Barth 1969: 10). “It’s a kind of fashion to judge Alevi. Alevi don’t need any judgment from anybody. Let [them] think for themselves, let [them] decide for themselves” (Ulaş Özdemir, interview, June 13, 2014).

The Alevi sociocultural revival movement can be distinguished from the larger Alevi community by the mobilization of agents and organizations within it. The Alevi cause is made visible through political and educational activities, while at the same time the larger community is discursively invoked and constructed by the activities of the movement. My research found that there is not a clear divide between active politicians and organizations and a passive community. Mehmet Tural, the president of the restored dervish lodge and active *cemevi* Şahkulu Sultan Dergâhı, distinguishes between the secular missions of Alevi associations, which demonstrate for political rights, and dervish

lodges, which keep *Alevilik* alive through history and education courses, as well as worship (Interview, March 17, 2013). Yet, on November 4, 2013, Tural spoke at an Alevi demonstration for equal citizenship, held near the ferry docks in Kadıköy on Istanbul's Asian side. His objection to the *cami-cemevi* project—building a complex that includes both a mosque and an Alevi assembly house—was quoted in an article about the event in the online newspaper *Radikal*: “With a different understanding of belief and worship style from our Sunni brothers, they want to create conflict among us and assimilate us. Neither our Sunni friends nor we Alevis consent to that.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the start of the sociocultural revival movement, the *cemevi* became commonplace in large cities in Turkey and in diaspora locations in continental Europe and the United Kingdom. A large, multi-story building with a social hall, kitchen and dining facilities, offices and meeting rooms, and a *cem salonu* (assembly hall), the *cemevi* provided a permanent space for worship and community activities, whereas in the past in rural Anatolia, *cems* were convened as needed in the largest private home in a given village or town.

*Cemevis* are subject to an approval process by local municipalities that function like county jurisdictions in the United States, and when the buildings are built or remodeled banners may be hung outside the *cemevi* thanking municipal administrators for their support, even though no state funds are allotted for overhead as they are for mosques. Until recently, terms other than *cemevi*, such as *dernek* (association), *kültür merkezi* (cultural center), or *vakıf* (foundation), were used for Alevi associations, since

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/aleviler-esit-yurttaslik-istedi-1158800/> (accessed January 15, 2013).

the Turkish state was more accepting of names that made reference to Alevi culture rather than religious practice.

As *cemevis* were established, positions for institutional *dedes* as well as volunteer boards and administrative staff were created. As in rural Anatolia, *dedes* are still responsible for the religious and moral guidance of their congregations, but the *ocak* (hearth), a hereditary system of Alevi spiritual leadership and followers, broke down with urban migration. In addition, *cems* to resolve community disputes, in which all in attendance, including the plaintiff and the accused, had to agree to the terms of resolution, are rarely held in urban settings (see Chapter Six for a description of one such *cem* I attended). *Dedes* have turned to expressing their knowledge and authority in pamphlets and books about Alevilik, and are regular contributors to faith-based magazines such as *Serçeşme*, a monthly journal published by the Sultan St. Hacı Bektaş Foundation.

### The Islamist Movement and the AKP

The first Islamist political party was founded in 1970 under the name of the National Order (Milli Nizam) Party. Perceived as a threat to the laic foundations of the state by Turkey's Constitutional Court, it was successively abolished and restarted under different names. During the 1980s and 1990s, wealthy, pious elite Islamists supported overtly Islamic politicians and their programs. Secularists were particularly concerned when, in 1994, Islamist candidates from the Refah (Prosperity) Party (its name at the time) were elected to the position of mayor in both Ankara and Istanbul.

The charismatic, populist mayor-elect of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, bridged the gaps between disenfranchised youth, conservative religious culture, and the new

ideologies of educated Islamists. Unlike Ottoman-style politicians who garnered votes through patriarchy, favors, and circles of influence, Erdoğan's success was based on "a vernacular politics that mobilized nonhierarchical horizontal ties among neighbors and relied on civil society for its organizational motor" (White 2002: 138). This was accomplished by encouraging good Muslim behavior through *imece* (voluntarism) and the *hadith*—a collection of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammed—that were infused into public conversations about citizenship, social justice, moral issues, and mutual obligation. Erdoğan was banned from politics from 1998 to 2003 due to a conviction for inciting religious insurrection when he read the following verse during a campaign speech from a poem written by nationalist hero Ziya Gökalp: "The mosques are our barracks, the minarets are our spears, their domes are our helmets and the faithful are our army" (White 2002: 146). Once the ban was lifted, the politician won an Assembly seat and took over as prime minister.

In the meantime, the Islamists had split into two groups; traditionalists formed the Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party) while those who advocated a more center-right position formed the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—Justice and Development Party).<sup>1</sup> The AKP won the national elections in 2002 and 2007, buttressed by funds from wealthy Islamists. Within a stance of conservative democracy, the party leadership has emphasized economic policy and a business orientation, but is conservative on religion and family values. They ostensibly reject the idea of government founded on religious principles but are also against political interference in daily religious practice. Thus, the AKP is less assertive than the Kemalists were in shaping a secular public sphere; they are

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<sup>1</sup> The Turkish word *ak* means white with implications of purity in terms of Muslim belief and practice.

neutral before religious and sectarian groups and allow the public visibility of religion (Soner and Toktaş 2011: 427).

In contrast to the construction of Turkishness as defined by Ziya Gökalp—a Turkish Muslim with a secular lifestyle and steadfast support for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s state-led modernization programs—the AKP and its supporters have developed a new Turkish identity, that of “a pious Muslim Turk whose subjectivity and vision for the future is [*sic*] shaped by an imperial Ottoman past overlaid onto a republican state framework, but divorced from the Kemalist state project” (White 2015: 9). White sees evidence for the romanticizing and uncritical consumption of Turkey’s Ottoman past in, for example, a new public holiday called Holy Birth Week to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday, and the recasting of the World War I battle at Gallipoli as a *jihad* (holy war) against nonbelievers (ibid.: 9-10).

### Alevi Support for the CHP

Motivated by memories of persecution during the Ottoman Empire, Alevis have demonstrated a long history of support for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Kemalist policies. Even today, his portrait hangs next to those of İmam Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli in many of the *cemevis* I visited during my research. A constitution that derived its power from national sovereignty rather than divine will and the elimination of the constitutional clause designating Sunni Islam as the state religion were reassuring to Alevis, and have kept them from reevaluating Kemalist policies of the past, such as the forced resettling of

Kurds and the unsparing suppression of the Dersim uprising in the 1930s (Kehl-Brodzki 2003: 67).

Since the start of the sociocultural revival movement Alevis have become politically significant. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (b. 1948), the current leader of the CHP, was elected to the assembly in 2002, and was unanimously voted head of the party in 2010. Kılıçdaroğlu, an Alevi, exemplifies many of the personal qualities—non-discrimination, and having a good heart and intent—that Alevis associate with their belief system, but neither Alevis nor other supporters want the party to be seen as sectarian in its position as the major opposition to the AKP. Cevahir Canpolat, president of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi in Batıkent, Ankara, spoke of the need for democratic, forward-thinking individuals, regardless of religious orientation, who can properly apply the reforms instituted by Atatürk—particularly an understanding that does not consider others as enemies (Interview, May 9, 2014). Some CHP members have criticized Kılıçdaroğlu for welcoming conservative politicians into the opposition, and those with leftist leanings called for a reevaluation of party leadership in the wake of the AKP's regaining of majority control of the assembly in the November 1, 2015, reelection call.<sup>1</sup> Alevis remain cautious in the current environment of support for Islamist politics and Sunni worship practices.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/chp-dissident-calls-for-snap-convention-targets-kilicdaroglus-leadership-after-election-failure.aspx?pageID=238&nID=90726&NewsCatID=338> (accessed November 1, 2015)

## The Gülen Movement

Fetullah Gülen (b.1941) is a preacher from southeastern Turkey and the son of an *imam*. His teachings are based on pious activism that emphasizes service, sincerity, enthusiasm, and supports dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims. He combines Qur'anic learning with modern thought to explain Islamic ideas in modern terms, much like Said Nursi (1873-1960), a religious revival movement leader whose writings inspired Gülen (Findley 2010: 386). Gülen began to build his religious movement after establishing a pulpit in Izmir. From 1970 through the mid-1980s he led summer camps for male university students for religious education and outdoor activities, while his supporters started foundations across Turkey to disseminate his philosophy. The end of the state monopoly on broadcasting enabled his followers to launch private media ventures in periodicals and television and, after 1983, to found private educational institutions. These independently owned businesses are vehicles dedicated to spreading Gülen's teachings of moral uprightness and engaging in charitable work in networks of mutual assistance that affect business and politics on local and global levels (White 2013: 37). During a military crackdown between 1999 and 2000, accusations that Gülen was an enemy of laicism forced him into exile in North America. He is considered a serious political rival and security threat by current Turkish president Erdoğan, and is thought by Erdoğan and others of plotting to overthrow the government through his global media connections.<sup>1</sup>

The owners of the small businesses that support the Gülen movement are considered more conservative and pious than their urban industrialist counterparts. They

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34709324> (accessed November 4, 2015).



believe that their success is the will of Allah: they and their families lead an elite Muslim lifestyle, purchasing Islamic fashions, commodities, and leisure activities. They and other middle-class Muslim women in Turkey support a large market for the high-fashion coats and headscarves that cover their feminine curves and hair as part of a code of modesty/humility (*haya* in Arabic and Turkish) in Islam: ironically, a choice to be seen in the latest upscale “look” resembles the global fashion industry, in which women purchase and wear clothing to make themselves objects of attention.

#### THE URBAN *CEM*, *THE SEMAH*, AND ALEVI VISIBILITY

The *cem* is at the heart of the debate over whether or not *Alevilik* constitutes a form of worship. As mentioned earlier, rural *cems* were restricted to the members of individual villages and incorporated worship and the adjudication and resolution of community disputes. In contrast, public, urban *cems* are attended by a wide variety of people: Alevi from different neighborhoods, curious Sunnis, journalists, academicians, and foreign researchers like myself, and therefore operate not only according to the ritual functions sought out by local Alevi but also for the sake of representing Alevism on a public stage, serving to dispel disparaging myths about the community” (Tambar 2014: 101).

In this framework of public visibility, the *semah* has taken on a different purpose and aesthetic, both in *cems* and as a performance in dance clubs, at festivals, and at devotional concerts and education meetings (Öztürkmen 1994; Solieu 2003; Tambar 2010). It is the part of the *cem* that is most often photographed and mentioned in news

reports and magazine articles about Alevi culture—a photograph of costumed, whirling young people in mid-spin is dramatic and attractive.<sup>1</sup> The different contexts for executing the *semah* raise questions of spirituality versus dramatic performance. Martin Sökefeld's research with German Alevis revealed that they see a similar predicament, as summarized by one of his contacts:

*Cem* is a spiritual practice; it is not a cultural event. . . . We have to return from this folklorization to the fundament of the *cem*, to what *cem* actually is. Unfortunately it has become a habit to dance *semah* like folklore at weddings. This is not good for *semah* and *cem*. Weddings and cultural shows are one thing but *cem* is something else. (Musa Aksoy in Sökefeld 2008:158).

(In Chapters Six and Seven I discuss the atmosphere of the urban *cem*s and education sessions I attended where the *semah* was performed.)

Unlike the Alevis, the Roma in Turkey have been concerned with civil, rather than religious, recognition. Roman cultural associations partner with NGOs to deploy cultural performance activities as a way to maintain a high profile and negotiate on behalf of the community. On the one hand, a higher profile has enabled Roman agency in negotiating with state and local government; for example, staving off the demolition of primarily Roman ethnic neighborhoods in the name of historic and cultural preservation. On the other hand, community leaders are aware of tensions between the Kurds and the state and are careful to avoid actions that could be construed as separatist (Seeman 2009:

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<sup>1</sup> Alevi and Sufi ritual share the practice of turning as the expression of unity with God. One difference is that the Mevlevi, also known as the whirling dervishes, turn in their own individual circles while Alevi spiritual assistants turn in one circle together. *Semah dönme* in Turkish means to turn *semah*.

212). Alevi expressions of difference are, like those of the Romans, highly mediated, as I discuss in the next section.

### Tactics of Inclusion

In 2004, a European Commission report on Turkey's progress toward accession to the EU highlighted Alevi complaints of unequal treatment by the state Office of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) regarding religious difference in a secular state. The report prompted EU debates on the problem of Alevism. In a subsequent televised interview on CNN Türk regarding Turkey's accession, then-Prime Minister Erdoğan responded to questions about the government's position on Alevis and *cemevis* by stating that since *Alevilik* is not a separate religion (from Sunni Islam), Alevis cannot be classified as a minority. He further stated that *cemevis* may be established as cultural centers but not as places of worship (Es 2006: 2). Erdoğan's statement is aligned with the Diyanet, which expresses approval of the *cem* only on the condition that it is not considered a form of worship (*ibadet*), only behavior (*davranış*) (Tambar 2014: 79).<sup>1</sup>

These kinds of constraints on the expression of Alevi religious differences constitute state governing strategies that seek to "set the terms of their domestication" (Tambar 2014: 12). In the laicist political environment of the Kemalist regime, Alevis were championed as bearers of a national heritage that carried historical depth and duration, whereas, since the 1980s, a pious Muslim elite has challenged the Kemalist vision and has redefined the model of a national citizen (White 2013: 19). In this climate,

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<sup>1</sup> Alevis seek recognition of the *cemevi* as an *ibadethane* (place of worship); the same status as a mosque.

in which a Turk is also defined as a (Sunni) Muslim, Alevi practices are recognized only insofar as they represent Turkish cultural heritage of the past. In some respects, the Uyghur case is similar to that of the Alevis, in that the Chinese government has attempted to manage *muqam* performances by substituting folk poetry for religious texts, and by replacing traditional calls of “Allah!” to “friends!” (Harris 2009: 182). The Turkish government has not resorted to controlling Alevi liturgy and music.

The full recognition of Alevis as a religious entity, with the *cemevi* given equal status with the mosque would entail certain political and economic consequences for the Turkish state: mosques are eligible for benefits such as free water and electricity, and the allocation of building sites and state funds. Control of ostensibly public city spaces through municipal administrators who reinforce state policy means that Alevis continue to be marginalized in spite of more liberal measures in other areas. Reports from the European Commission imply that the Turkish state misrecognizes Alevi ritual and thus constrains its presentation. Even though Alevi citizens, intellectuals, and organization leaders point to ongoing state discrimination, few in the community wish to jeopardize the public visibility they have achieved by directly challenging the state, and some are wary of potential interference from the Diyanet should *cemevis* receive state funding.

Another dimension of the state’s tactics of inclusion pertains to compulsory religious education in primary schools. Current policies stem from the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis crafted in the early 1980s when conservative university faculty members convinced members of a Ministry of Education commission that religious education would not conflict with the principles of secularism and would also reduce sectarian conflicts (Eligür 2010: 103).

In 2012, the Grand National Assembly introduced a new plan to increase the amount of religious education instruction in elementary, middle, and high schools that involved the conversion of many institutions into *imam-hatip* (Islamic religious) schools staffed by Muslim-educated preachers, and the transportation of students away from their neighborhoods to fill the classrooms. Both Alevi parents and those in non-religious families have complained about the lack of consideration for their preferences, in addition to other problems with Turkey's education system that are not being addressed such as the low quality of education and teacher shortages.<sup>2</sup>

In September 2014, the European Court of Human Rights (hereafter ECtHR) ruled on a case filed by fourteen Turkish Alevi citizens protesting mandatory religion classes. The court determined that the classes are in violation of the right to education and further noted that the classes convey "knowledge of Islam as practiced and interpreted by the majority of the Turkish population."<sup>3</sup> The court rejected the Turkish state's appeal of the ruling in February 2015. In the same news report, in defense of the AKP position, President Erdoğan claimed that violence, racism, and drug use would spread if the courses were eliminated. In spite of a similar ECtHR ruling in 2007, and an article contained in Turkey's laws about national education that regards secularism as fundamental in education, the AKP appears intent on continuing on the same path.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_alevis-protest-compulsory-religion-courses-at-turkish-schools\\_359697.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_alevis-protest-compulsory-religion-courses-at-turkish-schools_359697.html) (accessed September 25, 2015).

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/12/turkish-parents-steered-religious-schools-secular-imam-hatip> (accessed September 25, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_european-court-rejects-turkeys-appeal-to-reverse-ruling-on-compulsory-religion-classes\\_372957.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_european-court-rejects-turkeys-appeal-to-reverse-ruling-on-compulsory-religion-classes_372957.html) (accessed November 1, 2015).

Alevi school children have also been subjected to profiling requests from local police. In 2013, Izmir police asked for the names of Kurdish and Alevi male students from teachers and administrators in selected middle schools on the pretext of arranging seminars for the boys to prevent their future involvement in crime. Police believed that Alevis, aided by PKK support, organized the Gezi Park demonstrations in Taksim.<sup>4</sup>

## ALEVI AND SUNNI BIASES

Conflicts and alignments between Sunnis and Alevis do not occur only in terms of the state versus the Alevi community writ large. Aykan Erdemir's dissertation on Alevi umbrella associations (2004) discusses Alevi and Sunni cosmologies that he defines as a shared system (within a given group) of categories, principles, and conceptual frameworks in which beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, and cognition are deeply embedded. Erdemir argues that cosmologies are historically constituted, change over time, vary according to context, and are used as instruments of personal agency and collective action (2004: 68-69). These attitudes are, in part, informed by a history of conflict that began in the late fourteenth century, between the Ottomans, who espoused Sunni Islam, and the developing Shi'a Safavid state. In the following paragraphs, I include some incidents that illustrate how extreme views of Alevis and Sunnis mutually create an "other" through ongoing and culturally embedded prejudices: at the same time, not all those who would consider themselves Sunnis (or nominally so) subscribe to such view. I prefer to call such perceptions biases, and view them as obstacles to be overcome.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/polis-kurt-ve-alevi-ogrencilerin-listesini-istemis-1163543/> (accessed January 23, 2014).

Erdemir describes an extreme Sunni worldview that perceives Alevis as heretics and infidels, and this perceived deviance, combined with assumptions that they engage in sexual promiscuity (because Alevis do not separate men and women or perform ablutions after sexual relations as in orthodox Sunni Muslim practice), is said to make them beast-like. In contrast, Sunni Muslims construe their own practices as modest, pure, and honorable, and exclude Alevis for their deviance from the community of true believers. The following anecdote illustrates how Alevis figure as “other” in Sunni perceptions. During a routine inspection of an Alevi association in Istanbul, the visiting state official would not eat an elaborate meal prepared by the members to welcome him, since he believed that Alevis spit in food before serving it to Sunnis. When the association offered to purchase a meal from a local restaurant, the state official remarked that the cook should not be an Alevi. This incident illustrates ways that conservative bureaucrats base their decisions and actions on prejudice toward Alevis despite being functionaries of a nominally secular state (Erdemir 2004: 73).

Alevis vehemently deny allegations of incest, expressed in the term *mümsöndü* (literally, the candle went out), implying a sexual orgy in the dark at a *cem* when the candles are extinguished. The term *Kızılbaş* (red head), mentioned previously, also has the same implication. Talk show hosts and comedians who have inadvertently mentioned these terms on Turkish airwaves have had to resign from their positions (Ulaş Özdemir, interview June 13, 2014). In 1995, several thousand Alevis stoned the headquarters of the Interstar TV station after one of its quiz show hosts, Güner Ümit, used the term *Kızılbaş* to joke about incest during a live broadcast. The host was forced to resign and was banned from appearing in shows until 2002 (Erdemir 2004: 88).

During the Pir Sultan Abdal cultural festival in July 1993 in Sivas, thirty-seven people perished in a fire in the Madımak Hotel. Muslim fundamentalists were apparently provoked, in part, by festival participant and Turkish writer Aziz Nesin's alleged disrespect of the Muslim faith (because of his translation of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*). The municipal head and the police made weak efforts to stop the crowd from throwing objects at the hotel and then setting the fire. Mainstream media portrayed the massacre mainly as the result of an Islamist riot, with Alevi victims as victims by chance rather than as the targets of the attack (Sökefeld 2008: 121).

Attitudes toward gender relations are a key element in defining identity for many Alevi, who stress the equality (*eşitlik*) of women and men. Alevi refer to a husband or wife as *eşim* (my mate, my spouse) rather than using the more traditional gendered Turkish terms *koca* (husband) and *karı* (wife). Quotations of sages and teachers are put forward as evidence that such attitudes are embedded in Alevi tradition: for example, “*kadınları okutunuz*” (educate your women), attributed to Hacı Bektaş Veli. In the section of the Alevi worship service that tells of the Prophet Muhammed's ascent to heaven, he meets the Assembly of the Forty (*Kırklar Meclisi*), the men and women who are believed to have performed the first sacred movements (*semah*) that constitute the spiritual high point of the service. *Dedes* explained that the Assembly's statement “*birimiz kırkımız, kırkımız birimizdir*” (one of us is the same as forty of us; forty of us is the same as one of us) means that all men and women have equal status, even with the Prophet Muhammed, who becomes a participant in this group.

In spite of claims that women and men are equal in *Alevilik*, many women do not serve on the administrative boards of Alevi associations. In my research, I met only two



women in positions of authority—Cevahir Canpolat, president of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi in Batıkent, Ankara, and Sultan Ana Kümbet, director of the Sultan Ana Cemevi in Çorum. The male *dedes* at other *cemevis* I frequented spoke of the importance of “our women” (*bacılarımız*), but women generally were responsible mainly for cooking food, and participated in only some of the spiritual assistant roles. The ideal for Alevis is monogamy, and divorce should be sought only in the case of serious problems between a husband and wife (Zeynal Şahan Dede— hereafter, *Zeynal Dede*—interview, November 14, 2013). Although Alevis in rural communities of the past would have been shunned or excommunicated (*düşükünlük*) for divorce, it remains an unresolved issue in contemporary, urban Turkey. In Chapter Six I further discuss the role of women in the *cem*, and a court *cem* regarding the divorce and remarriage of my *dede* contacts.

Several *dedes* I worked with referred to “the Arab world” as a way to distinguish between Alevi and Sunni Muslim social and religious practices. Although Turkey is not an Arab-speaking country, some Alevi spiritual leaders perceive all Sunni Muslim practices to be related by extension, thus forming another aspect of the Alevi cosmology. For example, Alevis generally avoid using Arabic-language expressions such as the greeting “*salaam alaikum*” (peace be unto you), commonly used in Turkey. Instead, Alevis prefer to greet each other with the Turkish word *merhaba* (hello) and kiss each other’s cheeks three times—representing Allah, Muhammed, and Ali—rather than twice, as most Turkish people would do.<sup>5</sup> *Dedes* have varying responses to being greeted by their congregants—the worshipper kisses the *dede*’s hand and touches it to his/her

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<sup>5</sup> Both Binali *Dede* and Divani *Dede* characterize the use of Arabic expressions by Alevis to be an assimilated (*asimile olmuş*) from Sunni Muslim practice (personal communication).

forehead—since it can be seen as a Sunni Muslim gesture which Alevis have taken on. One *dede* will allow the entire gesture, another may allow his hand to be kissed and then pull it back and touch his heart, while another *dede* may clasp hands with congregation members to avoid having his hand kissed.

Narratives of violence and victimization are also part of the Alevi worldview and historical imagination. Alevi narratives have deployed “a Manichean dualism of good and evil, justice and injustice, freedom and oppression” that can be traced back to the time of Karbala (Yavuz 1999: 188). Sökefeld sees the Sivas hotel fire as a turning point when Alevis mobilized by protesting, establishing memorial sites, and organizing commemorative events that address the place of Alevis in Turkey (2008: 122-30). At the same time, the observance of events of Alevi victimhood and marginalization, coupled with fears of assimilation, can be barriers to reconciliation between Alevis and Sunnis, and between Alevis and the state (Köse 2014). Continuing incidences of violence and differing perspectives on the nature of gender relations remain divisive issues.

## ONGOING CHALLENGES

### The Cami-Cemevi Project

On September 12, 2013, members of Turkey’s political parties gathered to participate in a groundbreaking ceremony for the first complex to house both a mosque and an Alevi assembly house. Islamic scholar Fetullah Gülen, who initiated the project, and Cem Foundation president Alevi İzzettin Doğan, a strong supporter of the measure,

were both present.<sup>6</sup> Many Alevis expressed continuing fears about assimilation in relation to this project, since mosques have already been built, against Alevi wishes, in many towns where Alevis live. Other community representatives voiced concerns about *cemevis* annexed to mosques, because they would reinforce the formers' lesser status, and, by extension, the status of Alevi practices in relation to Sunni practices.<sup>7</sup> While Turkish journalists generally saw the project as a positive step in reducing Alevi-Sunni tensions, Alevis have remained mistrustful of the motivations of the parties involved.

Although Gülen appears to support Alevi-Sunni brotherhood, some of his comments have met with criticism by the Alevi community. When Alevis strongly criticized the Turkish government's decision to name the third bridge over the Bosphorus Strait after Selim I (r. 1512-1520), the Ottoman sultan believed to have massacred thousands of Alevis, Gülen remarked that the issue should be considered "a detail" and not overshadow "the many other bridges between the Sunnis and Alevis" in Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

The Cem Vakfi (Cem Foundation), founded by İzzettin Doğan in 1995 to promote a view of *Alevilik* as part of Islam, owns Cem Radio and Cem TV, stations that broadcast programs with this general view. The actions and policies of the Cem Foundation remain controversial in the eyes of many Alevis—for example, standardizing the *cem* at all of their branches by providing notes to *dedes* from which to read prayers and hymns. The process of creating standardized Alevi religious practices by the Cem Foundation can be likened to the methods used by folklore collectors and musicologists in the early

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<sup>6</sup> <http://gulen2.rssing.com/browser.php?indx=9334448&item=395> September 8, 2013 Sunday's Zaman (accessed October 25, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/turkey-shiites-alevis-sunnification-gulen-mosque-cemevi.html#> (accessed October 15 2015).

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_gulen-alevi-sunni-brotherhood-should-not-be-marred-by-bridge-controversy\\_318673.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_gulen-alevi-sunni-brotherhood-should-not-be-marred-by-bridge-controversy_318673.html) (accessed October 17, 2015).

Republic. Reducing expressive practices to rote versions would strip them of their inner, hidden (*batın*) meanings, leaving only the superficial (*zahir*).

### The Alevi Opening Workshops (*Açalım*)

Alevis have struggled for a way to be recognized by the state. The Alevi Opening Workshops (*Açalım*) were a series of dialogues held between 2008 and 2010 that brought together Alevi association representatives, Islamist intellectuals, AKP officials, the National Security Council, and the Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs) in order to discuss the recognition of Alevis and the status of the *cemevi*.

Islamist intellectuals viewed *levilik* as a socio-political question embedded in practices of Republican secularism, rather than an issue of religious recognition. They concluded that the Diyanet, in its control of religious life as established by the Kemalist regime, was creating barriers against Alevis, but was also discriminating against Sunnis by not providing sufficient religious instruction.

Just prior to the 2007 elections, the AKP provided a more convincing effort to appeal to Alevis, when then-Prime Minister Erdoğan made his first visit to a *cemevi* and several Alevis were nominated by the AKP and elected to the Turkish Parliament, militating against the party's Sunni-dominated image. In 2008, the party held meetings with Alevi intellectuals and the Prime Minister attended breakfasts at the close of Muharrem, to show the state's determination to provide a solution.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Muharrem (Muharram in Arabic) is the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar, and is a time of mourning for Alevis and Shia Muslims, who commemorate the death of İmam Hüseyin, his family, and followers at Karbala (680 A.D.).

The series of meetings and discussions that took place over the next two years again focused on “a political discourse relying on universal rights and freedoms including freedom of belief and conscience” rather than a recognition of religious differences (Soner and Toktaş 2011: 431). While some claim the dialogues were successful in creating a common language between Alevi representatives and the state, many in the Alevi community believe that the government’s control of the nature of the problems prevented a truly open process. Alevi participants felt demeaned by the ongoing question of whether or not *Alevilik* is part of Islam, the need to justify Alevi identity before a suspicious audience, and fears expressed by state officials that the recognition of *cemevis* would endanger Islamic unity (Borovalı and Boyraz 2014). Many saw the process as another state attempt to assimilate Alevis into the Sunni Muslim majority.

Soner and Toktaş state that the AKP ostensibly rejects the idea of government founded on religious principles, but the party is also against political interference in daily religious practice. The authors see the AKP as less assertive than the Kemalists were in shaping a secular public sphere, since the party claims neutrality before religious and sectarian groups and does not interfere with the public visibility of religion (Soner and Toktaş 2011: 427).

More recent discourses from the AKP include a denial of the ethnic difference between Alevis (some of whom are Kurdish) and Turks. In order to eliminate perceived threats to the majority Islamic community, the government reinforces the ideology that Turkish citizens are all Muslims and that “Aleviness” should not be articulated (Ateş 2014; quotes in original). At a break-the-fast dinner during Ramadan, the month of mourning for Sunni Muslims, then-Prime Minister Erdoğan was quoted in Today’s

Zaman: “I am a perfect Alevi if being Alevi means loving Caliph Ali.”<sup>10</sup> Recognition is a continuing issue between Alevis and the Turkish state.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have presented a brief political picture of Turkey from the founding of the Republic in 1923 to the present, highlighting projects, policies, and events that have affected Alevis and their expressive practices. I have discussed issues of modernity, minorities, and ethnicity and illustrated the ways that interpretations by different groups complicate political interaction. Turkish nation-building projects in the name of (Western) modernity included such drastic measures as language reform, citizen reeducation, and forced resettlements of Kurds (both Sunni and Alevi), among other peoples identified as non-Turkish.

In the 1930s and 1940s, folklore and folk music collection projects served to create a new national music. Alevi contributions to that process included minstrels’ performances at Peoples Houses, and on state radio programs. Alevis also gave staunch political support to a Kemalist state that emphasized Turkish citizenship over religious affiliation.

The switch to a multi-party political system in Turkey after World War II, resulted in the development of extreme political factions and increasing violence, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Ultrationalists were responsible for massacres of Alevis in Anatolian towns in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_i-am-a-perfect-alevi-if-alevism-means-loving-caliph-ali-erdogan-says\\_321159.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_i-am-a-perfect-alevi-if-alevism-means-loving-caliph-ali-erdogan-says_321159.html), (accessed September 9, 2015) now available at <http://en.haberler.com/i-am-a-perfect-alevi-if-alevism-means-loving-283954/>.

The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, crafted in the three years following the 1980 military coup, redefined Turkish identity in terms of Sunni Muslim piety, paving the way for Islamist political parties and their middle-class supporters. Alevi concerns increased as Islamist identity politics were, in part, responsible for the launching of the Alevi sociocultural revival movement at the decade.

The Alevi sociocultural revival movement provided challenges to the Turkish state in its management of Alevi difference. The workshops conducted in the first decade of 2000 further exacerbated tensions between Sunnis and Alevis, since they did not address the issue of religious tolerance. The government, led by Erdoğan and the AKP since 2002, has relegated Alevi cultural practices to the historical past by way of statements from the Diyanet and by refusing to grant *cemevis* equal status with mosques or to modify mandatory religion classes, in spite of European Commission reports of human rights violations. The sociocultural revival movement has also highlighted differences within the Alevi community: some see *Alevilik* as their faith while others prefer to be “culturally” Alevi.

In Chapters Four and Five I turn to Alevi music. It is important to understand the repertoire that is so vital to worship, concerts, and other social events: a familiarity with some of the music will make the discussions of the events and the ethnographies that follow much clearer. I analyze and discuss a representative sample of three types of sung poetry before contextualizing them in Chapters Six and Seven.

## CHAPTER FOUR MUSICAL ANALYSIS PART ONE

This chapter is the first of two on musical analysis. A basic familiarity with important types of music in the Alevi repertoire is essential to an understanding of the events in which they are performed: the *cem*, described in Chapter Six, and concerts, devotional meetings, and other performances described in Chapter Seven. The musical examples were selected from three categories of sung poems: *duvaz imam* (prayers that invoke the Twelve İmams) are part of the sacred *cem* repertoire; *deyiş* (songs of mystical love or social commentary) are performed in contexts from *cem*s to social clubs. The term *türkü* is most frequently used as a broad term for Turkish folk songs, but has been applied, in some cases, to music by Alevi minstrels. I will discuss this problematic term further in Chapter Five. In each category, I compare renditions of the same piece performed in different contexts, and illustrate how different settings influence the choices musicians make. This chapter begins with a brief description of some Middle Eastern musical characteristics and their intersection with Turkish folk music.<sup>1</sup> Next, I discuss basic *bağlama* playing techniques, which is followed by an analysis and discussion of *duvaz imam* prayers. Chapter Five continues with the analysis and discussion of *deyiş* and *türkü*s. I then delineate some of the changes and continuities in the Alevi music repertoire with regard to musical arrangement, and issues of authorship and ownership.

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<sup>1</sup> Middle Eastern is also a problematic term that may designate different configurations of countries and regions in historical, political, or musical contexts. The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (2002) includes Central Asia as part of this large region.



## TURKISH AND ALEVI FOLK MUSIC

Turkish and Alevi folk musics share a number of features in common with many types of Middle Eastern music. Performers rely on their knowledge of stock poetic and musical material to compose unique performances or to modify relatively fixed compositions by adding personal touches. Altering and adjusting musical patterns and sequences to fit different audiences and occasions is a highly valued part of music making in this region. For this reason variation is perhaps a more applicable term than improvisation. As the primary instrument of human communication, the voice is central to musical performance in this region and may be supported, expanded upon, or challenged by other musical instruments.

Complementary sounds, timbres, and rhythms play an important role in musical expression: for example; striking the center and rim of a drum produces tones of sustained and shorter duration, indicated by the mnemonic syllables *düm* and *tek*, respectively. Other complementary sounds include those of bowed and plucked string instruments, or a stringed instrument and the voice. Musicians use this sound compendium to produce both striking and subtle contrasts to create variety or change the character of a new section in a musical piece. The *bağlama* shares similarities with the folk lutes of Central Asia, particularly the two-stringed *dutar* played by Turkmen minstrels, which is played with the fingers rather than a plectrum. The *bağlama*'s drone strings, when plucked, have a longer decay that sound in contrast to its higher-pitched strings that decay more rapidly. The term monophonic—a single line of music—is often used to describe the texture of many types of music of the Middle Eastern region, including traditional Turkish folk music (Markoff 1986; 2008; Erol 2008). As illustrated

by the examples of complementary timbres, however, the term can be misleading “as it directs attention away from interactions through which performers create sonorous textures constituting multiple individual lines” (Blum 2002: 39).<sup>1</sup>

The classification of Turkish folk music (*Türk halk müziği*) that is commonly used today is due to the work of Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihâl (1900-1961) and Muzaffer Sarısözen (1899-1963), who divided the folk repertoire into two categories based on rhythmic features—vocal (*sözlü*) and instrumental (*çalgısal*) melodies in strict meter (*kirik*), and those in free rhythm (*uzun havalar*). Vocal music in strict meter includes vocal genres minstrel music (*aşık müziği*), folk songs (*türkü*), and dance songs (*sözlü oyun havaları*), while instrumental melodies in this category consist of those for dance and solo *bağlama*. Free-rhythm melodies, which have a semi-improvisational quality, include vocal and instrumental genres (Markoff 2002b: 108-109; see an extended discussion of folk models, Markoff 1986: 46ff.).

The Alevi repertoire in use today derives from two traditions, the *deyiş* (and *nefes*) of Bektaşî dervish lodge poets, and the Alevi poets such as Pir Sultan Abdal and Şah Hatayı, who favor the *koşma*, a verse form with eight- or eleven-syllable lines, with the poet’s pen name in the last verse. In contemporary arrangements of these mystical songs that are organized in verses and refrains, complementary timbres are created between the voice and the *bağlama*, or between two instruments, through countermelodies and distinct textural lines (Bates 2011: 66-67).

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<sup>1</sup> Although heterophonic texture (the simultaneous variation of a single melodic line) characterizes several types of Middle Eastern ensemble music, the only group specific to Turkey that plays in this manner is the urban *fasıl* ensemble.

The complexities of rhythm and irregular groupings of accents have contributed to the persistence of oral transmission in Middle Eastern music in spite of the adoption of western European staff notation in private music schools and conservatories. The degree of detail in notation can range from the basic tones of a melody, to the addition of melismas and other embellishments, to the full details of both melody and accompaniment.

In Turkish folk music, rhythmic patterns, *usul*—derived from regional folk dance styles—consist of long and short beats and define the beat structure and meter of a piece of music. Asymmetrical metric structures referred to collectively as *aksak* (limping) are also common. For example, a piece notated in 10/8 is divided into 3+2+2+3 eighth notes (and variations) and appears to be understood by Turkish musicians and audiences in these longer and shorter durations rather than counting the subdivisions precisely as a musician with western European training might. Bates observed that Turkish musicians perceive these durations as four beats (2011: 53). There is an accent on “1” of each of the subgroups: 1-2-3+1-2+1-2+1-2-3.

Musical Example 4.1 *Aksak semai* rhythmic pattern.



Turkish art music (*Türk sanat müziği*) and Turkish folk music (*Türk halk müziği*) share some theoretical parallels but are realized differently in performance. The rules for composing and performing Turkish art music are derived from *makams* (musical modes) that together, form a system based on melody types (similar to the Arabic *maqam* system). Turkish folk music has its own parallel modal scales that are closely associated

with *bağlama* tunings (Markoff 1986: 70).<sup>2</sup> The modes that most frequently appear in Turkish folk music resemble Hüseyni, Tahir, and Uşşak in the Turkish art music system, but the vocabulary for folk music modes uses the names of poet-minstrels and *bağlama* tunings (ibid.: 88). In Turkish art music theory, a comma (*koma* in Turkish) is a specific musical interval based on parsing a whole tone into nine equal divisions, but the realization of microtones in folk music practice is different: *komalı* refers to playing with microtonal intervals not necessarily tied to equal divisions of a tone. The use of *makam* theory and art-music terminology by professional *bağlama* players and aficionados is more a case of “appropriating the power of the *makam* as a symbol of logical and systematic musical organization” than analytical significance (Stokes 1994: 54).

#### LEARNING TO PLAY BAĞLAMA

I studied *bağlama* in private lessons with Cem *Hoca* for a total of fourteen months during my trips to Turkey in 2013 and 2014. For the first three months we met twice per week in order for me to learn playing techniques quickly; the pieces he gave me were designated as having first and second levels of difficulty. In subsequent periods of study we met once per week and the pieces increased to second and third levels of difficulty. At times I was learning two pieces simultaneously, but at each lesson I was expected to “finish” at least one song: that is, play it reasonably well. Usually we moved on to the next piece whether or not I was successful, but I was expected at some point to finish each one.

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<sup>2</sup> Markoff comments further that a formal theory of the Turkish folk modal system was in its formative stages at the time of her research in the mid-1980s (1986: 70).

Turkish musicians commonly use the *sofège* system: la is the tonic for most notations of music repertoire and for most scales in folk music theory (Markoff 1986: 72). Although I was not required to memorize the syllables to sing along with the melodies, as Turkish students would be expected to do, it was important to learn Cem *Hoca's* notation system for left-hand techniques such as fingerings for notes and vibrato, and for right-hand techniques such as up or down strokes, tremolo, and arpeggiation. It is common to use western European staff notation that incorporates *komas* (indicating microtonal pitches) and altered sharps and flats for certain tones in both the classical and folk music theory systems (see Signell 2008). Cem *Hoca* gave me copies of pieces that he had notated by hand, and later on wrote out others for me as needed. These notations are visually dense with a lot of information including fingerings, chords, up and down strokes, and text, unlike conventional notations for Middle Eastern music that provide only the melody with the expectation that skilled musicians will fill in ornamentation and other embellishments.

My learning process changed from a primarily visual to a primarily aural one as I became familiar with the notation symbols and typical melodic pathways. Once I could rely more on my ear and on recordings I made for each piece rather than the notation, I was able to learn more quickly. After completing my research the notated pieces, videos, and recordings of Cem *Hoca's* performances and instruction, and journal notes became my learning prompts for daily practice. Since leaving the field I have continued to learn, understand, and articulate the Alevi music tradition, similar to Timothy Rice, who persevered to learn to play the *gaida* (bagpipes) “in dialogue” with the recordings of his teacher after completing his research in Bulgaria the field (2008: 51).

Learning by ear was an important factor in my study for several reasons, first because the melody of a piece was always discernable in the accompaniment figures of the notation. Moreover, Cem *Hoca* did not always perform rhythmic figures the same way as they appeared in his notation; for example, he tended to play beams of four eighth notes in a “swing” rhythm as though they were pairs of dotted eighth and sixteenth notes.<sup>3</sup> I began to record separate videos for practice, one with only the accompaniment, and another with Cem *Hoca* singing and playing the piece at his own, much faster pace. In addition, listening to recordings and watching YouTube videos of his and other musicians’ performances was an effective way to gain a sense of phrasing, tempo, and musical sensibility of the pieces I was learning.

Many of the pieces I learned, particularly in the first three months of instruction—mainly *türkü*s (folk songs)—were part of Cem *Hoca*’s standard curriculum. As my skills developed and I heard certain songs repeatedly, such as “Bugün Matem,” a *mersiye* often sung in *cems*, and “Diktiğimiz Fidanlar,” a *türkü* composed by Divani *Dede*, I began to request to learn these and other pieces. Being familiar with the melodies before seeing the musical notation made it much easier to learn them.

The term *bağlama* comes from the Turkish verb *bağlamak* (to tie), because each fret on the instrument is created by winding thin plastic around the neck and knotting the loops together behind the flat plane where the fingers are placed. The short-necked *bağlama* has seven strings in three courses—two, two, and three from left to right if one faces the sounding board of the instrument. From this view, the highest-pitched strings are on the right, and are the lowest course in playing position. The performer sits and

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<sup>3</sup> Swing is my own term for Cem *Hoca*’s interpretation and is not related to jazz.

holds the instrument with the neck in the left hand and the body of the instrument resting on his/her lap with the *ses tablası* (sounding board) facing outward.<sup>4</sup> The performer's right forearm rests on the edge of the body of the *bağlama* to help balance the instrument.



Figure 4.1 Cem Çelebi performing on the *bağlama*.

The *bağlama* is played with a *tezene*—a small, plastic plectrum.<sup>5</sup> Playing with the plectrum has generally replaced the older technique of playing only with the fingers, a style that is called *parmakla* or *şelpe*, associated with nomadic Turkmen tribes. *Şelpe* remains the primary technique for a smaller *saz* such as the *cura* or *ruzba*, but some contemporary performers specialize in this picking style on the short-necked *bağlama*. Hasret Gültekin (1971-1993) is credited for his role in repopularizing *şelpe* through recordings dating from 1987. Other artists such as Erdal Erzincan (b. 1971) and Erdem

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<sup>4</sup> *Kapak* (literally cover) is another term for the sounding board (Philip Weil, apprentice to *saz* maker Celal Doldur in Maltepe, Istanbul, personal communication).

<sup>5</sup> Markoff notes that the flexible plastic *tezene*, replacing the plectrum made of wild cherry tree bark, was developed to accommodate thicker, wound strings sounding one octave lower on urban *bağlamas* (1986:134).

Şimşek (b. 1984) have furthered the technique to the point where it has become an art music dimension of the Alevi repertoire.

An important aspect of Alevi and Turkish folk music is the polyphonic effect of strumming multiple strings on the instrument (Erol 2009b: 146; Markoff 2005: 49). Although some chord-like sounds—mainly parallel fourths and fifths—and harmonic intervals may be produced by the left-hand finger positions when some of or all of the strings are strummed, solo and group *bağlama* performance is still considered to be essentially monophonic (Erol 2008; Markoff 1986, 2008). Alevi melodies that have been arranged for a Western symphony orchestra, or popular arrangements that combine melodies with Western functional harmony are considered polyphonic (Erol 2008: 113).

*Bağlama düzeni*, one of several tunings for the short-necked instrument, is re-sol-la for the highest (*üst*), middle (*orta*), and lowest (*alt*) strings, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Musicians normally tune starting with the top or highest course of strings, and work toward the lower-pitched strings.

Musical Example 4.2 *Bağlama düzeni* re-sol-la.



The pitches reflect relationships between the tones rather than a number of fixed cycles per second, as with the concert pitch A for a western orchestra. Each performer

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<sup>6</sup> Other names for this tuning include *Veysel düzeni* and *Alevi düzeni*.



tunes to accommodate his/her vocal range; in performances, Cem *Hoca* tuned his *bağlama* roughly one whole-step higher than he tuned our instruments during lessons.

### Techniques and Terms

The five-line western staff with a treble clef is used for the *saz*. Unlike notations that include only the basic melody, Cem *Hoca*'s music is visually dense with symbols: in addition to the basic melody there are numbered fingerings for the left hand and symbols for ornaments, vibrato and different kinds of attacks. Arrows above the notes indicate various types of right-hand up strokes and down strokes and/or courses of strings to be played. Markoff mentions that notation with these kinds of symbols was being developed at the time she conducted her research and studied with *bağlama* specialists at the State Conservatory of Istanbul Technical University in the mid-1980s (1986: 123). I learned several of the left- and right-hand techniques described by Markoff; however, Cem *Hoca* did not always use the same terms as her teachers did. It is possible that Markoff's teachers and contacts were attempting to create a broad lexicon of folk-music terms that did not develop further in later years.<sup>7</sup>

Left-Hand Techniques: The fingers should stop the strings directly behind the *perde* (fret) on the *klavye* (flat part or fingerboard of the neck) in order to produce a clear sound. For this reason, Cem *Hoca* was emphatic about positioning the fingers correctly. The fingers are assigned the following numbers: 5 = thumb, 1 = index finger, 2 = middle finger, 3 =



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<sup>7</sup> The reader is referred to Markoff's dissertation (1986: 119-140) for a description of terms and playing techniques in use at the time of her research.

ring finger, 4 = little finger, 0 = open string. *Çarpma*  $\nabla$  (*çarpmak*—to strike or hit) placed above a note is the symbol for a hammer-on technique—after plucking a string place another finger immediately on the fret to sound two different pitches consecutively—similar to that produced on a guitar. The technique can be performed with single or multiple courses of strings. *Çekme*  $\wedge$  (*çekmek*—to pull away) placed above a note is the symbol for a pull-off stroke after one or more fingers have already stopped the strings. This term also refers to the thumb pulling away from the lower set of strings. Cem *Hoca* referred to a range of vibrato techniques as *süsleme*  $\))$  (ornament, decoration), notated with two curved lines placed to the right of a note, or in some cases, one curved line, if the vibrato was meant to last a very short time. Other techniques include extending the sound of single or multiple strings by putting one finger just above the *perde* (fret), striking that string with the *tezene* (plectrum) and then rapidly touching a string with the adjacent finger. *Sallanma* (*sallanmak* – to sway) is a technique of pushing strings back and forth on the frets to bend the tones—Cem *Hoca* taught me this technique without a written symbol.

Right-Hand Techniques: The *tezene* is held between the thumb and first finger of the right hand. Arrows are used to indicate the direction for a downstroke (*aşağı*) or an upstroke (*yukarı*). An arrow with a circle around it means to strum all of the strings in the indicated direction. *Tırl* (from trill in English), a rapid succession of hammer-on strokes produced after striking a stopped string with the *tezene* (if the string is stopped by the index finger the hammer-on strokes are produced by the middle finger, etc.)—another technique I was taught without a written symbol. Other musicians may refer to this technique as *ses vibratosu* (vibrato sound). Markoff mentions *ses vibratosu* as a means to

sustain and extend sounds in the melodic flow, thus compensating for the *bağlama*'s technical limitations (1986: 130). Cem *Hoca* frequently emphasized that strumming across the strings in a closed manner (*kapalı*)—that is, keeping the plectrum close to the *ses tablası* (sound board)—is extremely important for the proper tone and aesthetic sense; strokes that aggressively flick the fingers and wrist away from the strings are not considered in good taste. Also, a wide (*geniş*) up or down stroke—moving beyond the strings—with the right hand is also part of making the proper sound. Occasionally, for certain effects or accents Cem *Hoca* would strum or play a single course of strings in a more strident manner. *Tezene takma* (*takmak* – to attach or fix) is the rapid alternation of up and down strokes by the plectrum on a single string, or on two or three strings

consecutively in the same direction, the latter indicated by the symbols  or .

An important part of my learning experience was playing in front of an audience. As Cem *Hoca*'s student, and particularly as his first American student, I was expected to play *bağlama* occasionally at his programs at small venues. At first, when I had studied with him for less than one year, I found the prospect of stumbling through songs that most of the audience had grown up singing to be rather daunting. In my second year of study, Cem *Hoca* began to let me know in advance that if I came to his program he would expect me to play. In order to have more practice time, I learned to ask him about his upcoming engagements. Sometimes during the evening he would get so involved in performing that he would forget to introduce me. On these occasions, it was a mixed blessing—I was both relieved not to have to face the audience and disappointed because I had spent extra time preparing.

When Cem *Hoca* was ready to introduce me, he began, “we are going to America” and proceeded to tell the audience about my doctoral project. Then, he laughingly presented me as “*aşık* Melanie” (Melanie the bard), which always elicited a jovial response from the patrons. In spite of the laughter, most people were surprised by my performance, since not many Americans play this instrument. I learned, once again, to be the good-natured outsider, and that, in the end, my social inclusion in the evening’s program was far more important than any novelty people saw in the American *bağlama* student. I performed twice at the Sıla Türkü House in Taksim, once at Sazende in Ankara, and three times at the Fatsa Community Association in Mecidiyeköy.<sup>8</sup>

### Style and Interpretation

*Tavır* (manner) refers to the way a *bağlama* performer plays: if a performance is *tavırlı* it is a stylistically correct in relation to the regional origin of a particular piece. In other words, the artist is able to reproduce the flavor of that region.<sup>9</sup> *Yorum* (interpretation) refers to personal, creative interpretation that can be imposed on regional performing conventions, although an excess of personal interpretation is undesirable in both a technical and an aesthetic sense. Both elements are necessary in order for musicians to perform folk music with sufficient precision and sensitivity. During lessons with Cem *Hoca*, I tried periodically to test my understanding of the parameters of these terms by asking him what it meant to play a piece incorrectly or badly; that is, with the

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<sup>8</sup> My first non-tourist experience as a cultural outsider was in Korea, where I studied and performed on the *kayagŭm* (zither) for Koreans.

<sup>9</sup> The term also refers to particular right-hand techniques associated with a given region (Markoff 1986:120).

wrong style or with too much personal interpretation. “Can you play it with too much emotion?” or “Can you play it with too many ornaments?” I asked, but I could not get him to demonstrate poor *bağlama* playing. Through interviews and informal conversations I gained a sense of Cem Hoca’s complete devotion to understanding and performing Turkish folk music, from which I infer that demonstrating something incorrectly does not properly serve musical performance. As a teacher, he always spoke positively, encouraging me with “*güzel*” (good, beautiful) as soon as I could approximately reproduce ornaments or figures in a musical phrase.

Prior to the 1990s, it was expected that young musicians would travel to study with master musicians in different parts of Anatolia in order to develop an ability to understand and correctly reproduce the music of regional styles. The sudden huge increase of recordings and broadcasting of Alevi music since the start of the musical revival, and more recently Internet availability, has made Turkish folk music and the Alevi repertoire more accessible to young musicians all over Turkey, and most have spent more time in private music schools than traveling to regions in Anatolia to study with local masters. Both the gradual institution of the standard *bağlama* ensemble to accompany regional folk songs on TRT (Turkish radio and television) programs, and the urbanized repertoire of musicians have contributed to a pan-Turkish musical style. Most of the *zakirs* I met had all studied in private music schools in addition to learning from family members. Those who grew up playing *bağlama* in their hometowns outside of major urban areas (for example, Divani Dede, Ulaş Özdemir, Erdal Erzincan, Gani Pekşen) continue to research and collect folk music in Anatolian towns and villages, and are listed as collectors (*derleyen*) for various pieces on their compact disc albums.

## CONSIDERATIONS IN TRANSCRIPTION AND NOTATION

A category of Alevi music repertoire is determined more by context than by musical form and poetic line length—*duvaz imams*, *deyiş*, and *türkü*s share these features with some types of Turkish folk music. An additional important factor is the poet's pen name in the final verse and his association with the Alevi and/or Bektaşî faith. Although performers of Turkish folk (and Alevi) music have some flexibility in the degree of vocal ornamentation, and the use of the melody in repetitions and interludes, the lyrics, vocal melody, and meter of a song must remain intact (I discuss arrangements of folk music later in this chapter).

My research found differences between the performances of amateur *cem* musicians in small towns and urban areas (both are unpaid), and between urban, amateur *cem* musicians and professionals (those who make a living by performing). Amateurs do not, as a rule, have as highly developed vocal or instrumental techniques as professionals do. To illustrate these findings, I combined the features of a blueprint with important features from specific performances in the transcriptions; that is, a combination of Charles Seeger's prescriptive (blueprint) and descriptive (specific performance) types of notation. The transcriptions provided here can be considered "normative," as they include some of the basic features of the melodies and some of the realization in a specific performance.<sup>10</sup> I also discuss style as a manner of performance to assess "characteristic ways of realizing one essential idea" between small-town, urban amateur, and urban professional musicians (Blum 1992: 191). It is difficult to find definitive notations for

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<sup>10</sup> I thank Dr. Robert C. Provine for the term "normative."

Turkish folk music (and Alevi music), since the TRT does not provide easy access to its holdings, and Internet websites provide varying degrees of ornamentation in notations of Turkish folk melodies (accompaniment is not included).<sup>11</sup>

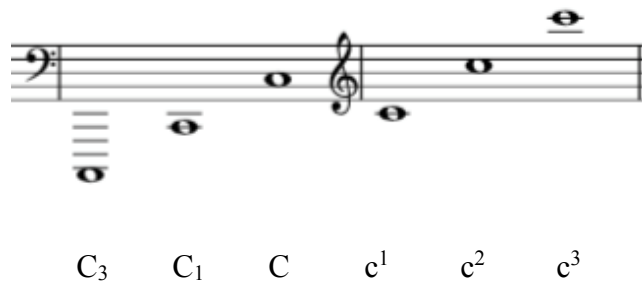
Transcriptions and discussions are organized by song type: *duvaz imams* are discussed in the remainder of this chapter, and *deyiş*, and *türkü*s in Chapter Five. A list of the pieces transcribed appears at the start of each respective section, and includes the title of the piece and its translation, the performer, place and date of performance, the author of the poetry, the composer of the music (in some cases they are the same person, or the music is designated as traditional if the composer is unknown), duration of the piece, and a diatonic scale approximation of the final resting tone. I notated the vocal and instrumental parts on separate staves. All musical pieces are notated at the same pitch level on the staff for easier comparison of vocal and instrumental realization, although each performer adjusted the la-sol-re tuning to his comfortable singing range. Using Helmholtz pitch notation, where Middle C is indicated by  $c^1$ , one octave higher is indicated by  $c^2$ , and one octave lower by C, I indicate the final resting tone (*durak* or *karar ses*) in order to show the difference in range among the performers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> These include <http://www.turkuler.com/> and <http://www.turkudostlari.net/>.

<sup>12</sup> This is “do” in *solfege* syllables: Picken refers to the final resting tone as *karar* (1975: 231), Markoff uses *karar ses* (1986: 69) while Eliot Bates prefers *durak* (2011: 69).

### Musical Example 4.3 Helmholtz Pitch Notation



I offer one important comment about perceptions of tempo in Turkish folk music. Although I have included a tempo designation for each piece, it is more of an average than a consistent speed. Keeping a steady beat throughout a musical piece, as musicians with western European training have been trained to do, is not a strongly held value for solo performers of Turkish folk music. In live performances I observed that musicians tend to slow down the tempo to execute vocal and instrumental melismas, ornaments, and densely textured sections, and speed up the tempo when the melody is simpler and sung in a syllabic manner. When groups of musicians play together, tempos tend to be more consistent, and on professional albums studio engineers use click-tracking to synchronize sound recordings.

Turkish folk music borrows conventions from the Turkish classical music system to indicate microtones and other subtle pitch inflections. Although the *koma* is derived from the Pythagorean tuning system, where one *koma* is equal to 23 cents, Turkish music uses the Holdrian *koma* calculated at 22.6415 cents, so named for seventeenth-century



English clergyman and music theorist Willam Holder.<sup>13</sup> The conventional key signature for most Turkish folk music is a b flat (*bemol*) with the number 2 above it signifying that the pitch is lowered further by two *komas*. Microtones are conventionally indicated in the score as they appear by sharp and flat symbols with the number of *komas* above them. The microtone that most frequently appears in the Alevi repertoire is f sharp (*diyez*) with the number 3 above it, indicating that the pitch is raised by an additional three *komas*, commonly called *fa diyez uç*.<sup>14</sup> The microtone appears in cadential formulae as a single tone or as part of polyphonic strums with chord-like effects; melodic tones determine the key signature.

#### ANALYSIS OF *DUVAZ İMAM*

In this section I present transcriptions of *duvaz imam* (praise for the Twelve İmams). The examples are selected from among those I recorded at urban *cems*, and during my two trips to Çorum, and one example comes from a recorded album in order to broaden the comparison.

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<sup>13</sup> Eliot Bates (personal communication, spring, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> *Bemol* and *diyez* are Turkish terms borrowed from the French, *bémol* and *dièse*, respectively.

Figure 4.2 List of *Duvaz İmam* Pieces Transcribed.

“Hata Ettim Huda” (I Have Erred, God)

Performed by Hıdır Güç *Dede* (*Hıdır Dede Sesinde*. Arda Music, 2012).

Words: Şah Hatayı—Music: traditional

Time: 5:56—Durak: Ab

“Allah Medet Ya Muhammed Ya Ali” (Help (me), Allah, Muhammed, and Ali)

Performed by (*aşık*) Hasan Bey, Sultan Ana Cemevi, Çorum, February 13, 2013.

Words: Şah Hatayı—Music: traditional

Time: 1:57—Durak: F

“Muhammed Mustafa ey Şah-I Merdan” (Muhammed and Mustafa hail Ali)

Performed by Erdoğan Mutlu, Kağıthane Hacı-Bektaş Veli Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği, May 22, 2014.

Words: Viridi Derviş—Music: traditional

Time: 3:44—Durak: F–F#

Sung poems referred to as *duvaz imam* are an important part of the Alevi worship service: up to three of them may be included in the *cem*, and they usually precede other types of sung poems such as *tevhid*, *miraçlama*, and *semah*. They may be interspersed between other prayers; often two will be sung consecutively. Each verse contains lines that invoke the names of the Twelve İmams, followed by a line of refrain such as “*kabul eylesin*” (let it/them be included), as in Musical Example 4.4. A total of three examples were notated. The first two, one from a *cem* I attended in Çorum and one from the compact disc album *Hıdır Dede Sesinden* have somewhat different texts but will be analyzed together, since they are representative of an older playing style—a thin texture of open fourths and fifths.<sup>15</sup> The third example, performed by a *zakir* at the Kağıthane *cemevi*, illustrates a more recent (since the 1980s), urban playing style, a revivalist use of

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<sup>15</sup> Hıdır Güç *Dede* is from Sivrialan village in Şarkışla, a town in Sivas Province, located in Central Anatolia.

the short-necked *bağlama*, and a dense accompaniment texture. As mentioned previously, since the start of the musical revival commercial recordings by Alevi artists have included of *duvaz imam* and other sung poetry of the *cem* (for example, *tevhid* and *semah*). While *dedes* with more traditional views of the sanctity of the *cem* believe that such recordings should not be made, younger spiritual leaders like Divani *Dede* welcome the opportunity to demonstrate Alevi culture and beliefs through recordings and other public media: “We have a chance to perform part of our belief system” (Interview, November 26, 2014).

There are some musical similarities between the three examples of *duvaz imam*: for example, the first half of the vocal phrase exhibits a rising-falling melodic contour and the second half rests on one or two pitches. Also, note durations change to accommodate the number of, or stresses on, syllables in the text. Each musician sings and accompanies himself on the *bağlama* and strums with open fourths and fifths, although the rhythmic density (strums and passing tones) of the urban *zakir*'s accompaniment, along with his electrified instrument, gives the impression of a thicker texture.

### “Hata Ettim Huda”

In this *duvaz imam*, Hıdır Güç *Dede* sings and accompanies himself on a three-stringed *cura*, the smallest-sized *saz*.<sup>16</sup> The Twelve İmams are named in short lines of verse interspersed with a refrain line, “*kabul eylesin.*” In 4/4 meter, as I have transcribed the *duvaz imam*, each poetic line is sung in the first of two measures with a full rest in the

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<sup>16</sup> The track sounds like an unedited field recording and was probably recorded outside the context of the worship service.

second measure while the ostinato-like *bağlama* accompaniment part takes the two full measures. In the accompaniment, strums consist of open fourths and fifths, that move back and forth by step in the first of the two measures, then, in the second measure, leap by the interval of a fifth and descend one more step to pause (for the duration of a dotted quarter note), giving a feeling of arrival on c-g, four tones above d-g, where the ostinato began (measures 1-2) 2, measure 4, etc.).

After the fourth verse, Hıdır Güç *Dede* changes the meter and verses of the prayer (from those listed in the liner notes). The main metric change, starting at one minute (1:00) on the track and continuing for the remainder of the prayer, is a rush of the beat in the second measure of the two-measure phrase, which results in a total of seven, rather than eight, beats. Before the fourth verse, the cadence-like open fifth on c-g lasts for the duration of a dotted quarter note, giving a sense of arrival before the eighth-note pick-up to the two-measure accompaniment figure is repeated. Once Hıdır Güç *Dede* shortens the duration of the open fifth to eighth notes, like the other tones before and after them, the sense of arrival is lost and the eighth-note pairs all sound like passing tones. The difference can be seen by comparing measures 13-15 in Musical Example 4.4 and the three measures in Musical Example 4.5, in which the dotted quarter note interval has changed to a eighth-note interval in the middle measure.

Musical Example 4.4 “Hata Ettim Huda” (Hıdır Güç Dede)

## Hata Ettim Huda

performed by Hıdır Güç Dede

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of four systems, each with a Voice line and a Bağlama line. The Bağlama line is marked with a '2' and an '8', indicating a second fret and eighth notes. The Voice line is marked with a '2', indicating a second line. The lyrics are in Turkish and are written below the Voice line. The score includes a repeat sign at the beginning of the first system. The dynamics are marked as 'Mm' (mezzo-moderato).

1. Ha- ta et- tim hu- da Mm

Ka- bul ey- ley- sin Mu- ham- med Mu- sta- fa Mm

Ka- bul ey- ley- sin Mm 2. A- li'- nin Dül- dü- lü Mm

Gam- ber- i bi- ne Mm Zül- fû- ka- rı ka- za Mm

17 *dal Segno*

Vo. Ka- bul ey- ley- sin Mm

Bağ. 8

Musical Example 4.5 “Hata Ettim Huda” rushing the beat.

Voice İ- mam Zey- nel E- ba Ey Ba- kın Ca- fer

Bağlama 8

After the fourth verse, Hıdır Güç *Dede* sings some of the verses in a different order from that in the liner notes that accompany the compact disc. Then, at two minutes and one second (2:01), he changes the refrain to “*nazar bu kurban*” (look upon this sacrifice) or “*nazır bu kurban*” (oversee this sacrifice).<sup>17</sup> Finally, at three minutes and forty-one seconds (3:41) he begins to sing a second *duvaz imam*—one that does not appear in the liner notes—without pausing.<sup>18</sup> It is unclear why the liner notes do not reflect this performance of the *duvaz imam*—perhaps there were limits on how much could be printed, or the producer relied on standardized versions of the poems for the notes rather than what was actually sung. The discrepancy illustrates ongoing

<sup>17</sup> With the *dede*’s rural accent and the field-recording quality of the sound it is difficult to determine the first word in the new refrain; it could also be “*nezir bu kurban*” (this pure, upright sacrifice) or another word.

<sup>18</sup> It turns out that this new section is also the text of the *duvaz imam* Hasan *Bey* sings in the *cem* in Çorum (Musical Example 4.4).

intersections between oral tradition and the commercialization of Alevi music, similar to what has occurred in flamenco music, a process that I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five.

“Allah Medet Ya Muhammed Ya Ali”

Hasan *Bey*, the *aşık* at the Sultan Ana Cemevi in Çorum, performed “Allah Medet Ya Muhammed Ya Ali” while accompanying himself on a short-necked *saz* (with seven strings) and playing with a thin, open interval texture. The structure of this *duvaz imam* is similar to that of the previous example: the refrain of this *duvaz imam* “*bizi dergâhundan mahrum eyleme*” (don’t deprive us of your court) occurs twice in the first verse—lines two and four—but in subsequent verses is repeated only in line four.<sup>19</sup> There is a two-measure accompaniment figure that I transcribed in 4/4 meter, but each line of verse takes four measures of accompaniment. As a result, the poetic line is broken up in the middle of the names of the *imams* and other mentioned personages in the poetry; first Muhammed (measures 1-3) and then Hacı Bektaş Veli (measures 8-10) in example 4.6, below. At twenty-five seconds (0:25) on the track, Hasan *Bey* pauses to listen to a stage direction or comment from one of the officiating *dedes* at the *cem* and then resumes playing. I observed similar breaks in the ritual at other *cems* with this small, close-knit community for whom individuals appeared to be more important than maintaining a fixed pace of the service. (In Chapter Six I discuss more details of the Hubyar *cems* I attended.)

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<sup>19</sup> *Dergâh* (dervish lodge) in this case is rendered as “court” in English, since the saint’s presence is being compared to divine and royal courts (Professor Ahmet Karamustafa, personal communication, April, 2016).

Musical Example 4.6 “Allah Medet Ya Muhammed Ya Ali”

## Medet Allah Ya Muhammed Ya Ali

performed by Hasan Bey

Voice



Me- det Al- lah Ya Mu- ham- med Ya'A- li

Bağlama

Vo.



Bi- zi Der- gâ- hin- dan Mah- rum Ey- le- me

Bağ.

Vo.



Pi- rim Hün- kâr Ha- cı Bek- taş- ı Ve- li

Bağ.

Vo.



Bi- zi Der- gâ- hin- dan Mah- rum Ey- le- me

Bağ.



19 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo. A- dem -i Sa- fiyul- lah a- tam hak- kı i- çin  
 Bağ. <sub>8</sub>

23 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo. Ey- yüb- be ver- diğ- in si- tem hak- kı i- çin  
 Bağ. <sub>8</sub>

27 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo. Mu- ham- med Mus- ta- fa ha- tem hak- kı i- çin  
 Bağ. <sub>8</sub>

31 <sup>2</sup> D.C. al Fine  
 Vo. Bi- zi Der- gâ- hin- dan Mah- rum Ey- le- me  
 Bağ. <sub>8</sub>

Verses one and two from the *duvaz imams* performed by Hıdır Güç *Dede* and Hasan *Bey* appear below with their translations, and also in Appendix B (it is not within the scope of this dissertation to provide a complete translation of the various multi-sectioned prayers). Again, the idea of the *duvaz imam* is a recounting of the deeds,

attributes of, and associations with the Twelve İmams and other saintly characters in *Alevilik*, but as the analysis has shown, there is variation as to which texts are designated as the first, second, or third sections of the prayer. I found this variation to be true for urban cems and for *duvaz imams* found on Alevi websites.

Figure 4.3 Excerpt from “Hata Ettim Huda”

Hata ettim hüda/Kabul eylesin	(I have erred/Let God accept it)
Muhammed Mustafa/Kabul eylesin	(Muhammed Mustafa/May he accept it)
Ali'nin düldülü/Gamberi bine	(May the companion ride Ali's mule)
Zülfikarı kaza/Kabul eylesin	(The fate of Ali's sword Zülfikar/ Let God accept it) <sup>20</sup>

Figure 4.4 Excerpt from “Allah Medet Yâ Muhammed Yâ Ali”

Allah medet yâ Muhammed yâ Ali	(Help Allah, and Muhammed and Ali)
Bizi dergâhından mahrum eyleme	(Don't deprive us of your court)
Pirim Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş Veli	(My sage, sultan St. Haji Bektash)
Bizi dergâhından mahrum eyleme	(Don't deprive us of your court)
Ademi Safiyullah atam hakkı için	(Ademi Safiyullah the footsteps of right)
Muhammed Mustafa hatem hakkı için	(For the sake of the seal of the prophets of Muhammed Mustafa)
Eyyüb'e verdiği sitem hakkı için	(You rebuked Eyyub for justice)
Bizi dergâhından mahrum eyleme	(Don't deprive us of your court)

The performances of Hıdır Güç *Dede* and Hasan *Bey* illustrate more reliance on memory than on the printed page. Both of them sang some of the verses out of order in comparison to the liner notes for the album and a printed copy of the worship service I

<sup>20</sup> The first part of this line may be “Zülfikarı kese” (May Ali's sword be sharp) (Professor Ahmet Karamustafa, personal communication, April, 2016).

requested for the *cem* in Çorum, respectively (several of the *dedes* used a printed copy of the service during the *cem* for reference, but did not read from it). I conclude, based on my observation of several *cems* in Çorum, that in general the verses should be performed in some sort of consistent order; however, if they are sung in a different order, it does not appear to be a “mistake” in carrying out the ritual. Memory and oral transmission account for more flexibility and fluidity in small-town *cems* performance, whereas a number of young, urban *zakirs* used notebooks filled with hand-written poetry during the *cem*, which made their performances more consistent.

#### “Muhammed Mustafa ey Şah-ı Merdan”

Musical Example 4.7 is a performance of the *duvaz imam* “Muhammed Mustafa ey Şah-ı Merdan” by Erdoğan Mutlu at the Kağıthane *cemevi*.<sup>21</sup> Urban-style accompaniment texture is rhythmically denser than that played by rural and/or small-town musicians and more often makes use of all seven strings on the short-necked *bağlama*. I observed that the vocal delivery of urban *zakirs* tended to be more intense and emotional, involving ornamentation and vibrato (see Musical Example 4.8), compared to the more straightforward and syllabic singing of musicians in small towns. Erdoğan *Bey*’s delivery is particularly dramatic: he punches out the words and strums energetically at the end of each line of poetry. As mentioned before, urban *zakirs* use electrified *bağlamas* and microphones for their voices, effectively filling the *cemevi* with sound, in contrast to the sound of acoustic instruments and the more straightforward delivery of the performers in small-town locales.

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<sup>21</sup> Şahı Merdan (alternate Şah-ı Merdan) is one of many names for İmam Ali.

Like the previous two prayers, this *duvaz imam* is structured with four-line verses. The refrain line, “*Hû sana sığındım*” (Oh Lord, I take refuge in you), is repeated at the end of the second and fourth lines in the first verse, and then only in the fourth line of each subsequent verse. In the poem, “*Hû*” (literally, “he,” rendered in English as “Oh Lord”) is added to the beginning of phrases. In this performance, Erdoğan *Bey* plays two-measure accompaniment phrases that are repeated throughout the prayer, and also make up the *arasaz* (an informal term indicating music played by the *bağlama* in between verses). At times, Erdoğan *Bey* extended the *arasaz* to give the presiding *dede* a chance to call out to the congregation to participate with love (“*Aşkile!*”) before the next verse began, or he would shorten or skip it and start the next verse. At the end of the prayer, he continues to strum the *bağlama* to transition to the next prayer to be sung. Like Erdoğan *Bey*, other experienced *zakirs* are able to shorten or lengthen *duvaz imams* and other music in the *cem*, and segue to the next piece.

I observed that urban *zakirs* sang with more vocal ornamentation than their small-town counterparts. While Hasan *Bey*’s performance exhibited only occasional use of vocal ornamentation, Erdoğan *Bey* sang with some types of ornamentation similar to those I learned to played on the *bağlama*: for example, at the end of each line of verse (measure 8 on the syllable “*dan*” and in measure 12 on the syllable “*dim*”), he executes a vocal *çarpma* technique—singing one tone and then its adjacent upper tone quickly. This type of ornamentation is common in descending melodic lines. Although, in the first instance, the melodic line descends, and in the second, it stays on the tone *d*, the two are parallel, since they occur at the end of the first and second poetic lines. Another type of vocal ornamentation is the use of the larynx (*gırtlak*) to accent some parts of the melodic

line. Erdoğan *Bey*'s throat tightens on certain syllables (shown in bold); for example, “ey Şah-ı Mer-dan” in measure 7, and “Hû Ha-san **müç**-te-ba” in measure 16. Both of these types of vocal ornamentation are important in Turkish folk music (Eliot Bates, personal communication, May 2016).

Musical Example 4.7 “Muhammed Mustafa ey Şah-ı Merdan” (Erdoğan Mutlu)

**Muhammed Mustafa ey Şah-ı Merdan**

performed by Erdoğan Mutlu

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The top staff is labeled 'Voice' and contains a whole rest for the first four measures. The bottom staff is labeled 'Bağlama' and contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes and chords. The second system starts at measure 5. The top staff is labeled 'Vo.' and contains the vocal line with lyrics: '1. Mu- ham- med Mu- sta- fa Hû ey Şah- ı Mer-'. The bottom staff is labeled 'Bağ.' and continues the bağlama accompaniment. The lyrics are aligned with the vocal line, with '1.' at the start of measure 5, 'Mu- ham- med Mu- sta- fa' across measures 5-6, 'Hû' at the start of measure 7, and 'ey Şah- ı Mer-' across measures 7-8.

8

Vo. dan Hû A- li'- yyel Mur- te- za Hû sa- na sıĝ- in-

Bağ.

12

Vo. dım Hû Ha- ti- ce Fa- ti- ma

Bağ.

15

Vo. Hû Ha- san Müc- te- ba Hû Hü- seyn- i Ker-

Bağ.

18

Vo. be- la Hû sa- na sıĝ- in dım

Bağ.

22 2  
Vo.   
2. İ- mam Zey- nel

Bağ. 

26 2  
Vo.   
i- le Hû Mu- ham- med Ba- kır

Bağ. 

29 2  
Vo.   
Hû Cen- net bah- çe- sîn- de Hû bül- bül- ler şa- kır

Bağ. 

33 2  
Vo.   
Hû Ca- fer Sa- dıĝ' - a Hû er- dik çok şü- kür

Bağ. 

37 2  
Vo. Hû Ka- zım Mu- sa Rı- za Hû sa- na sığ- ın-

Bağ. 2  
8

40 2  
Vo. dim  
Bağ. 2  
8

D.C. al Fine

Figure 4.5 Excerpt from “Muhammed Mustafa ey Şah-ı Merdan”

Muhammed Mustafa Hû ey Şah-ı Merdan (Muhammed Mustafa, Allah, Ali)  
Hû Ali'yyel murtaza Hû sana sığındım (Allah, Caliph Ali, Allah, I take refuge in  
you, Oh Lord)  
Hû Hatice-İ Fatıma, Hû Hasan müçteba (Allah, Hatice Fatıma, Allah, Hasan the  
chosen)  
Hû Hüseyin'İ Kerbala Hû sana sığındım (Allah, Huseyin at Kerbala, Allah, I take  
refuge in you, Oh Lord)

The text of this *duvaz imam* also appears in the copy of the worship service that I received from the congregation at the Sultan Ana *cemevi* in Çorum but it was not performed at every service I attended. I assume it would have been played in a similar fashion as the one played by Hasan *Bey*.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Four has provided a basic description of playing techniques and aesthetic principles for *bağlama* performance. I discussed the present state of music study and the



ways that formal instruction in universities and urban private music schools is more prevalent than working with regional masters. Revivalist musician-teachers research and collect music from Anatolian performers and pass their knowledge on to their students in urban settings. The accurate rendering of musical pieces in terms of regional style and flavor, limited creative interpretation, and tasteful musical arrangement of a traditional work have remained highly valued aspects of traditional Turkish folk music performance. I also made observations about my own music study of *bağlama*, noting that individual lessons and personal coaching, as well as aural understanding, were essential to the learning process, while video recordings and musical notation were used as prompts.

An analysis of *duvaz imam* sung poems and performances revealed that small-town *zakirs* demonstrated more connections to rural-based, oral learning processes than urban *zakirs*; that is, relying on memory rather than written texts, and singing verses in a more flexible order. Small-town musicians also sang in a straightforward manner, with little or no vocal ornamentation or vibrato, and strummed open fourths and fifths without passing tones, giving the music a thin texture. *Zakirs* who have studied music in urban settings are more affected, directly or indirectly, by the development of virtuosic performing techniques by revivalist and professional musicians than those in small towns. In my lessons Cem *Hoca* emphasized producing a good sound through particular hand positions, vibrato, and other techniques even when he was teaching me music of the *cem*. In Chapter Five, I will continue with the musical analysis of *deyiş* and *türkü*s, including vocal ornamentation in renditions of “Diktiğimiz Fidanlar,” the *türkü* by Dertli Divani *Dede*, and discuss Alevi music with respect to Sufi poetry, and issues of authorship and ownership in arrangements of Turkish folk music.

## CHAPTER FIVE MUSICAL ANALYSIS PART TWO

This chapter continues with analysis and discussion of *deyiş* and *türkü*s performed by both professional musicians (those who make a living as performers) and amateurs (those who are not compensated) in live performances, on recorded albums, and YouTube posts. Both amateur and professional musicians perform these pieces in *cems*, *muhabbets*, festivals, and other Alevi community events, contexts that I will discuss in Chapters Six and Seven. As in Chapter Four, the examples analyzed in this chapter are from, in order to broaden the comparison of arrangements.

The use of the terms *deyiş* and *türkü* can be complicated; as mentioned before, *türkü* is a general term for many types of Turkish folk songs and a *deyiş* is a mystical or social commentary song associated with Alevis. Nevertheless, some professional musicians have recorded albums that contain *deyiş* that are not so identified; for example, the series “Türküler Sevdamız” (Our Beloved *Türkü*s).<sup>1</sup> Another example is the music of Aşık Veysel that has been broadcast and performed under the general rubric of Turkish folk music. In this chapter I analyze Veysel’s “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” (My Advice to You, Heart) which appears on an album entitled “Aşık Veysel *türkü*s” yet, this song contains moral advice associated with Alevi *deyiş* (and an eight-syllable metric line as in the *koşma*).<sup>2</sup> These fluid categories “serve to illuminate levels at which interrelated repertoires and social structures prevail” (Bohlman 1988: 33). Thus, I use apply the term

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<sup>1</sup> The musicians on these albums include Tolga Sağ, Erdal Erzincan, Muharrem Temiz and Yılmaz Çelik. Thanks to Paul Koerbin for his input on song categories.

<sup>2</sup> Another term, *deyiş türküsu* (rendered in English as mystical poem-folk song), further confuses, rather than clarifies, how a work should be categorized. It is possible that the term is meant to indicate inclusion in Turkish folk music.

“türkü” advisedly to this work. After completing the musical analysis, I will discuss Sufi imagery in an example of Alevi poetry, and issues of authorship and ownership in Turkish folk music.

#### ANALYSIS OF *DEYİŞ*

*Deyiş* are mystical songs containing moral advice, and social commentary. Most are structured in verses of four-lines; Alevi and Bektaş poets favor the *koşma* verse form, with lines of eight or eleven syllables. In realizing the music, performers have some flexibility in the amount of repeated material in the verse and in the *arasaz*. A cadence-like formula that occurs at the end of verses and instrumental repeats is characteristic of many pieces in Alevi style. This formula can be realized in different ways; for example, as a single melodic line or with chord-like strums on several strings, as illustrated in Musical Example 5.1. Most songs end quickly, with a closing strum or two after the final melodic phrase of the song.

Musical Example 5.1  
Cadence-like formulae found in Alevi musical style.



Figure 5.1 List of *Değiş* Transcribed.

“Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” performed by İmdat Çelebi *Dede*, Hacı-Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı Ayazağa branch, Maslak, İstanbul, May 29, 2014.<sup>3</sup>

Words: Pir Sultan Abdal—Music: traditional  
Time: 4:37—Durak: Bb-B<sub>1</sub>

“Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” performed by Tolga Sağ, Haacı-Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı Okmeydanı branch, Şişli, İstanbul, April 24 2014.

Words: Derviş Ali—Music: traditional  
Time: 2:50—Durak: Eb

“Aman Ey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden” performed by Cem Çelebi, Fatissa Restoran, Şişli, İstanbul, October 10, 2014.

Words: Şah Hatayı—Music: traditional  
Time: 3:32—Durak: C#

“Aman Ey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden” performed by Turan Tandoğan, Hacı-Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı Okmeydanı branch, Şişli, İstanbul, November 28, 2013.

Words: Şah Hatayı—Music: traditional  
Time: 4:04—Durak: F

“Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” performed by Dertli Divani (Serçeşme. Güvercin, 2000).

Words and Music: Dertli Divani.  
Time: 3:58—Durak: F

“Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” performed by Dertli Divani and the Mekteb-i İrfan Öğrenciler, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, November 26, 2014.

Words and Music: Dertli Divani.  
Time: 4:22—Durak: E

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<sup>3</sup> Words by Pir Sultan Abdal <https://eksisozluk.com/sabahtan-ugradim-ben-bir-figana--774980> (accessed April 19, 2015).

## “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana”

The first of two examples of “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” was performed by İmdat *Dede* at a *cem* that he led in Ayazağa, and the second was played by Tolga Sağ as a guest *zakir* at a *cemevi* in Okmeydanı.<sup>4</sup> There are two versions of the poem set to the same music (each poet’s name appears in the final verse). The verses sung by Tolga Sağ are attributed to Derviş Ali, a nineteenth-century Bektaşî poet (words appear directly below), while those sung by İmdat *Dede* are attributed to Pir Sultan Abdal, a sixteenth-century Alevî poet. There are only minor differences in word choices between the two poems, and the meaning is essentially the same. For example, after each poet identifies himself in the last verse, Derviş Ali states “*nefesim hakktır*” (literally, my breath is truth), and Pir Sultan Abdal states “*sözlerim hakktır*” (literally, my words are truth), but each phrase can be understood to mean “I speak the truth.” *Nefes* (breath) is a word associated with Bektaşî religious orders (Ulaş Özdemir, interview, June 13, 2014). The first and third verses of the poem by Derviş Ali and the third verse of the poem by Pir Sultan Abdal appear below with their translations. The lines set off by asterisks (\*) are normally repeated in performance.

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<sup>4</sup> Tolga Sağ’s father is Alevî musician Arif Sağ whose innovations helped to revitalize *bağlama* music.

Figure 5.2 First and third verses, “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana”  
Words by Derviş Ali

\*Sabahtan uğradım ben bir figana\* (I ran into a lament in the morning)  
Bülbül ağlar ağlar güle getirir (The nightingale’s cry yields the rose)  
\*Bakın şu feleğin daim işine (Look at the permanence of this fate)  
Her bir cefasını kula getirir\* (Fate brings every kind of hardship to  
people)

\*Derviş Ali’m der ki nefesim hakır (I am Derviş Ali, my breath is truth)  
Hak diyen canlara şek şüphem yoktur\* (Those who speak truth are not doubted)  
\*Cehennem dediğin dal odun yoktur (There is no branch or wood in hell)

Herkes ateşini burdan getirir\* (Everyone even brings their own fire from  
here)

Figure 5.3 Third verse, “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana”  
Words by Pir Sultan Abdal

\*Pir Sultan Abdal’ım sözlerim hakır\* (I am Pir Sultan Abdal, my words are true)  
Hak diyen kullardan hiç şüphem yoktur (Those who speak truth are not doubted)  
\*Cehennemde ateş olmaz nar yoktur (In hell there is no pain without fire)  
Herkes ateşini bile götürür\* (Everyone even brings their own fire)

(Third verse, “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” words by Pir  
Sultan Abdal)

“Sabahtan Uğradım,” as performed by İmdat *Dede* at the *Ayazağa cemevi*, is one of several prayers and *deyiş* that he strings together with transitional short, melodic phrases and strums. He leads into this *deyiş* with repetitions of the two-measure cadence-like formula (measures 1-3), and then plays the instrumental introduction that is also the melody of the third and fourth lines of each verse. He sings in a mostly syllabic style and accompanies himself with a thin accompaniment texture, only occasionally using chord-like strums. For this reason, İmdat *Dede*’s performance of the *deyiş* is a good illustration of a clearly discernable counter melody in the *bağlama* accompaniment. For example, in measures 15-18, after he sings the first half of the line, “Sa-bah-tan u-ğra-dım”, he plays

a short figure that alters the microtone from *f#* to a natural; then, after the second half “ben bir fi-ga-na”, the *bağlama* enters on a syncopated eighth note. Another example can be found in the last line, where the *bağlama* part anticipates the vocal melody by one measure (measures 28-29).

İmdat *Dede* performs the *deyiş* with several inconsistencies in meter and tempo. Although he maintains a steady duple meter throughout most of the song, there are two instances in the first verse in which he rushes the vocal line. The first example occurs in the first melodic phrase (measures 15-18): in regular duple meter, the second half of the phrase, “ben bir figana” (measure 17) would normally be followed by four beats of *bağlama* accompaniment (measure 18), but instead, the duration of the two measures is reduced to seven, rather than eight, beats. The second example occurs in the third melodic phrase (measures 23-26) in which İmdat *Dede* rushes the beat in the second of the four measures (measure 24) at the end of “Bakın şu feleğin.” Later, when he plays the second and third verses of the *deyiş* (not transcribed), he changes to a steady duple meter. He plays with a somewhat inconsistent tempo—more slowly for verses, and faster for instrumental sections. As indicated in the transcription, İmdat *Dede* returns to the instrumental introduction for the *arasaz* after each verse.

Musical Example 5.2 “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” (İmdat Çelebi *Dede*)

## Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana

performed by İmdat Çelebi

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a Voice line and a Bağlama line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, triplets, and repeat signs. The lyrics are written below the voice line in the fourth system.

1. Sa- bah- tan uğ- ra- dım ben bir fi- ga- na



19

Vo.  $\frac{2}{4}$  Bül- bül ağ- lar ağ- lar gü- le ge- ti- rir

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{4}$  8

23

Vo.  $\frac{2}{4}$  Ba- kın şu fe- leğ- in çü- rük i- şı- ne

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{4}$  8

27

Vo.  $\frac{2}{4}$  Her bir ce- fa sı- ni ku- la ge- ti- rir

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{4}$  8

32

Vo.  $\frac{2}{4}$  dal Segno

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{4}$  8

Tolga Sağ's (hereafter *Tolga Bey*) rendition of "Sabahtan Uğradım" is the second of four *deyiş* he strings together with strums and melodic figures as transition material. He plays with a thick accompaniment texture—lots of full strums—throughout the piece, similar to the performances of young, urban *zakirs*, whereas İmdat *Dede* mainly doubles

the melodic line, with some full strums in the *bağlama* accompaniment. Like İmdat *Dede*, Tolga *Bey* sings in a mostly syllabic style, but with energy and an intense vocal quality, increased with amplification, that carries over the chattering congregation at the Okmeydani *cemevi*. In the repetition of the first half of the first line of the verse, Tolga *Bey* changes one or two of the initial tones in the vocal line (an accepted convention I learned from Cem *Hoca*, but which was not executed by İmdat *Dede*).

Tolga *Bey* maintains steady duple meter throughout the *deyiş* (transcribed in 4/4), and, combined with the nearly constant strums in his *bağlama* accompaniment that includes some syncopated rhythms (for example, measures 4, and 7-8), gives the impression of a driving rhythm that moves the music forward. As previously mentioned, when İmdat *Dede* and Tolga *Bey* conclude their performances of this *deyiş*, each plays material drawn from the last four measures of the *arasaz* to make a transition to the next pieces they play.

Musical Example 5.3 “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” (Tolga Sağ)

## Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana

performed by Tolga Sağ

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of four systems, each with a Voice part and a Bağlama part. The Bağlama part is marked with a '2' above the staff and an '8' below, indicating a two-octave range on an eight-stringed instrument. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a repeat sign. The second system continues the instrumental introduction. The third system begins the vocal melody with the lyrics '1. Sa- bah- tan uğ- ra- dım ben bir fi- ga- na'. The fourth system continues the vocal melody with the lyrics 'Bül- bül ağ- lar ağ- lar gü- le ge- ti- rir'. The Bağlama accompaniment features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often in a rhythmic pattern that complements the vocal line.

Voce

Bağlama

Vo.

Bağ.

Vo.

Bağ.

Vo.

Bağ.

1. Sa- bah- tan uğ- ra- dım ben bir fi- ga- na

Bül- bül ağ- lar ağ- lar gü- le ge- ti- rir

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Voice (Vo.) and Bağlama (Bağ.). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system (measures 17-20) has the lyrics: "Ba- kın şu fe- leğ- in da- im i- ši- ne". The second system (measures 21-24) has the lyrics: "Her dem ce- fa- nı ku- la ge- ti- rir rir". The score includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2. D.C. al Fine). The Bağlama part features a prominent descending rhythmic motif in the final measures.

“Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden”

For the second *deyiş*, “Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden” (Courage from You, Saints; alternate titles include “Ey Erenler” and “Aman Ey Erenler”), I transcribed and compared two performances, the first by Cem *Hoca* and the second by Turan *Bey*, a regular *zakir* at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*. The song is in duple meter (notated here in 4/4). Both Cem *Hoca* and Turan *Bey* sing the same three verses; two Internet sources show four verses for the *deyiş*.<sup>5</sup> Like the previous *deyiş*, the poetry is in the *koşma* form, organized in verses of four lines, each with eleven syllables. Similarly to the performance of other *deyiş*, the first line of each verse is repeated, as are lines three and four. The melody of the last two lines also serves as the *arasaz*. This *deyiş* is identifiable for a repeated rhythmic figure that serves as a motif restated as a descending sequence, through the end of the musical phrase.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.turkuyurdu.com/aman-hey-erenler-muruvvet-sizden-14292.html> and <http://www.turkudostlari.net/soz.asp?turku=14292> (accessed October 30, 2014).



*bağlama* playing skills separately, by playing softly with fewer ornaments while singing, and then filling in the remaining beats of the measure with strums, ornaments, and cadence-like figures that continue through the *arasaz*.<sup>8</sup> His tempo is elastic: he slows down the tempo while he sings, and plays slightly faster and more precisely when he plays the instrumental accompaniment.

Musical Example 5.5 “Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden” (Cem Çelebi)

## Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden

performed by Cem Çelebi

First four measures in free rhythm

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the first four measures in free rhythm. The Voice staff has rests, and the Bağlam staff plays a melodic line with ornaments and triplets. The second system shows measures 5-6, with the Voice staff having rests and the Bağlam staff playing a melodic line with ornaments and triplets. The score ends with a repeat sign.

<sup>8</sup> Generally Cem *Hoca* plays more individual tones, figures and scale runs than strums. He objects to the trend that so many *bağlama* players seem to sound like the current popular masters rather than develop their own interpretations.

10

Vo.  $\frac{2}{8}$

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{8}$

14

Vo.  $\frac{2}{8}$

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{8}$

1. A- man Hey E- ren- ler mü- rüv- vet siz den

16

Vo.  $\frac{2}{8}$

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{8}$

Ök- süz- üm ga- rib- em ih- sa- na gel- dim

18

Vo.  $\frac{2}{8}$

Bağ.  $\frac{2}{8}$

ih- sa- na gel- dim Bu ye- tim hal- im- e

21 2  
Vo. 8 mer- ha- met ey- le Ağ- layı ağ- la- yı mey- dan- a gel- dim

Bağ. 8 7 3 3

24 Dal Segno  
Vo. 8

Bağ. 8 3

Turan *Bey* played this *deyiş* at the Okmeydanı *cemevi* on January 16, 2014. I observed him frequently using a capo on the *bağlama* to accommodate his tenor voice. Similar to other urban *zakirs*, Turan *Bey*'s performing style consists of dense strumming and rhythmic figures that he says engage the congregation's attention.<sup>9</sup> He sings in legato phrases with a rapid vibrato that softens the clipped rhythmic figures of the piece. Like Cem *Hoca* and other performers, Turan *Bey* plays more slowly while singing the verses, and faster while playing the instrumental sections. The main difference between the two performances is that Turan *Bey*'s thick accompaniment texture is important to help project the music to the congregation and keeping the sound going in the *cemevi*, while at the social club, Cem *Hoca* focuses on virtuoso techniques.

<sup>9</sup> On my recording there is lots of chatting by the congregation during the performance, typical of the behavior at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*.



Musical Example 5.6 “Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden” (Turan Tandoğan)

## Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden

performed by Turan Tandoğan

The musical score is written for Voice and Bağlama. It is in 2/4 time and the key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into four systems, each with a voice line and a bağlama line. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a key signature change from B-flat to A-flat. The second system includes the lyrics "1, A- man Hey E- ren- ler". The third system includes the lyrics "mü- rüv- vet siz den Ök- süz- üm ga- rib- em a- man- a gel- dim". The fourth system includes the lyrics "a- man- a gel- dim". The bağlama part features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with some triplets and slurs. The voice part is a simple melody with some rests.

2  
Voice

2  
Bağlama

4  
Vo.

1, A- man Hey E- ren- ler

7  
Vo.

mü- rüv- vet siz den Ök- süz- üm ga- rib- em a- man- a gel- dim

Bağ.

10  
Vo.

a- man- a gel- dim

Bağ.



Arif and Tolga Sağ on the repeat. The piece closes with an extra cadence-like figure and strum (not notated).

Figure 5.5 Excerpt, “Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” (The Shoots We Planted)<sup>10</sup>

*Diktiğimiz fidanların*	(We could not eat the fruit)
Meyvesini yiyemedik	(Of the shoots we planted)
*Ne suçu vardı onların*	(Whatever was their fault)
Dur be zalim diyemedik	(—Hold on tyrant!— we cannot say)
*Sana ne bana ne hep diye diye	(Saying what’s it to you, what’s it to me?)
Böylece yem olduk ağaya beye*	(Thus we’re fodder for lord and master)

Examples of vocal ornamentation include *çarpma* (singing one tone and then its adjacent upper tone quickly) and *trıl* (trill, a rapid alternation of two tones). The former can be found in a few isolated instances as a rhythmic figure of two sixteenth notes and one eighth note (d-e-d) in measure 8 (Mey-ve-**si**-ni) and 13 (Dur be **za**-lim). A combination of techniques, *trıl* followed by *çarpma*, is found in measure 7 (fi-**dan-la**-rın) and is repeated in measure 12 (-dı **on-la**-rın).

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<sup>10</sup> Translation by Paul Koerbin, used with permission. See Appendix B for full text, and <https://koerbin.wordpress.com/2010/02/06/dertli-divani-diktigimiz-fidanlari/> (accessed January 14, 2013). See also Paul Koerbin (“I am Pir Sultan Abdal: A Hermeneutic Study of the Self-naming Tradition (*Mahlas*) in Turkish Alevi Lyric Song (*Deyiş*).” Ph.D. diss., The University of Western Sydney, 2011).

Musical Example 5.7 “Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” (Dertli Divani)

## Diktiğimiz Fidanlar

performed by Dertli Divani

The musical score is written for Voice and Bağlama. It consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a key signature of one flat and a 2/8 time signature. The Voice part has a first ending bracket over the final measure. The Bağlama part provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system begins with a second ending bracket for the Voice part, which leads to the lyrics: "Dik-ti- ği- miz fi- dan- la- -a- rı- ın". The Bağlama part continues with a similar accompaniment. The third system continues the lyrics: "Mey- ve- si- ni yi- ye- -e- me- -e- dik". The fourth system concludes the lyrics: "Ne' su- çu var dı on- la- rı- ın Dur- be za- lim". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and triplets.

Voice

Bağlama

Vo.

Bağ.

Vo.

Bağ.

Vo.

Bağ.

Dik-ti- ği- miz fi- dan- la- -a- rı- ın

Mey- ve- si- ni yi- ye- -e- me- -e- dik

Ne' su- çu var dı on- la- rı- ın Dur- be za- lim

14 2  
Vo. di- ye -e- me- -e- dik Sa- na' ne ba- na' ne

Bağ. 8

17 2  
Vo. hep di- ye' di- ye Bøy- le'- ce ye'm ol- duk a- ğa bey- ye D.C. al Fine

Bağ. 8

Divani *Dede* and his student group, the Mekteb-i İrfan Öğrenciler, perform “Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” at their concerts and *muhabbets*. I recorded the piece during a program they gave at Middle East Technical University in Ankara (Orta Doğu Teknikal Üniversitesi) on November 26, 2014. Sitting on cushions on stage along with Divani *Dede*, there were about fifteen students singing and playing *bağlama*. Although the words and melody can be heard fairly clearly in the recording, the microphones and amplifiers were not geared to pick up the nuances of the *bağlama* accompaniment.

The verses, repeats, and refrains are sung in the same order as the track on the *Serçeşme* album, but not all of the vocal rhythms and ornamentation are clearly articulated. One likely reason is that, although the students play quite well, rhythmic precision is, on the whole, less important for amateurs who perform Turkish folk (and Alevi) music. An additional consideration is that Divani *Dede* may have underplayed or eliminated the glottal stops when he taught the work to his students, given that many of them grew up in urban environments where Turkish pronunciation is different (they all articulate the ğ sound in the back of their throats, like Divani *Dede*). There is one major

difference between this arrangement and that on Divani *Dede*'s album: after singing and repeating the refrain for the third verse, the group then sings the second, and then the first, refrain *a cappella* with a ritard and a drop in volume at the end, giving a dramatic effect to this rendition.

Musical Example 5.8 “Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” (Dertli Divani and Students)

## Diktiğimiz Fidanlar

performed by Dertli Divani and Students of the School of Knowledge

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece. The Voice part starts with a whole rest, followed by a first ending bracket. The Bağlama part begins with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second system shows the vocal entry with the lyrics "1. Dik- ti- ği- miz fi- dan- rın". The Voice part has a melodic line with a slur over the last two notes. The Bağlama part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern, including a triplet of eighth notes. The third system shows the continuation of the Bağlama part, ending with a double bar line.

8 Vo. 2/4  
Mey- ve- si- ni yi- ye- me- dik Ne su- çu var

Bağ. 2/4  
8

12 Vo. 2/4  
di on- la- rı- n Dur- be za- lim di- ye- me- dik

Bağ. 2/4  
8

15 Vo. 2/4  
Sa- na ne ba- na ne hep di- ye di- ye

Bağ. 2/4  
8

18 Vo. 2/4  
Böy- le- ce yem ol- duk a- ğa bey- ye D.C. al Fine

Bağ. 2/4  
8

## ANALYSIS OF *TÜRKÜS*

In this section, I analyze and discuss “Gönül Sana Nasihatım” (My Advice to You, Heart) by Aşık Veysel Satrioğlu (1894-1973), a well-known and frequently performed piece. The latter is notable for verses of eight syllables, and refrains of eleven syllables that introduce new text (see Appendix B for the full texts and translations).

Figure 5.6 List of *Türkü*s Transcribed.

“Gönül Sana Nasihatim” performed by Cengiz Özkan (*Saklarım Gözümde Güzelliğini*. Kalan Müzik, 2003).

Words and Music: Aşık Veysel Satıroğlu.

Time: 4:55—Durak: Eb

“Gönül Sana Nasihatim” performed by Cem Çelebi and Aliye Kaya Çelebi (*Itikat*. Güvercin, 2012).

Words and Music: Aşık Veysel Satıroğlu

Time: 5:50—Durak: Eb

### “Gönül Sana Nasihatim”

One of two renditions of “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” is performed by Cengiz Özkan (b. 1967), from his album, *Saklarım Gözümde Güzelliğini* (I Keep Beauty in My Eyes). This professional musician, who specializes in the interpretation of the music of Aşık Veysel (1894-1973), possesses a thin, raspy voice and sings in a restrained, quiet manner that is unusual for Turkish folk musicians, who typically sing loudly and with emotional intensity. Nevertheless, Cengiz Özkan is a well-respected and popular interpreter of Alevi music, as his albums and concerts appearances attest. The second performance is a duet sung by Cem *Hoca* and his wife, Aliye, on his album *Itikat* (Faith). As I compare the two very different performances, I will include a few comments about one of Aşık Veysel’s own performance that is available on YouTube.

Like the *deyiş* analyzed previously, this poem is also in *koşma* form, in verses of four lines of eight syllables each. When sung, the first two poetic lines are separated by cadence-like strums on the *bağlama*, and the third and fourth lines are sung consecutively, and then repeated, and finished with a few more strums (see the first verse of the poem, below, with asterisks (\*) for the repeat). The instrumental introduction



serves as the *arasaz*; but because this *türkü* has six verses—and audiences like to hear them all—performers tend to shorten the *arasaz* or play it only after every two verses. Even with such abbreviations, this piece can take five minutes or more to perform.

Figure 5.7 Excerpt, “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” (My Advice to You, Heart)

Gönül sana nasihatim	(My advice to you, heart)
Çağrılmazsan varma gönül	(If you are not called don't go)
*Seni sevmezse bir güzel	(If a beauty does not love you)
Bağlanıp da durma gönül*	(Don't get hung up on him/her, heart)

Before describing Cengiz Özkan's album track, I will mention a little about Aşık Veysel's own performance on YouTube.<sup>11</sup> Veysel's rendition is rather long (5:29), because he plays an instrumental version of the entire melody as an introduction and after each verse. Although each musical phrase is in duple meter, he plays short, cadence-like figures in groups of two or three beats in between the phrases, giving the piece a feel of irregular meter. Veysel performs this *türkü* (and many of his other works) on the *dede saz*, which has six strings and the fewest number of frets of the instruments in the *saz* family. Although he was not a polished, formally trained musician, as evidenced by the rough quality of his singing and playing, he is much beloved by Alevis and non-Alevis alike.

Cengiz Özkan stays true to Veysel's style by performing on the *dede saz*, and retaining the short two- and three-beat cadence-like figures that are played after each

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<sup>11</sup> “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” performed by Aşık Veysel Satıroğlu. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDxbZz20bKA> (accessed April 2, 2014). I was not able to locate the album from which the track was posted.

melodic phrase. Like Aşık Veysel, Cengiz Özkan plays with a thin accompaniment texture, mainly doubling the melody on the *saz*, and he follows the exact melodic contour as sung by Veysel. Cengiz Özkan shortens the duration of the *türkü* by playing the introductory material at the beginning, and then only after the second and fourth verses. After the odd-numbered verses, he plays the cadence-like formula, sometimes in a measure of 2/4, or 3/4 meter. The transcription includes the first two verses of this arrangement.

Musical Example 5.9 “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” (Cengiz Özkan)

Gönül Sana Nasihatim

performed by Cengiz Özkan

Voice

Bağlama

Vo.

Bağ.

1. Gö- nül sa- na na- si- ha- - tim

10 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo.  Çāğ- rıl maz- san var- ma- gö- - nül  
 Bağ. 

13 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo.  Sen- i sev- mez- se bir gü- zel Bağ- la- nıp da dur- ma gö- nül  
 Bağ. 

17 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo.  dur- ma gö- nül Sen- i sev- mez- se bir gü- zel  
 Bağ. 

22 <sup>2</sup>  
 Vo.  Bağ- la- nıp da dur- ma gö- nül  
 Bağ. 

22

Vo.  Bağ- la- nıp da dur- ma gö- nül

Bağ. 

27

Vo.  2. Ne ge- zer- Şa- m'ı Şar- k'ı Yok mu sen- de

Bağ. 

35

Vo.  Be- ni boş- a yor- ma gö- nül yor- ma gö- nül

Bağ. 

40

Vo.  Terk e- der- sin e- vi bar- kı Be- ni boş- a yor- ma gö- nül

Bağ. 

44

D.C. al Fine

Vo. 

Bağ. 

Cem *Hoca*'s arrangement of this *türkü* is structured generally like that of Cengiz Özkan—with an introduction that serves as the *arasaz*, which is played in full after the

second and fourth verses—but there are several important differences. First, *Cem Hoca* maintains duple meter throughout the song. Second, he sings the odd-numbered verses while his wife, *Aliye Hanım*, sings the even-numbered ones, and they sing the sixth verse together. At the start of the song, he repeats the first two lines of the first verse for emphasis, while the rest of the verses are sung with a repeat of the third and fourth lines only. Third, *Cem Hoca* performs the accompaniment on a long-necked *bağlama* (rather than on the *dede saz* as *Cengiz Özkan* does), and explained that he added a background track with arpeggiated chords (not notated) (personal communication, January, 2016).<sup>12</sup>

The most interesting difference between the two arrangements is the overdubbed *arasaz* after the fourth verse, which *Cem Hoca* orchestrated in the form of *soru-cevap* (question-answer); that is, a musical interplay between two melodic streams. In arranged music in Turkey, this form is an opportunity for creativity in distinguishing the question and answer phrases from each other to effect “a palpable change in ensemble texture” by changing such features as volume, note density, ornamentation, or playing style (Bates 2011: 67). In this case, *Cem Hoca* orchestrates the interplay between a *cura* (the three-stringed, smallest-sized *saz*) and a long-necked *bağlama*. The two parts are played one octave apart: the *cura* plays a single melodic line while the long-necked *bağlama* plays a combination of melody and chord-like figures. The contrast is heard not only in the different octaves and textures of the two parts, but also in the staccato-like sound of the *cura* with its high strings and rapid decay, versus the deeper and longer-sounding tones of

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<sup>12</sup> *Cem Hoca* elaborated further that for the arpeggiations he played the long-necked *saz* in a guitar-like manner (*gitar havasında*) with only his fingers (*parmakla*) (personal communication, January 2016).

the long-necked *bağlama*. The *soru-cevap* form is an excellent example of complementary timbres characteristic described at the beginning of this chapter.

Musical Example 5.10 “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” (Cem Çelebi and Aliye Kaya)

## Gönül Sana Nasihatim

performed by Cem Çelebi and Aliye Kaya

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a Voice line and a Bağlama line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The Bağlama line is marked with a '2' above the staff and an '8' below it, indicating a two-string, eight-measure pattern. The lyrics are written below the Voice line.

1. Gö- nül sa- na si- - ha- - tim Çağ- rıl maz- san

var- ma- gö- - nül Sen- i sev- mez- se bir gü- zel

Bağ- la- nıp da dur- ma gö- nül dur- ma gö- nül

18 2  
Vo.   
Sen- i sev- mez- se bir gü- zel Bağ- la- nıp da dur- ma gö- nül  
Bağ. 

22 2  
Vo.   
2. Ne ge- zer- sin Şa- m'ı Şar- k'ı  
Bağ. 

27 2  
Vo.   
Yok mu sen- de hiç bir kor- ku Terk e- der- sin  
Bağ. 

31 2  
Vo.   
e- vi bar- kı Be- ni boş- a yor- ma gö- nül yor- ma gö- nül  
Bağ. 

35 2  
Vo.    
Terk e- der- sin e- vi bar- kı Be- ni boş- a

39 2  
Vo.    
yor- ma gö- nül D.C. al Fine

8

Musical Example 5.11 “Gönül Sana Nasihatim” soru-cevap

## Soru-cevap (Gönül Sana Nasihatim)

performed by Cem Çelebi (after verse 4)

8 2  
Cura    
Bağ. 

7 2  
Cura    
Bağ. 

13 2  
Cura    
Bağ. 



## ALEVI POETRY AND SUFISM

*Alevilik* shares elements with Sufism, from the use of sacred objects such as a tanned sheepskin (*post*) that symbolizes the spiritual leader's authority, to the concept of reaching *tevhid* (unity with God; *tawhid* in Arabic) through ritual practice.<sup>13</sup> Alevis revere Sufi mystical poets of the thirteenth century and onward, who used vernacular languages (Farsi, Turkish, and Urdu) to express the mysteries of divine love and devotion (Schimmel 1975: 33). Classical images in Sufi poetry include love as an all-consuming fire, and the heart as a garden in which the nightingale and the rose—manifestations of the soul and God, respectively—are united. Yet these words are imbued with many more representations; ambiguity is intended. Nothing should be taken at face value since “the texture and flavor of the meaning of a word may change at any moment” (Schimmel 1975: 282). While one might be able to glean a superficial or apparent (*zahir*) meaning from a phrase or verse, there are many underlying or esoteric (*batın*) interpretations to be discovered. The musical notations of the *deyiş* and *türkü* I was given by Cem Hoca included the lyrics with Turkish translations for the words in Farsi, but the additional language added another layer of complexity to the meaning as I attempted to translate the poems. In an interview (December 9, 2014), Ulaş Özdemir explained some of the references and their possible meanings in the *deyiş* below.

Figure 5.8 “Şaha Doğru Giden Kervan” (The Caravan Going Toward God)

Şaha doğru giden kervan	(The caravan going to God)
Çok ağlattın güldür beni	(You made me cry; make me laugh)
Düşmüşem elden ayaktan	(I am unable to do anything)
Tut elimden kaldır beni	(Hold my hand and raise me up)

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<sup>13</sup> The *dede* sits on the *post* while presiding over a *cem*.

Tut elimden ferman eyle  
Gel bu derde derman eyle  
Götür yâre kurban eyle  
Öldür derse öldür beni

(Hold my hand and cure me)  
(Come and cure my suffering)  
(Take me to the lover and sacrifice me)  
(Even to my own death)

Arıdım baldan ayrıldım  
Ne şirin dilden ayrıldım  
Bülbülüm gülden ayrıldım  
Gülistana kondur beni

(I was a bee; I left the honey)  
(I left a beautiful heart)  
(I was a nightingale; I left the rose)  
(Place me in a rose garden)

Tut elimden düşmeyelim  
Doğru yoldan şaşmayalım  
Derdim çoktur deşmeyelim  
Böyle yâre bildir beni

(Hold my hand; let us not fall)  
(Let us not veer from the true path)  
(Let us not talk about my pain)  
(Make me thus known to the lover)

One can interpret the first two verses to mean that the speaker has chosen to follow a spiritual path toward God, and that he/she is experiencing both pain (difficulty) and joy at having made this choice. He/she is unable to function, and asks to be held up, supported by God. Holding the poet's hand (the touch of God) will cure suffering and pain. In the last half of the second, verse the poet promises to sacrifice (*kurban*) himself/herself in service to God even to the point of death (*öldür beni*), if necessary. The word *yâr* can mean a lover or, in this case, a spiritual leader a lover/seeker of God). *Yâr* appears again in the last stanza of the poem.

In the third verse, the poet turns his/her attention to leaving the material world and its people behind in order to be on this path. The metaphors in this verse include having been like a (busy) bee, going from flower to flower, and then choosing to leave behind both the honey and a nice heart (*Ne şirin dilden ayrıldım*)—the latter could imply a relationship with another person: *dil* in Sufi poetry can be rendered in English as heart, as well as—literally—tongue or language. In the third line of the third verse, the poet says

he is a nightingale and left the rose (*Bülbülüm gülden ayrıldım*).<sup>14</sup> It is unclear whether the image here refers to the physical or the spiritual world. Ulaş Bey explained that these metaphors are common in older folk poetry. Having left all of these things behind, the speaker asks to be put charge of cultivating a garden of good (*Gülistana kondur beni*), since *gülistan*, rendered in English, is a rose garden, perhaps implying that the poet takes on the task of making his heart in the image of God, and being reborn into the new world he chooses.

In the last verse, the poet says, “take my hand; let us not fall” (*Tut elimden düşmeyelim*); perhaps suggesting that God’s touch will prevent both a physical fall and spiritual failure. The rest of the stanza expresses the speaker’s desires; let us not veer from the true path (*Doğru yoldan şaşmayalım*). In the third line, he/she says that he is in so much pain that (implied) it is better not to talk about it, (*Derdim çoktur deşmeyelim*—from the verb *deşmek*, to open up a painful subject), and the last line states “make me thus known to the spiritual leader/lover” (*Böyle yâre bildir beni*).

#### AUTHORSHIP, OWNERSHIP, AND MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The term *derleme* (from *derlemek*—to gather together) refers to an individual notated score or a recording of music collected in rural Anatolia. Each score or recording is accompanied by a meta tag—several important pieces of information that identify it—the *yöre* (region or place of origin), *söz* (author of the words) *müzik* (composer of the music), *kaynak* (source person or village), and *derleyen* (collector of the musical piece).

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<sup>14</sup> The nightingale and the rose, used separately or in relation to each other, are two of the most prominent images in Sufi poetry.

Since the 1930s, tens of thousands of songs have been collected and housed in the government-funded Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) Archive through the Ministry of Culture. Yet problems exist with this system; for example, if the TRT holds that any pieces are compositions (*beste*)—that is, made up by the person from whom they were collected—then they cannot be considered true folk music. Under that ruling, the songs of *aşıks*, whose names appear in the final verses of their pieces, are not regarded as folk music. In the 1980s, the TRT allowed the works of deceased poet-minstrels to be added to the repertoire, although the idea of innovation is denied (Stokes 1992: 56).

In spite of these contradictions, musicians and recording studio personnel consider the *derleme* to be a highly valued folkloric resource that serves as raw material for new recordings and arrangements (*düzenleme*) of Turkish folk music and functions as “the most important technology for authenticating new renditions of traditional repertoires” (Bates 2008: 3). In order for any new recording to be deemed a true derivative of the collected work (*derleme*), it must demonstrate a faithful rendering of the lyrics, the contour of the vocal melody, and the meter of the song. Within these constraints, musicians must reconcile conventions of musical practice and personal creativity (Markoff 1986: 142). A musician can take credit on a recording for adding some personal touches to the music, but must not change those elements that define it.

The meta tag information is critical to identifying authors of songs for royalty payments as determined by the government-run music publishing company in Turkey, MESAM (Müsiki Eseri Sahipleri Meslek Birliği – Musical Work Owners’ Association of Turkey). Problems arise when young musicians, who are hoping to establish a reputation,

do not always give credit to their sources of poetry and music. A songwriter may take a line or verse from the work of an important poet-minstrel, use it in a song, and register it as his or her own work in MESAM. Another young artist might hear a song and claim it as his or her own composition rather than as an arrangement of the collected source. In some cases musicians are trying to avoid royalty fees, while in others they are hoping to appear original (Ulaş Özdemir, interview, June 13, 2014). Ulaş Bey collected and recorded albums of music from his hometown area of Maraş (*Maraş Sinemilli Deyişleri*, Kalan Müzik 1998, and *Bu Dem*, Kalan Müzik 2008) through personal connections to the community and the trust he built by scrupulously crediting the sources from whom he learned *deyiş*. Ulaş Bey and other conscientious musicians view the lack of attribution to known folk poets and musicians as a continuing problem. The privatization of repertoires in the twenty-first century has made it more difficult to find material for new recordings; therefore, personal connections to and the songs learned from true regional sources become all the more valuable.

Acknowledging the author in one's performance is very important. "Even if (the performer) *wasn't* asked he *must* say" (Kalaycioğlu and Öney 2007; italics in original).<sup>15</sup> Among Alevi musicians, permission conventions from oral tradition must also be observed: *dedes* and musicians who are invited to other regions to participate in *cems* or *muhabbets* may not perform the *deyiş* or *semahs* of those regions without express permission from local *dedes* or villages (Gani Pekşen interview, August 16, 2012). This practice is less consistently upheld in urban areas where performances of the *semah*

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<sup>15</sup> From a two-part interview with Divani *Dede* and musician Ulaş Özdemir on the Hasbihal Project (unpaged, electronic source).

include sections from different regions and provinces. I will discuss *semah* performance further in Chapter Five.

There are distinctions between the concept of an arrangement and a composition in Turkish music tradition. As described above, arranged music produced in a recording studio includes new stylistic features while preserving the lyrics, vocal melody and meter of a song. The *aranjör* (arranger) oversees the making of an *aranjman* (arrangement), including the recording process and orchestrating the basic melodies, and also acts as a liaison between sound engineers, studio musicians, and others involved (Bates 2011: 86).<sup>16</sup> A certain amount of originality of interpretation (*özgün bir yorum*) is considered desirable, whereas if the musician plays something with little or no connection to musical material of the past, the piece is considered to be invented (*uydurma*) and therefore not authentic (Markoff 1990: 136).

When Cem *Hoca* added new stylistic features to a piece, he credited his work with the term *düzenleme* (editing, setting, arrangement), both on his albums and on notated music for the *türkü*s and *deyiş* I learned. On occasions when, during a *cem*, İmdat *Dede* played a melody I had not previously heard, I would ask him to identify the source of the music (sometimes the answer would be a person, sometimes a village or region). A few times, he said the music was his (*benim*, literally “mine”), although he never used the term *besteci* (composer) or *beste* (composition), which would indicate that he had created an entirely new musical work. In addition to the title of *dede*, İmdat *Dede* also called himself an *asık*; as such, I believe he was acting more as an arranger, drawing on his knowledge of stock musical material and ornamentation to enhance the melodies of the

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<sup>16</sup> *Aranjör* and *aranjman* are contemporary terms adapted from French.

prayers. The nature and extent of İmdat *Dede*'s musical interpretations and the questions of whether others in his immediate community have conferred the title “*asık*” on him are areas for further investigation.

Since the years of the folklore and folk music collections projects (1923-1940), Turkey has made little effort to acknowledge subsequent generations of its musical tradition bearers, particularly by including the works of living musicians in its archives, or address ways to update the preservation of its folk music—at present, there is no cultural policy in place (Cem Çelebi, personal communication, January, 2015). UNESCO was the organization that named Divani *Dede* a Living Human Treasure in 2013 for carrying on the tradition of his father, Aşık Büryani. Access to Alevi music through the state is limited, since sacred sung poems from the *cem* are not considered to be folk music and few of them are included in official government archives (Bates 2011: 13).<sup>17</sup> Internet websites for Turkish folk music have relatively few musical notations or words for *deyiş*, and even fewer, if any, for *duvaz imam* or other types of sacred sung poems, and Alevi association websites often post the words to prayers, but not musical notation or audio. The process of commercialization has raised the profile of Alevi music, but at the same time has made authentic sources less discernable.

The current dilemmas of crediting sources and authorship in Turkish folk music illustrate the ways that oral traditions evolve or become absorbed into commercial popular music, similar to the situation of flamenco music. Flamenco and Turkish folk music both rely on the elaboration of existing styles combined with soloistic interpretation that de-emphasizes composition. Turkish folk musicians acknowledge a

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<sup>17</sup> Bates further explained that *deyiş* that fit standard poetic meters of *türkü* may be included in the TRT Archive collections (personal communication, January, 2016).

relationship with the past through oral transmission, such that no one can view him or herself as the sole creator of a musical product (Markoff 1986: 151). Within this frame, the term “composition” continues to carry a negative connotation of invention or a separation from that past. In flamenco, the notion of a “song” as recorded by a contemporary performer should be considered “in the sense of elaborating, altering, or refining existing melodies” comparable to an arrangement in Turkish folk music tradition (Manuel 2010: 117).

### The Ensemble in Traditional Music

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the tasteful performance or recording of a traditional music work has greater value than a new composition in Turkish folk music. As revivalist musicians have made accommodations in their arrangements of traditional folk music songs for the sake of revitalization, notions of tradition and innovation change. Ensembles that mix different types of folk instruments—for example, a *bağlama*, *kaval* (vertical flute), and *keman* (spiked fiddle)—have no historical precedent, but became commonplace for the performance of Turkish folk music during the twentieth century.

The use of western and/or non-Turkish instruments is also not unusual— to keep the music lively and interesting for audiences, Mustafa Ozarslan incorporates various percussion instruments and jazz rhythms in his arrangements for singer Sabahat Akkiraz. The album *Aleviler'e* (For Alevis) (Kalan Müzik, 2014), a compilation of traditional Alevi music performed by contemporary interpreters (Erdal and Mercan Erzincan, Musa Eroğlu, and Ali Rıza and Hüseyin Albayrak, among others), features bass guitar, electric guitar, keyboard, and cello, among other western instruments, on several tracks.



These examples illustrate the debate over the future of Turkish folk and Alevi music. On the one hand, staunch preservationists who argue for upholding the foundations of the Turkish folk music system see such innovations as hybrid or violating older musical sensibilities. On the other hand, those who see Alevi music in terms of a revivalist strategy accept that “the music we declare to be ‘authentic’ is the music we ‘appropriate’” (Erol 2008: 111; quotes in original). Albums produced by Kalan and other labels that cater to educated, cosmopolitan Alevi audiences commonly include ensembles of mixed instruments (percussion, strings, and winds) with the belief that they are also maintaining the essence of traditional sound.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter Five I have analyzed and discussed performances of three *deyiş* and one *türkü*. I discussed the difficulties identifying a song as a *deyiş* or *türkü*—in some cases, artistic or marketing decisions are the determining factor, while in other cases, individual interpretation influences the use of the terms. This dilemma is indicative of a musical tradition that has not yet been completely fixed and categorized. I have presented the poetic and musical structures, and the cadence-like formula characteristic of these and many Alevi pieces. All of the performances preserved the essential features of each song—the lyrics, vocal melody and meter—making each version recognizable as the “same” piece of music. Individual registers for tunings, tempo and meter variations, and vamping to connect several songs together were a normal part of performing and likely not noticed by audiences.

Context was an important factor in performance: urban *zakirs* tended to play with a thick accompaniment texture to fill the *cemevi* and move the music forward rhythmically to keep the congregation interested. Professional musicians performing solo or in the recording studio tended to play and sing in a precise manner. İmdat *Dede* 's performance of "Sabahtan Uğradım," with its thin accompaniment texture, revealed the counter melody—otherwise often obscured by rapid multistringed strums—in the *bağlama* part. In an analysis of Divani *Dede* 's recording of "Diktiğimiz Fidanlar," I gave examples *çarpma* and *gırtlak* vocal ornamentation. The *soru-cevap* section of Cem *Hoca* 's arrangement of "Gönül Sana Nasihatim" illustrated the interplay between two complementary melody streams. I conclude that the Alevi music repertoire includes both recognized musical pieces, poetic forms, and musical structures that together, serve as frameworks for oral tradition, similar to that of Uyghur *muqam* (Harris 2008: 78).

I have provided a brief look at surface and hidden meanings in Alevi poetry and its connection to Sufi images. Interpretations of poetry are highly subjective and changeable, but many Alevis find inspiration in *deyiş* and revere the dervish-lodge poets whose works circulated from the fifteenth century onward.

The current dilemmas of ownership and authorship in Turkish folk music illustrate the ways that oral traditions are both evolving and being absorbed into commercial popular music production. Young Turkish musicians often copyright their own songs using folkloric material without acknowledging source information or conducting research to be sure of sources. In addition, Turkish (and Alevi) folk music and musicians are faced with commercial music trends and popular tastes. The debate continues regarding preservation and change in Turkish folk and Alevi music:

preservationists see many contemporary musical innovations as hybrid or violating older musical sensibilities, while revivalists redefine what is authentic and appropriate. Now that I have provided a sense of some types of Alevi music and their features, I contextualize them by discussing the *cem* and its music in Chapter Six, and other venues and music events in Chapter Seven.

## CHAPTER SIX MUSICAL COMMUNITY AND THE CEM

This chapter presents Alevi beliefs as practiced in urban areas—Istanbul and Ankara—and small towns in Turkey’s Black Sea region—Çorum and Fatsa. Music is so central to the series of rituals that constitute the *cem* that it is described by Divani *Dede* as *olmazsa olmazı* (indispensable) (education meeting, January 22, 2013), and Binali Doğan *Dede* (hereafter Binali *Dede*) says that beautiful music is needed to reach the creator (*yaratana’la ulaşmak için güzel müzik. . . gerek*) (Interview, January 4, 2014). I also illustrate the ways that *duvaz imam* and *deyis*, analyzed in the previous chapter, are incorporated into the service.

Frequenting three *cemevis* in Istanbul over the course of my research gave me the opportunity to observe similarities and differences in the practices and attitudes of the different communities, and led me to consider music’s role in creating a spiritual atmosphere more carefully. I talked with administrators and *dedes* about music and worship and about the neighborhoods where the congregations lived, and also tried to compare the ways that the *dedes* conducted the *cem* and the *zakirs* performed the music. My analysis of these factors follows ethnographic descriptions of worship services later in the chapter. I compare the practitioners of large, urban *cemevis* to those at a small, grass-roots association in Ankara, and to Alevi communities in the small towns of Çorum and Fatsa near the Black Sea.

Most Alevis prefer the Turkish word *inanç* (belief) to *din* (religion). *Dedes* whom I interviewed explained that they associate *din* (the same word in Arabic) with backwardness and ritual by rote—the way they view (Sunni) Muslim practice in the

“Arab world.” As discussed in Chapter Three, this view conflates Sunni Muslim majority practices, including those in Turkey, with Arab-language countries and is part of an Alevi perception of being outsiders. As mentioned previously, I use the term “*Alevilik*” instead of “Alevism” since Turkish scholars associate “-ism” with Western constructs. I begin the chapter with a basic explanation of Alevi beliefs and practices.

## INTRODUCTION TO *ALEVILIK*

Alevis are followers of Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammed, and consider Ali, Muhammed, and Allah to be three aspects of spiritual unity.<sup>1</sup> They revere the *Ehl-i beyt* (the household of Muhammed), including Ali and Muhammed’s daughter, Fatima, who is also Ali’s wife.<sup>2</sup> Ali is the first of twelve *İmams* who are worshipped and incorporated into the liturgy of the cem. Like the so-called Twelver sect of Shi’ite Islam, Alevis believe that the Twelve *İmams* are the spiritual and political successors to the Prophet Muhammed. Alevis recognize the Qur’an as one of four sacred texts, along with the Torah (Tevrat), the Gospel (İncil), and the Psalms (Kitabı Mukaddes’teki Mezmurlar).<sup>3</sup>

Similar to Western humanist thought, *Alevilik* emphasizes accountability and the actions of individuals. Alevis regard the five pillars of Islam espoused by Sunni Muslims to be an external display rather than a genuine belief, which is a private matter between

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<sup>1</sup> The Alevi concept is different from that of the Christian trinity.

<sup>2</sup> *Ana* (literally “mother”) is a term of respect given to the wife of a *dede* or *İmam*.

<sup>3</sup> ([http://www.hacibektas.com/index.php?id=ana\\_sayfa](http://www.hacibektas.com/index.php?id=ana_sayfa) Accessed September 4, 2014).

God and man.<sup>4</sup> The main watchword for Alevi ethical practice is “*eline, diline, beline sahip ol*” (be the master of your hands, tongue, and loins); that is, no stealing, lying, or committing adultery. Alevi tenets include the frequently quoted teachings of historic leaders, among them Hacı-Bektaş, their patron saint and founder of the Bektaşî dervish order, to whom the maxims “*Bilimden gidilmeyen yolun sonu karanlıktır*” (a road that does not follow science leads to darkness) and “*Kadınları okutunuz*” (educate your women) are attributed.

The Alevi spiritual journey is a continuous striving for self-improvement, as represented by the term *İnsan-ı Kâmil*, an honorific title for the Prophet Muhammed that also means “the person who has reached perfection.”<sup>5</sup> To accomplish this perfection one must reach a pure state of consciousness and be free of the distractions of the senses and the material world. “*Yol bir sürek binbir*” translates as “one path, one thousand ways” (to reach the state of complete acceptance of Allah, Muhammed and Ali). Declaring “*yoldayım*” (I am on the path) or “*yol evladım*” (I am a child of the path) is a common phrase among believers.

The Alevi *cem* is a ritual with twelve sections integrating sung poetry, music, and semah (sacred dance movements). The *dede* presides over the *cem* and directs a group of men and women who are assigned specific roles to carry out during the service; for example, bringing food to be blessed by the *dede*, or lighting lights. Participants are called on to execute their duties at different times in the service; collectively they are referred to as *oniki hizmet* (twelve duties). Additionally, each role is associated with one

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<sup>4</sup> The five pillars are testimony of faith, prayer five times per day, giving alms, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca in one’s lifetime.

<sup>5</sup> *İnsan-ı Kâmil* is an important concept in Islamic theology (*al-Insan al-Kamil* in Arabic).

of the twelve *İmams*. A *cemevi* often incorporates the number twelve in structural and decorative features. The Şahkulu Sultan Dervish Lodge in Göztepe, Istanbul, has a twelve-sided *cem* salon with a central pillar from which twelve ceiling arches fan out, and twelve lights around the middle of the pillar.



Figure 6.1 Assistants executing the *semah* at the Ayazağa *cemevi*



Figures 6.2 and 6.3 Central pillar in the *cem salonu*, Şahkulu Sultan Dergâhı

In Islamic tradition, Friday, the holiest day of the week, begins on Thursday evening since religious observances are kept from sundown to sundown. Urban *cemevis* also hold weekly worship services on Thursday nights, although in rural areas *cems* are held on Friday evenings (Markoff 1990-1991: 47).<sup>6</sup> *Cems* are performed during religious festivals such as Nevruz (arrival of spring), and also have other functions such as the *görgü cemi* (literally, good manners; also called a *halk mahkemesi*, or people's court), held in order to settle community disputes within the community. A *musahiplik cemi*, a ceremony of ritual kinship, joins pairs of non-related males or couples to provide mutual encouragement and moral guidance.

Muharrem, the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar is a time of mourning for Alevi and Shia Muslims who remember the martyrdom of Hüseyin, the third of the twelve *İmams*, in the Battle of Karbala. Very observant Alevi do not shave or cut their

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<sup>6</sup> Since the publication of Markoff's article, this practice may be changing in rural areas.



hair during the first ten days of the month. Verbal and musical conversations about *Alevilik* substitute for the execution of some or all of the twelve parts of the *cem*. The *dede* may give an instructional talk and take questions from congregation members. The sacred movements, *semah*, that express the height of spiritual joy and complete the main portion of the *cem*, are not performed, and according to older practices “the instruments are tied up in silence and respect to commemorate the martyrdom of Hüseyin during the first twelve days of the month (Markoff 2002: 796). In my experience at urban *cemevis* during Muharrem, although the *semah* was not included, there was music—*zakirs* and congregation members performed *deyiş* (mystical songs) and *mersiye* (laments).

The musician, variously called *zakir*, *aşık*, or *sazende*, is seated to the right of the *dede* (from the congregation’s point of views) and accompanies him/herself on the *bağlama*.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 6.4 The *post*—the sheepskin on which the *dede* sits, Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı

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<sup>7</sup> The *post* refers to the sheepskin on which the officiating *dede* sits, symbolizing his ultimate authority during the *cem*. Veliyettin Ulusoy *Dede* currently holds the position of authority inherited directly from St. Hacı-Bektaş.

The *zakir* is one of the twelve roles necessary to carry out the *cem*, but at the same time, he or she is considered paramount because of the centrality of music. It is the musician's duty to evoke the congregations' emotions and involvement. There are frequent references by Alevi poets to the musician as the nightingale (*bülbül*) of the *cem*: for example, in Pir Sultan Abdal's (1480-1556) poem "Ayn-î Cemin Bülbülüym" (I am the Nightingale of the Cem). Like the other ritual participants, the *zakir* is a volunteer and is not compensated for his or her performance. Professional musicians—those who make their living as performers—who may perform at a *cem* do so as a service to the community. In Chapter Seven, I will discuss a variety of performing contexts, and amateur and professional musicians in greater detail.

As previously mentioned, the urban *cemevi* is a large, multi-story building with a social hall, kitchen and dining facilities, offices and meeting rooms, and a *cem salonu* (assembly hall), thus providing a permanent space reserved for worship and community activities that did not previously exist. As the first public *cemevis* were established in the 1990s, so were positions for institutional *dedes*, as well as for volunteer boards and administrative staff. Some *dedes* moved permanently with their families to a city while others returned periodically to their villages in Anatolia, where their families remained. For the first six years of his tenure, Binali *Dede*, the current spiritual leader at Erikli Baba Kültür Derneği ve Cem Evi (Father Erikli Culture Association and Assembly House), lived and worked at the *cemevi* until his wife could join him in Istanbul to look for an apartment. Zeynal Şahan *Dede* (hereafter *Zeynal Dede*), also from Erzincan, helped to found the Kağıthane Hacı-Bektaş Veli Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği (Kağıthane St. Haji

Bektash Education and Culture Association) in 1994, and has been its president and senior spiritual leader since then.

Traditionally, *dedes* in rural Anatolia were paid something for performing a ceremony, often with in-kind contributions of food or other goods, but did not earn a regular salary for their services. Many had day jobs, and even today many urban *dedes* must work to support their families until retirement—only some are salaried employees of large associations or foundations.<sup>8</sup> Before describing the sequence of the typical urban *cem*, it is useful to understand the twelve roles assigned to the assistants and the types of musical pieces included in the service.

### The Urban Cem

The *cem* is often described in Western scholarship as having twelve parts, but more often *dedes* and scholars of *Alevilik* designate twelve ceremonial roles with special *görevler* (duties) or *hizmetler* (services) for the assistants. The following is a list of the twelve roles based on my observations and interviews at the three *cemevis* I frequented, and on a book of the worship service written by Binali *Dede* (2013) while he was the institutional spiritual leader at the Okmeydanı branch of the Hacı-Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (St. Haji-Bektash Anatolia Culture Foundation):

1. *Dede* (spiritual leader) – the main officiator of the *cem*; a *Mürşit* or *Pir* (types of spiritual masters) may also be present
2. *Rehber* (guide) *dede*'s assistant
3. *Zakir* (musician) – sings and plays the *bağlama*
4. *Gözcü* (watchman or manager) – keeps order and silence, seats latecomers

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Bektaş Ermiş *Dede* at the Kağıthane *cemevi* previously worked for Türk Telecom, and currently sells water-filtering equipment. İmdat Çelebi *Dede* teaches *bağlama* and directs the Çem Çelebi Music School.

5. *Çırağcı* (light keeper) –lights candles or electric lights symbolizing Allah, Muhammed, and Ali
6. *Süpürgeci* (sweeper) – in charge of ritual carpet sweeping (usually three women assistants)
7. *Tezekâr* (ewer keeper) – offers a pitcher of water, basin, and towel for washing and drying the *dede*'s hands (usually two assistants)
8. *Kapıcı* (doorkeeper) – in charge of guarding the door
9. *Kurbanacı* – (sacred food keeper) offers food to be blessed then distributed to community
10. *İznikçi* (shoe keeper) – in charge of guarding the shoes of the *cem* attendees
11. *Sakkacı* – (water carrier) distributes water in remembrance of İmam Hüseyin
12. *Peyikci* – in charge of announcing the *cem*



Figure 6.5 Assistants who wash and dry the *dede*'s hands  
Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı, Okmeydanı

Lists of the twelve roles can vary depending on different eras, regional practices, and *dedes*' preferences. For example, Binali *Dede*'s book on Alevi worship lists *mürşit* and *pir* as separate roles, but does not include the *dede*. Additionally, the *zakir* does not appear in his list, although that role is described in detail in the text following the list (2013: 18-21). Sometimes the *semahçı* (ritual dance performers) are listed as a separate

role, although this is currently less common. For other lists of the twelve roles and descriptions of traditional *cems*, the reader is referred to Korkmaz (2003: 91-99), Tur (2002: 325-420), Yaman (1998), and Sökefeld (2008: 148-152).

It is important to mention that *Alevilik* promotes the equality of women in some ways but not in others. Although men and women worship together in the *cem*, and women are encouraged in education and career building, only a few of the roles listed above are performed by either men or women, including those of the musician, the light keeper, the sweeper, and the sacred dancer. A man and woman together carry the basin, ewer, and towel to wash and dry the *dede*'s hands. In my observations of urban *cems*, the only role that men consistently do not participate in was the role of the sweeper. I was prompted to ask more about women's roles in worship when a Turkish friend showed me a video of a woman officiating at a *cem*. When I asked about female *dedes*, I was told that there are none but that an *ana* could carry out a *cem* in the *dede*'s absence (Zeynal Dede, interview, December 19, 2013). This situation speaks to a more limited kind of equality between men and women in *Alevilik* than might otherwise be assumed. Women are often given the jobs of cleaning and cooking in *cemevis*, but few participate on the administrative boards of Alevi associations. not only in Turkey but also in continental Europe (Erdemir 2004: 102-7; Kaya n.d.).

The music of the urban *cem* includes different types of sung poetry. As seen from examples in Chapter Five, *deyiş* contain thought-provoking verses, commentary on perceptions of the world, advice, and criticism and provide an invitation to self-examination and improvement. They are most often played just before the *cem* begins, setting the mood for worship or, less often, after the conclusion of the worship service to

extend the mood of unity. The core types of musical prayers and hymns of the *cem* include *duvaz imams* (honoring the Twelve Īmams), *miraçlamas* (telling the story of Muhammed’s ascent to heaven), *ilahis* (hymns with a special repeated refrain), *tevhids* (hymns of unity), *mersiyes* (laments), and *semahs* (hymns that accompany sacred ritual movements).<sup>9</sup> The sequence of recited and sung prayers, blessings, hymns, and finally, *semah* movements, builds spiritual feeling among the congregation, and prepares them to experience unity with God. The integration of music, poetry, and dance is referred to as *âyîn*, similar to the Mevlevi Sufi ceremony for the common practice of “singing mystical poetry to metrical compositions arranged in cyclical form within a single *maqam* (musical scale)” (Feldman 1996: 85).

Similar to the Alevi *cem*, the presence of cyclical sung poetry, accompanied by the *tanbur*, is crucial in the rituals of the Ahl-I Haqq of Iran. The musical repertoire is considered to be a vehicle through which congregation members can approach “experiencing the divine really and ultimately the presence of Sultan” (God) (Hooshmandrad 2004: 354). While the goal of ritual for Ahl-I Haqq is the manifestation of the divine presence in sacred food; for the Alevis blessed food is one of the twelve parts of the ritual.

There were often small variations in the music, poetry and prayers at a given *cemevi* or between those at different locations. *Zakirs* could play regional melodies or those learned from their families to accompany the poetry. The *miraçlama* could be sung or narrated with accompaniment. At the *cems* I observed, *dedes* often had a preference for a particular part of the multi-sectioned *duvaz imam*, the number of *tevhids* performed, or

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<sup>9</sup> The refrain of the *ilahis* is the same as that of the Sufi *tahlil* formula “la ilahe illallah” (literally, there is no God but Allah; the Islamic profession of faith) (Markoff 2002: 795).

a particular *ilahi*. Selections of *deyiş* and *devriyes* (mystical songs about existence) were more likely to vary each week than the other types mentioned above. Much of the poetry in use at urban *cemevis* is attributed to Şah Hatayî (the pen name for Shah Ismail).

### Comparing Urban and Rural Practices

Below is a summary of the procedures and music of the urban *cem* based on my regular attendance at the Kağıthane and Okmeydanı *cemevis*, and at those conducted by İmdat *Dede* at the Esenyurt and Ayazağa *cemevis*. Musical pieces (some are indicated by types of sung poetry and others are titles of pieces) are highlighted in bold italics to show both where they occur in the service and the quantity of music performed. As the *cem* progresses, the amount of music generally increases in proportion to spoken prayers, although short responses continue throughout the service. There is no standardized view on when the the *cem* proper begins or ends—some *dedes* include the instructional talk about *Alevilik*, while others say it begins with the first *deyiş*—but it invariably includes the execution of the twelve roles, and all *dedes* agree that the *semah* is the culminating event. The *cem* actually continues with the retelling of the killing of İmam Hüseyin and his family at Karbala, the final blessing of the assistants, distributing *lokma* (blessed food) such as cookies and fruit, and the *dede*'s closing remarks. There are also no standardized titles for the prayers. For example, Binali *Dede* called one prayer “Çırağ Uyandırma” (one of the lines in the poem) whereas İmdat *Dede* referred to the same prayer as “*delil duvaz*.” Sometimes, prayers are referred to by the first line of verse, like that of a *deyiş* or *türkü*. After the summary of *cem* procedures I observed I compare these with procedures in rural *cems*.

*Dede* gives an instructional talk about *Alevilik*.

***deyiş*** performed by the *zakir*.

Congregation kisses each other's cheeks to show harmony.

***hizmeti çağırısı*** – calling assistants to center.

Watchman and doorkeeper go to center.

Assistant brings tray of food to center.

Three women (sweepers) sweep the center.

Man and woman (ewer keepers) bring basin and towel to wash and dry *dede*'s hands.

Assistant lights one light each for Allah, Muhammed, and Ali.

***“Çirağ Uyandırma”*** – awakening to the light of the prophets.

Two assistants spread out the cloth that represents the center.

Congregation asks for forgiveness from Allah.

***duvaz imam*** – start of multi-sectioned prayer to Twelve İmams.

e.g., ***“Medet Allah Medet”*** – appeal to Allah for help.

e.g., ***“Gel Dertlere Derman Eyle”*** – asks for cure for pain.

***tevhid*** – hymn of unity – refrain is *la ilahe illallah*.

***miraçlama*** – story of Muhammed's ascent to heaven.

3 ***semah*** sections – usually *Kırklar* (*semah* of 40) is first.

*Cem* proper concludes with end of *semah* and blessing those participants.

***“Bugün Matem”*** – lament for *İmam Hüseyin*.

In loosely reverse order, the assistants mentioned above (except the ewer keepers) perform their duties once more and the three lights are extinguished.

The assistants form a circle at the center—the *zakir* stays in his seat near the *dede* but is included in the *dede*'s final blessing.

In earlier times in rural areas, the *dede* was empowered by the community to act as legal, moral, and spiritual authority, and the performance of the *cem* reaffirmed both the social and spiritual harmony of the community. The ritual began with a communal meal, followed by the resolution of community disputes and a worship service; once it began, the *cem* was sealed (no one could leave or enter and the watchman or doorkeeper kept guard) until the conclusion of all events. Before proceeding, the community was asked three times and gave verbal consent three times—*rızayız* (we consent)—to confer authority on the *dede* to preside over the *cem*. The people's court facilitated the resolution of disputes and ill feelings among the community. Those who were involved in conflicts or accused of wrongdoing were obliged to come to the *meydan* (center area) to be



questioned.<sup>10</sup> Compensations or punishments were discussed between the *dede* and the congregation, and in order for the *cem* to continue the congregation and all parties in the dispute had to agree to the terms of the resolution (Sökefeld 2008: 149).

The most salient difference between the practices I observed in urban *cems* and those in written accounts of traditional rural *cems* is the absence of the people's court as a part of the ritual. In small, close-knit communities, *dedes* served as both spiritual leaders and legal authorities, but lost much of this authority through urban migration that separated *dedes* from their former communities, and the establishment of a modern legal system as part of the nation state. Moreover, life in large urban areas does not require the kind of social harmony necessary to function in small villages where people interacted with each other in multiple ways on a daily basis. In March, 2014, I had a rare opportunity to attend a court *cem*, discussed in a later section of the chapter.

In each of the three urban *cemevis*, Okmeydanı, Kağıthane, and Esenyurt, *dedes* asked for consent and harmony among the congregation before proceeding with the *cem*. We kissed the shoulders or the cheeks of our closest neighbors. At a *cem* at the Erikli Baba dervish lodge, where Binali *Dede* now officiates, the congregation recited “*rızayız*” three times, similar to older, rural practice.

Other rural procedures such as the communal meal, the sealing of the *cem* once it begins, and the exclusion of children, have also changed in urban areas. After the weekly service at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*, we ate a hot meal of lamb and bulgur in the social hall, while at the Kağıthane and Esenyurt *cemevis* blessed food called *lokma* (literally, “mouthful”), such as cookies and fruit, was distributed at the end of the service. An urban

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<sup>10</sup> *Meydan* means town square or plaza and represents the public space where the truth must be told and disputes are resolved.

*cem* is not sealed—people arrive after the service has begun, and may leave the salon to take a break. The average duration of the services I attended was two to two-and-a-half hours, compared to several hours as described in Sökefeld’s account. Unlike rural customs of the past, parents occasionally bring their young children to *cems* even though their behavior can be disruptive. Perhaps *dedes* in urban locales are more tolerant of a certain amount of disruption because of a contemporary focus on educating young Alevi and a desire to avoid alienating parents who make time to attend *cems* but bring their young children with them.

Several contacts with whom I spoke view a number of procedures in large *cemevis* as the result of urbanization. First, the weekly *cem* with its execution of all twelve roles is a construction of the urban environment; as previously mentioned, *cems* in rural areas were convened as needed. In addition, Okan Murat Öztürk, Turkish music scholar at the State Conservatory of Başkent University, Ankara, believes that the congregation members are now passive spectators rather than active participants, and that the *cem* has become a social rather than a spiritual event (Interview, February 18, 2014).<sup>11</sup> My experience revealed that this is not true for all urban Alevi congregations: I witnessed two different levels of participation at the Okmeydanı and Kağıthane *cemevis*, as my ethnographic accounts illustrate.

Two spiritual leaders not associated with urban *cemevis*, Yusuf Başaran *Dede* from Malatya, who is studying ethnomusicology at Istanbul Technical University, and Divani *Dede*, a well-known musician and spiritual leader originally from Urfa, believe

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<sup>11</sup> It is possible that the congregation at the Okmeydanı *cemevi* attends the service in part because of the meal served at the end. Later in the chapter I will discuss attendance at urban *cemevis* and social troubles in the Okmeydanı neighborhood.

that asking forgiveness from God is a recent addition to the *cem* and represents an aspect of assimilation to Sunni Muslim practice. According to them, God is inside and inseparable from each human being and thus does not require repentance. In their perception of *Alevilik*, God does not judge us. If you hurt another person you take his or her *hak* (rightful share to peace, to contentment, to one's possessions, and to conducting one's life), so you must ask forgiveness from that person.<sup>12</sup>

### Altering the Basic Cem

In addition to the small variations previously discussed, the *cem* may also be altered depending on the situation. At the Kağıthane *cemevi*, a *sohbet* (conversation) about Alevi beliefs filled the time until the *dede* entered the salon to begin the *cem*, whereas this did not always take place at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*. At any *cem*, a *dede* may choose to discuss the meaning and symbolism of some parts of the service rather than carrying them out, although the core parts *tevhid*, *miraçlama*, and *semah* were usually executed in sequence.

Guest officiators may perform additional *deyiş* and other sung poetry. Well-known musician Tolga Sağ (hereafter *Tolga Bey*), director of Istanbul's Arif Sağ Music School founded by his father, performed at the Hacı-Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (St. Hadji-Bektash Anatolia Cultural Foundation) in Okmeydanı in April 2014. *Tolga Bey* played several *deyiş* (one of which was analyzed in Chapter Five), then joined the regular *zakir*, Turan Tandoğan, in playing some of the hymns during the service. When Mustafa Temel *Dede*, a famous leader from Tokat, was invited to officiate at the Nevruz (New

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<sup>12</sup> The term in Sharia law is *tawba* (Arabic), the act of atoning for one's misdeeds. It is rendered into Turkish as *tövbe*. In mainstream Islam only Allah can grant forgiveness.

Year) *cems* in March 2013 at the Hubyar Alevi community's Sultan Ana Cemevi in Çorum, several additional hymns were performed by the *aşıks*, presumably to showcase the community's local talent.<sup>13</sup>

The presence of outsiders can also affect the length of a *cem*. When journalists or university professors came to photograph or make video recordings of a *cem* I was attending, I noticed that more *deyiş* were performed by the *zakirs*, and a wider variety of *semah* sections were included than on nights with no visitors. On two occasions, women at the Okmeydanı *cemevi* wore their regional clothing to the service when journalists and researchers were recording the event—I believe it was not a coincidence. I discovered my own effect on the services led by İmdat *Dede*, who mentioned that on several occasions they executed all twelve parts of the service in Esenyurt “because you were there.”



Figure 6.6 Kıymet Tekin wearing handmade traditional garments from Sivas Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı, Okmeydanı

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<sup>13</sup> This Hubyar community refers to its musicians as *aşıks* but the term *zakir* may also be used (see Andrews and Temel 2011: 297).

## THE IDEAL SPIRITUAL *CEM* AND TWO *CEMEVI* EXPERIENCES

All of the *dedes* I spoke with were far more concerned about their congregations experiencing the joy of unity with God, and opening their hearts to be able to crying for İmam Hüseyin, than in viewing the *cem* as a set of procedures to carry out. An ideal *cem* for them might indeed be very close to the description related to me in an interview with Zeynal *Dede*, the president of the Kağıthane *cemevi*. His thoughts are summarized below:

If you pay attention to the *semah*, it comes at the end of the *cem*, not so? These are the reasons for that. First, we have *muhabbetler* [conversations] that clarify people's questions about *Alevilik*; this creates a rapport to go to the spiritual world. Then people declare they are in agreement with each other, in *tevhid* [unity]. They ask for forgiveness. Confession/repentance is the first station. You leave earthly emotions behind. The penitents perform *secde* [prostrate themselves in prayer]. The *saz* plays a *devriye* [a mystical poem about existence], the enthusiasm begins, and people begin the *cem* with their souls and bodies together with prayers to the [Twelve] İmams, followed by the *tevhid* [hymn of unity]. Then the *miraç* [*miraçlama* – Muhammed's ascent to heaven] starts, that is, it comes from people themselves like a trance and each person feels like he is the only person there. At the peak he thinks and feels only God— nothing else—the creator himself. At the end of the ascent, with such a big love the soul has a spiritual expansion. The *semah* brings out a feeling of *aşkile yanma* [burning with love]. It is love together with the creator. It is performed at the end of the *cem* because this is the peak of worship. People prepare, their emotions expand and grow, and at the end, there is a volcanic explosion of sentiment and emotion, of being caught up in the feelings. This is the *semah*. At this moment people are unconstrained. (Interview, December 19, 2013).

The following two sections present a description and analysis of the worship services at two *cemevis* in Istanbul: the Kağıthane Hacı-Bektaş Veli Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı (Kağıthane St. Hacı-Bektaş Culture and Education Foundation) in the Nurtepe neighborhood of Kağıthane, and the Hacı-Bektaş Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (St. Hacı-Bektaş Anatolia Culture Foundation), in Okmeydanı (the two *cemevis* have similar names but are different associations). Hereafter, these two *cemevi* will be referred to as the Kağıthane *cemevi* and the Okmeydanı *cemevi*, respectively. With very different atmospheres and

levels of community participation in the two worship services, these accounts illustrate a range of current Alevi practices and also problematize the efforts of *dedes* to serve the community's spiritual needs in urban environments.

A friend from the music conservatory at Istanbul Technical University introduced me to the *dedes* and members of the congregation at the Kağıthane *cemevi*. Their welcoming attitude toward a researcher and non-Alevi encouraged me to arrive early before the *cem* to sit and talk over cups of tea with other women in social hall. During many weeks of making audio and video recordings of *cems* (using a small digital recorder, my cell phone, and a small camera on a tripod on my last few visits) and writing in a small notebook, I was asked only once “What are you writing?” and immediately showed my notes and explained my work. The involvement of the *dedes*, assistants, and congregation during the *cem* drew me in to the music, singing, and heart-patting motions, but I tried to maintain a balance between experiencing and documenting the service—remembering to start a new track on my audio recorder for the next hymn or periodically take photos and movies. I documented the service while sitting with other congregation members on the carpet, since I felt it was inappropriate for me to get up to take close-ups of individuals' faces or behaviors as I saw several Turkish journalist-photographers do at other *cems*.

When I heard İmdat *Dede* mention that the Okmeydanı *cemevi* was a “*radikal*” place, I went there to see what he meant.<sup>14</sup> Fortunately, I met right away with Binali *Dede*, who was happy to explain *Alevilik* to an outsider. In the course of interviews and

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<sup>14</sup> *Radikal* is the Turkish rendering of “radical,” meaning both extensive and revolutionary, but İmdat *Dede*'s expression may have referred more to the neighborhood as a site of political demonstrations rather than to the *cemevi* itself.

conversations I did not find anything extreme with regard to worship practices or observe that members of the *cemevi* itself were involved in protest activities, but the neighborhood was the scene of several clashes with police (described later in this chapter). Documenting the *cems* here presented different challenges from those at the Kağıthane *cemevi*. The small salon was often quite crowded, which made it more difficult to keep my equipment well positioned or take photos and movies over the heads of congregation members. Very few people arrived early to chat, so it was more difficult to I develop relationships with congregation members. As much as possible, I tried to do what the congregation did: at the Kağıthane *cemevi* this meant and singing along with prayers and hymns as I became familiar with them and moving in time to the music, while at the Okmeydanı *cemevi* this meant a much lower level of participation.

The Kağıthane *cemevi* January 2, 2014



Figure 6.7 Kağıthane *cem salonu*

The *cem salonu* at the Kağıthane *cemevi* is the largest and most richly decorated of the three places I have regularly attended; Zeynal *Dede* thinks it can hold one thousand people. Two sets of carved double doors open into an enormous room covered in thick, claret-colored carpet, with gold runners leading to a large circle in the center of the floor. Made of highly polished, inlaid wood with twelve alternating light and dark sections symbolizing the Twelve *İmams*, this *meydan* sits just in front of the cushion-lined, raised platform where the *dedes* and other officiators sit. Behind it is a large painting in three sections of the twelve *İmams* dressed in black robes and green hoods flanked by paintings of the sun and the moon. At the center of the dodecagon-shaped ceiling, there is a large chandelier and twelve wooden beams radiating from it. Along the back wall of the salon are cushioned benches for those who have difficulty sitting on the floor. Some *cemevis* provide cushions for participants who sit on the floor, but the thick carpeting here makes them unnecessary. The shades of the wood and color scheme reflect a warm, inviting



space in which to worship. On either side of the cushioned platform are audio monitors for the *zakirs* to plug in their *bağlamas*.

The *cem salonu* on the third floor is brightly lit on this January evening. My eyes are immediately drawn to the intense colors of the plush carpet, and the painting of the İmams. It looks warm and inviting in the salon, but without central heating the room is cold. Because all must remove their shoes before entering the room, some of the older attendees have brought blankets and thick knitted socks so they will stay warm during the *cem* that will last nearly three hours. They are still wearing their coats and heavy sweaters when I enter. Most of the women wear brightly colored floral headscarves, and many of the men wear newsboy caps. As I set up my recording equipment near the *meydan*, I count about twenty people sitting on cushioned benches along the back wall.

As we wait for the *cem* to begin an older man with a gray mustache gives a recitation from the Qur'an while more people enter the salon, stop to kiss the doorframe three times, then find seats on the carpet. Some go to the *meydan* to perform *secde*, a prayer posture in which they kneel and touch their heads to the floor, then kiss their hands three times, and touch them to their foreheads. Assistants gather the ritual objects and test the three lights representing Allah, Muhammed, and Ali. The *zakir* tunes his *bağlama* and checks his microphone and amplifier. In the moments before the *dede* arrives, the congregation members and the Qur'an reciter have a brief conversation about Alevilik. More assistants arrive and tie green ribbons around their waists as they take their places around the *meydan*.

As Bektaş Ermiş *Dede* (hereafter Bektaş *Dede*) enters the room with other officiators, the watchman calls out “*marifet geliyor*” (the [one with] spiritual knowledge

is coming), and we all stand as they move to the *meydan*, perform *secde* facing the painting of the twelve *İmams*, then greet each other and settle themselves on cushions on the platform facing the congregation. After Bektaş *Dede*'s talk about sharing and brotherhood, Erdoğan *Bey* begins to sing a *deyiş*. His amplified voice and *bağlama* fill the large room and set the atmosphere for the evening's worship. Immediately following is the hymn that calls the assistants by their roles, one by one, to the *meydan* where they form a circle, standing with their right hands over their hearts, heads bowed, and their feet together, right toes covering the left toes.<sup>1</sup> They are blessed by Bektaş *Dede* and return to their seats along the edge of the *meydan*. Then the first three parts of the *cem* are completed; two assistants present and unfold a cloth symbolizing the *post*; two assistants holding a basin and towel wash and dry each others' hands and then the *dede*'s hands; and three electric lights are turned on one at a time, for Allah, Muhammed, and Ali. Each part is accompanied by Bektaş *Dede*'s blessings and responses from the congregation.

In the next hymn about the *İmams* who are the guiding lights in Alevilik, Erdoğan *Bey* strums the *bağlama* with conviction, his baritone voice punching out the words and refrains. The music draws people into the spirit of the *cem*, and they begin to pat their hearts with their right hands and their left knees with their left hands in time to the beat. Bektaş *Dede* stands with his eyes closed and sways in time, calling out “*aşkile*” (with love) to the congregation, exhorting them to say the name of Allah during this prayer and the blessings that follow. Then three female assistants chant the blessings for the

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<sup>1</sup> The placement of the feet is called *mühür*, rendered into Turkish as “seal.” There is a story told about Fatima, Muhammed's daughter, who bumped her toe against a stone while bringing water to her father. She covered the bleeding wound with the other toe when she came before Muhammed to give him the water. A posture of respect and modesty, *mühür* symbolizes the idea that the relationship between *dedes* and their *talips* (seekers) is equal to that of Muhammed and Fatima.

*süpürgeci* (sweeper) while one of them sweeps the *meydan* with a broom. The *gözcü* (watchman) and the *kurbancı* (sacred food keeper) bring a tray of fruit to be blessed by the *dede*.

The *duvaz imam*, a long, sung prayer with several sections, begins. The assistants sitting around the *meydan* and the congregation start to sway forward and back while continuing the heart patting, knee patting, and singing. The leaders on the platform also move in time to the music, their eyes closed. Without pausing, Erdoğan *Bey* starts another section of the *duvaz imam*—an appeal to *Hazreti Allah* (His holiness, or exalted) and *Hazreti Ali* for help. The congregation sings louder and louder, repeating the name of Allah continuously in the refrain. Erdoğan *Bey*'s singing and strumming seem louder to me too, and the room is full of the motion of the community. I join them in swaying, patting and singing. At the end of this section we perform *secde* to Bektaş *Dede*'s blessings.

The next hymn begins in an even faster tempo, and the assistants call out “*Allah Allah, Y’Ali Hü!*” in between the verses.<sup>2</sup> Erdoğan *Bey*'s intense delivery continues—the next section is faster still. Everyone becomes even more physically animated, patting their hearts and legs harder, swaying intently as they sing. Bektaş *Dede* calls out “*aşkile*” (with love) and “*Hû, Hü, Hü.*” As I look around the room I see that some in the congregation have closed their eyes or are staring, not moving, seemingly rapt in the moment of worship. After a quick pause for *secde*, Erdoğan *Bey* momentarily slows the tempo of the *ilahi* (sacred hymn) “*Bugün Bize Pir Geldi*” (Today a Spiritual Master Came to Us), but after only a few verses, he suddenly increases the tempo again and begins to

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<sup>2</sup> “*Hû*” (literally, “he”): the act of saying the name of God aloud during worship, as in “Oh Lord.”

play the music of the *tevhid* (unity)—the moment in Alevi worship that unites all beings into one with the universe. Bektaş *Dede* calls out to feel love for Allah, and the community sings the refrain “*la ilahe illallah.*” My own senses are firing intensely; I see the bright colors in the room, my ears are full of Erdoğan *Bey*’s animated playing and singing, and I feel a tingling sensation in my torso because I have been patting my heart along with the others—it all has a hypnotic, compelling effect.

Erdoğan *Bey* begins the *miraçlama*, calling out in short, declamatory phrases each part of the Prophet Muhammed’s ascent to heaven. We stand and act out some parts of the story in gestures. Immediately following the *miraçlama*, all the assistants stand and perform the *semah*, quickly moving in a circle around the *meydan*. The first section is in moderate tempo; tonight it is the *Kırklar semahı*—the turning of the forty saints. The two subsequent sections increase in tempo and we watch as the assistants step and turn in a continuous circle; their movements are in sync with each other. This is the peak of worship, the volcanic explosion of sentiment and emotion that Zeynal *dede* described. They turn quickly and call out “*Hû Allah*” after each of Erdoğan *Bey*’s sung phrases. Suddenly the assistants stop turning, gather in a semi-circle in front of the *dede* where they are blessed, and return to their seats around the *meydan*.

The *cem* proper is concluded and the service continues with the remembrance of *İmam Hüseyin*. To Erdoğan *Bey*’s *bağlama* accompaniment, Bektaş *Dede* narrates the story of the battle of Karbala and Hüseyin’s martyrdom, his voice rising and falling with the drama of the action.<sup>3</sup> We call out “*Ya, Hüseyin*” (Oh, Hüseyin). Then Erdoğan *Bey*

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<sup>3</sup> In 680 A.D. the Umayyad caliph Yazid I defeated the *İmam Hüseyin*, grandson of the Prophet Muhammed, and his band of warriors who refused to pay Yazid allegiance.

leads the community in a *mersiye* “*Bugün Matem Günü Geldi*” (The Day of Mourning Is Today). During this long, slow song with several verses and repeats we stand holding hands, and then fold our hands across our chests, bow our heads, and put our feet together with the right toes covering the left ones. People are visibly crying, wiping their eyes with the tissues that were passed out earlier in anticipation of this part of the service; I can hear people sobbing behind me.<sup>4</sup>

The evening is coming to an end. The watchman and the sacred food keeper come forward to distribute the fruit *Bektaş Dede* has blessed, but many in the congregation continue to shed tears, slowly recovering their composure. *Bektaş Dede* hands pieces of fruit to these assistants, indicating to hand the fruit to special guests, to those who have an ill family member or may be recovering from illness themselves. He announces that we have made the *cem*, says that our service has been accepted by Allah, and reminds us of his earlier talk on sharing and brotherhood. People exit the salon, put on their shoes in the outside hall, and make their way downstairs to go home. Some linger in the main hall to exchange news about families or finish conversations they started before the *cem* began.

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[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/karbala-SIM\\_3928](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/karbala-SIM_3928)  
(accessed May 31, 2015.)

<sup>4</sup> İmdat *Dede* explained that those who are able to cry can experience the pain of *İmam Hüseyin*. This sensibility is referred to as *can gözünü açmak* (to open the eyes of the soul) (interview, March 11, 2013).

The Okmeydanı *cemevi* December 26, 2013



Figure 6.8 Okmeydanı *cem salonu*

The remodeling of the Okmeydanı *cemevi* was in process when I began to attend *cems* there in November, 2013. The *cem salonu*, a six-sided room, is on the main floor just inside the entrance of this multi-floor building. The salon has rich wood paneling with a stencil border above, and a large painting of Hacı Bektaş Veli above the cushioned platform for the *dede*. Like the salon at the Kağıthane *cemevi*, the ceiling here also has an elegant chandelier in its center. Radiating out from the huge light there are twelve stencils, much larger versions of those in the border along the walls. Paintings of the twelve *İmams* are hung around the room. Small and elegant, this salon is roughly half the size of the Kağıthane *cem salonu*. Here too, the *meydan* is a highly polished, inlaid wood circle. Tonight İlkan Bey, one of the regular *zakirs*, and a guest *zakir* are tuning their *bağlamas* and conferring about which pieces to play during the service.

The benches at the back of the room are already full of older men and women when I enter the *cemevi* to set up my recording equipment. The women call to me to sit with them where the heating vents are located, but in order to get the best audio and video recording possible, I need to sit near the front, right behind the assistants. I explain that I

want to make a recording, close the conversation with “good evening” (*iyi akşamlar*), and go to stake out space just behind the *meydan* where I take two cushions for me and my recording and camera equipment before it gets too crowded. They go back to talking among themselves.

The atmosphere here is much different from the one at the Kağıthane *cemevi*. People are avidly chatting as Binali *Dede* enters the *cem salonu* from a side door. He takes his place quickly on the platform but it takes some time for the talking to stop. The watchman calls out sternly, “*canlar!*” (brothers/friends) for quiet.<sup>5</sup> During Binali *Dede*’s short talk, some in the congregation continue to chat, and a loud cellphone ring elicits another stern call from the watchman. Binali *Dede* announces that we will have a *cem* and we kiss the shoulders of the people seated on either side of us to indicate that the community is in harmony. After an opening *deyiş* is performed by İlkan *Bey*, the assistants, seated around the *meydan*, are called one by one to stand, are blessed, and return to their seats. There is a short pause in the proceedings as the watchman stops to confer with one of the assistants, then goes to the *meydan* for blessings, followed by the assistants who wash and dry the *dede*’s hands, the three sweepers, and the light keeper who lights the three lamps. Tonight İlkan *Bey* plays the same *deyiş* that Erdoğan *Bey* often plays at the Kağıthane *cemevi*—we pause for *secde* at its conclusion.

İlkan *Bey* starts the *duvaz imam* with the section “Medet Allah Medet” (Help, Allah). Without pausing, he begins a second section of the prayer with “Ayırma Bizi” (Don’t Separate Us), one that Divani *Dede* recorded on a recent album (*Duvaz İmam*, Güverçin Müzik, 2012). İlkan *Bey* calls out some of the words and phrases exactly the

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<sup>5</sup> The term can also mean spirit, person, or dear, as in *canım* (my dear).

way Divani *Dede* performs them, as though he had listened to and rehearsed the prayer several times. I see only a few people patting their hearts, or singing along; most are silently watching the proceedings. After these two sections of *duvaz imam* we perform *secde* and Binali *Dede* recites blessings—there is another pause while people resettle themselves on their cushions.

During the next group of sung prayers I hear only some of the assistants singing the words and most congregation members are sitting quietly, not involved. The younger female assistants seated around the *meydan* are whispering to each other and adjusting their headscarves; one of them passes a note to another girl. By the third section of the *duvaz imam*, “Muhammed’i Candan Sevki” (Sincere Love of Muhammed), more of the congregation has joined in to sing the refrain—the repetition of the name of Allah. Some of the women are swaying; only a few seem drawn into the music; the men are mostly sitting still. At the end of this section we perform *secde*. The guest *zakir* narrates the *miraçlama* accompanying himself on his *bağlama*.<sup>6</sup> The *miraçlama* lasts for about seven minutes and then the assistants rise to perform the rapid *Kırklar semahı* with accompaniment by *İlkan Bey*. The next section of the *semah* is executed with slow, graceful arm movements and pauses to match the slow tempo.<sup>7</sup> Turan, another regular *zakir*, comes forward to the platform to play and sing in his smooth, tenor voice. After the *semah*, Binali *Dede* blesses the assistants. Then, just like the service at the Kağıthane *cemevi*, we stand and go through the motions for the first verses of the *mersiye* for *İmam Hüseyin*, first holding hands and then standing in the foot position attributed to

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<sup>6</sup> The *tevhid*, normally preceding the *semah*, was omitted this evening.

<sup>7</sup> For Alevis the crane is a symbol of God and the arm movements of the *semah* symbolize the takeoff and flying of cranes—a symbol of Alevi social unity (Markussen 2005:65).



Muhammed's daughter. I turn my head a little from side to side to watch the congregation: most are singing but no one appears to be crying. We sit down on our cushions after the *mersiye* and Turan continues with a second lament, "Gökyüzünde Uçan Dertli Turnalar" (The Sorrowful Cranes Flying in the Heavens). His voice trembles with vibrato; each vocal phrase has an answering phrase on the *bağlama*. The community is attentive, but I don't hear sobbing, see people wiping their eyes, or notice anyone overcome with emotion as I observed at Kağıthane. Binali *Dede* finishes the evening by mentioning a point in his earlier talk. People stand up quickly and pile their pillows along the walls of the salon before exiting. They are moving so fast I have to race to pack up my recording equipment to keep up. In the hall they grab their shoes and head downstairs to the social hall where a hot meal of lamb and bulgur is passed out in plastic containers. There are no chairs or tables, so we must stand with our food. Many eat quickly while others wrap their containers in plastic bags to take with them. Some elderly participants are wrapping up several containers of lamb and bulgur; I wonder whether there are other mouths to feed at home or whether these will serve as their own food for the week, but I never asked directly about people's personal situations.<sup>8</sup> People socialize while they are eat but finish quickly and exit the *cemevi* through a set of doors at the far end of the hall, apparently in a hurry to get home.

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<sup>8</sup> In keeping with the longstanding tradition of Alevi hospitality, *cemevis* offer food to one and all, no questions asked.

## ATMOSPHERE AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Over a period of eight months I was able to compare common features and differences between the atmosphere and level of community participation at the Kağıthane and Okmeydanı *cemevis*. The procedures of the *cems* were fairly similar: each *dede* gave an instructional talk on a topic of Alevilik prior to the start of worship and the rituals were carried out in more or less the same order. The *cem* proper consisted of a few sections of the *duvaz imam* followed by the *tevhid*, the *miraçlama*, and three sections of *semah*. The worship service continued with laments for *İmam Hüseyin*, after which additional prayers and announcements concluded the evening. The *deyiş* changed weekly at each *cemevi*, but aside from occasionally using different verses of part of the *duvaz imam* or a *tevhid*, there were no significant variations in the core parts. At the end of each service there was some kind of *lokma*, either fruit and cookies at the Kağıthane *cemevi*, or the hot meal at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*. Bektaş *Dede* or Zeynal *Dede* passed out pieces of blessed fruit to guests or to those who requested special prayers for recovery from illness.

The most striking differences I observed were in the level of community participation—strong involvement at Kağıthane and much less involvement at Okmeydanı.<sup>9</sup> As noted in my ethnography, the members of the Kağıthane congregation sang the words to almost all of the hymns and prayers, actively patted their hearts and knees, and cried during the lament for *İmam Hüseyin*, whereas the Okmeydanı congregation appeared to behave more like spectators at a staged event. Zeynal *Dede*, Binali *Dede*, and İmdat *Dede* all placed a great value on emotional involvement in the

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<sup>9</sup> I use the Okmeydanı *cem* as representative of associations where congregation members appeared to be less involved in the worship service than those at the Kağıthane *cemevi*.

*cem* and saw crying, trance, and physical movement as evidence of a focus on worship.<sup>10</sup> Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned İmdat *Dede*'s linking the ability to cry during the *cem* with the ability to feel the pain of *İmam* Hüseyin. If these are the criteria for the most effective spiritual experience, then I conclude that the Kağıthane congregation exhibited more deep involvement with worship than the Okmeydanı or Esenyurt *cemevis*.

To account for this difference I considered three types of factors: the living circumstances near each *cemevi*; the pace and intensity of the service conducted by the assistants, *dedes*, and *zakirs*, including the musical delivery and tempos of the various sung prayers; and the possibility that some congregation members at Kağıthane reached an altered state of consciousness during the *cem*. For the living environment, I interviewed administrative leaders about the main neighborhoods where the congregations lived; I relied mainly on my own observations and musical analyses for the pace and intensity of the *cem*; I consulted selected research in ethnomusicology that posits perspectives on altered states of consciousness for the psychological and emotional effects of music (Qureshi 1986; Becker 2004; Penman and Becker 2009).

### Neighborhood Environments

I learned from Zeynel Şahin (hereafter *Zeynel Bey*), the Okmeydanı *cemevi* lay president, that area residents were uncomfortable with political protests near the *cemevi* that frequently sparked clashes with the police, making it difficult for Alevis, Turkish Sunnis, and Kurds to conduct their normal lives and businesses. *Zeynel Bey* maintained that since the area is known as a site for radicals, outsiders go to Okmeydanı to conduct

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<sup>10</sup> When I used the word trance, *dedes* responded with *kendiden geçmiş* (literally, “leaving of the self”), which is rendered as unconscious, intoxicated, or ecstatic.

protests and then depart for their own homes in other locations in Istanbul. In the fall of 2013, the bus stop a few blocks from the *cemevi* was destroyed—its glass walls were shattered and its metal frame was torched. It took the municipality more than a few months to replace it. Zeynel *Bey* also related rumors about property developers collaborating with government administrators to get residents to move away in order to rebuild a wealthier district (Interview, October 16, 2014). Perhaps it is such tensions in the living environment that prevent full participation in *cems* in Okmeydanı, and induce people to leave so quickly after the worship service. Binali *Dede* was acting spiritual leader at the Okmeydanı *cemevi* for only six months, as previously mentioned, before a shooting incident occurred, resulting in his resignation.<sup>11</sup> He related that his best efforts could not seem to elicit more participation from the Okmeydanı congregation. I also note that I attended one worship service at the Erikli Baba *cemevi*, after Binali *Dede* had returned there permanently (November 2014), and observed a higher level of community participation in the *cem*, closer to that at the Kağıthane *cemevi*.

In the course of several interviews with Zeynal *Dede* at the Kağıthane *cemevi*, and through my own observations of the area, I discovered that the Nurtepe neighborhood is a busy, fairly prosperous middle-class area.<sup>12</sup> There are several newer high-rise apartment buildings near the *cemevi*, as well as bakeries, restaurants, markets, and other shops indicating better economic circumstances than those in Okmeydanı. When I arrived early on a Thursday for informal chats at the Kağıthane *cemevi*, other people were at the

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<sup>11</sup> In the spring of 2014 police fired into the courtyard of the Okmeydanı *cemevi* where Binali *dede* was conducting a funeral. The shooting killed a man standing next to the *dede*. [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_eyewitnesses-say-police-officer-shot-at-cemevi-at-close-range\\_348907.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_eyewitnesses-say-police-officer-shot-at-cemevi-at-close-range_348907.html) (accessed October, 2014)

<sup>12</sup> That is, middle class in terms of the Turkish economy.

*cemevi*, sometimes two hours or more in advance of the *cem*. A few older men came to watch the news on the flat-screen television in the social hall, and there was often a group of women making food or sitting and chatting. The secretary was almost always there serving tea. I got to know several of the women well enough to make conversation, and was always greeted with kisses and hugs. In contrast, although people were friendly toward me at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*, few of them arrived more than one hour in advance of the worship service to socialize.

### Pace of the Cem

The second kinds of observations I made at these two *cems* pertained to the pace of the *cem* set by the *dedes* and *zakirs*, including pauses in the service and distractions such as chatting among the congregation. At Okmeydanı there appeared to be a relaxed pace to the *cem*, similar to that at the Esenyurt *cemevi* (led by İmdat Dede), with short pauses in the proceedings at various times, giving me the impression that not all the procedures were worked out in advance. Members of the congregation seemed to take their time to resettle themselves on their cushions after performing *secde* (prostrate prayer posture), and the *dede* and *zakir* often waited for the rustling and chatting to die down before continuing with the service. In addition, some of the assistants appeared to be of middle school age and were easily distracted during the *cem*. The watchman at Okmeydanı played an active role since there was normally a fair amount of chatting and cell phone use during the *cem*. There was much less engagement from the congregation—singing along to the hymns, heart patting, or knee patting—than at the Kağıthane *cemevi*.

Binali *Dede* remained seated during the *cem* and did not engage in any physical movement during the hymns, unlike Bektaş *Dede*.

At Kağıthane the flow of the *cem* was more continuous. The rituals were more fluidly executed and, as a result, there were very few pauses. The assistants were a mixture of adults and young people of at least high-school age—more mature than some of the assistants at Okmeydanı. The pauses for *secde* and for sitting up afterward were not as long as those at Okmeydanı or Esenyurt and were not used by the congregation as an opportunity to chat with their neighbors. Once the *duvaz imam* began, Bektaş *Dede* stood up to call out emphatically to the congregation, often in time to the music. At times he sang along with the hymns and moved to the music with his eyes closed in concentration. Many in the congregation sang the words to the hymns along with the *zakir*, and became physically involved during the singing and instrumental music by patting their hearts and knees. It is possible, as Zeynal *Dede* contends, that the high level of participation in worship is in part the result of his twenty-year tenure as the Kağıthane's spiritual leader and president and his efforts to shape the spiritual experience for the assistants and the congregation. He participated in about one-half of the number of *cems* I attended there, although Bektaş *Dede* led nearly all of them.

At the Kağıthane *cems* I attended, Erdoğan Mutlu most often performed. He explained that his motivation to develop his musical talents came from a special message from *Hazreti Ali*. He also believes that the responsibility to create the atmosphere of the *cem* rests with the *zakir* more than with the *dede*. The Okmeydanı *cemevi* had two regular musicians, one a high school student and the other in his twenties, who performed on alternate weeks. The older of the two, Turan Tandoğan, talked about performance skills

such as adding different rhythmic strums and ornaments on the *bağlama* to keep the congregation engaged in the *cem*, but neither of them spoke of a personal mission or inspiration as Erdoğan *Bey* had. The reader is referred to detailed interviews with *zakirs* in Chapter Seven.

The chart on the following page gives examples of the differences in tempo between some of the same types of sacred songs performed at the Kağıthane and Okmeydanı *cemevis*. I chose two *cems*, one at each location, in which many of the same musical pieces were performed. Although tempo by itself is not conclusive, the chart indicates that the second prayer in each pair of prayers is consistently faster, and shows a bigger increase in the tempo at Kağıthane than at Okmeydanı. I also compared the tempos of pairs of hymns including the *tevhid* that directly precedes the *semah*. If, as Zeynal *Dede* stated, the *semah* is the peak of worship and the release of earthly emotions, and if music plays an important role in reaching unity with God, as *dedes* and *zakirs* have indicated, then tempo increases may facilitate the emotional build-up and arrival. A comparison of the tempos of *tevhids* performed on several dates at the two *cemevis* revealed that they were consistently slower at Okmeydanı than those performed at Kağıthane. Erdoğan *Bey*'s intense and energetic delivery also may have influenced the build-up of emotions during worship and encouraged the high level of participation.

Table 6.1 Comparison of Tempos

KAĞITHANE January 2, 2014

“Hizmeti Çağrısı”	1 quarter note = 69-72	5:29
“Cırağ Uyandırdık” secde	1 quarter note = 63-66	3:06
Duvaz İmam	1 quarter note = 69-72	2:50
“Medet Allah Medet” secde	1 quarter note = 72-76	3:45
“Gel Dertlere Derman Eyle”	1 quarter note = 69-72	3:03
“Muhammed’i Candan Sevki” secde	1 quarter note = 82	3:43
“Bugün Bize Pir Geldi”	1 quarter note = 58-60	3:00
Tevhid	1 quarter note = 88-92	4:15

OKMEYDANI December 26, 2013

“Hizmeti Çağrısı”	1 quarter note = 69-74	5:05
“Cırağ Uyandırdık” secde	1 quarter note = 69-72	2:01
“Medet Allah Medet”	1 quarter note = 56-58	4:11
Duvaz İmam (“Ayırma Bizi”) secde	1 quarter note = 74-80	3:57
“Gel Dertlere Derman Eyle”	1 quarter note = 56-58	3:14
“Muhammed’i Candan Sevki” secde	1 quarter note = 66-69	3:21
Tevhid	no Tevhid section (although usually included)	

Tempos of Tevhids performed at Okmeydanı on other dates:

1-16-14 1 quarter note =58-60 + Su Aleme=66-69

1-30-14 1 quarter note =72-76

3-20-14 1 quarter note =57 + Muhammed’I Candan Sevki=69-72

4-24-14 1 quarter note = 57



Summary of observations of behavior in the *cem*:

Kağithane:

- High level of participation by congregation – singing and physical movement
- More focus on worship, little chatting or cell phone activity
- Little or no pausing to confer among assistants
- Consistent tempo increases in pairs of hymns, intensity of delivery by *zakirs*
- Dede* stands up and calls out to congregation—high level of *dede* participation
- Fast pace – short time for *secde* then return to music and prayer

Okmeydanı:

- Low level of participation by congregation – little singing or physical movement
- Less focus on worship, more chatting and cell phone activity
- Pauses for “stage directions” and conferring among assistants
- Some tempo increases, some intensity of delivery by *zakirs*
- Dede* sits and calls out less to congregation—lower level of *dede* participation
- Inconsistent pace – lag time between *secde* and returning to music and prayer

### Emotional Response to Music

Zeynal *Dede*'s description of the ideal spiritual experience of the *cem* bears similarities to Sufi practice and the process by which mystical emotion is aroused in the listener.

Although Alevis object to being categorized as a sect of Sufism, the *cem* shares with Sufism an emphasis on arriving at a state of unity with God through music. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned Binali *Dede*'s similar understanding that the music of the *cem* assists in the arrival to God. Performances of *Qawwali*, a form of Sufi devotional music popular in South Asia, and some of the music in the Alevi *cem* share several features including the repetition of certain affirmations and increasing musical tempos that are designed to lead audience members to a spiritual union with God. One difference between the two ceremonies is that *Qawwali*'s explicit purpose is to effect states of

ecstatic arousal in listeners, whereas in Alevi worship, such states are possible, but not expected.

In her study of *Qawwali*, Regula Qureshi explains that the function of this music is “to serve the presentation of mystical poetry in order to arouse mystical emotions in an assembly of listeners [with diverse spiritual needs]” (1986: 59). *Qawwali*, performed by singers and musicians who play a harmonium (small reed organ) player, and a *dholak* (double-headed drum) or *tabla* (small pair of drums), requires a strong rhythmic framework with a recurring beat suggesting the continuous repetition of God’s name (*zikir*). The ideal singing voice for *Qawwali* is loud, full, and strong rather than melodious, and singing must be carried out at a high dynamic level. Additionally, a gradually increasing tempo is an important element contributing to spiritual arousal (Qureshi 1986: 61).

Similar to *Qawwali*, practices of *zikir* involve the chanting of sacred texts, song and bodily movement, performed in order to remember spiritual truths. *Zikir* “conditions a spiritual and musical self” which allows for achieving temporal transformation, that is, ecstatic states in the participants (Shannon 2004: 381). At the end of each musical section, the lead vocalist raises the pitch of the chanting, and accelerates the tempo. Participants strive to reach proximity to the divine, which can be expressed in various ways from trance-like stillness, to violent movement, to whirling.

As in the *Qawwali* and *zikir* rituals, a strong rhythmic framework is provided by the *bağlama* accompaniment in the *cem*. Turkish musician-scholar Gani Pekşen explained that true spiritual feeling comes from the rhythm of the music (Interview, August, 2012). Further, a strong voice and high dynamic level are considered important

for a good *zakir*—amplification of the instrument and the voice aid the dynamic levels. Likewise, the consistently increasing tempos of the pairs of sung prayers analyzed previously may be a factor contributing to the congregation’s high level of emotional arousal during the *cems* at Kağthane.

The ritual practices described above can be considered forms of audition (*sama’* in Arabic) “essential to the cultivation of the sensitive heart that allows one to hear and embody in practice the ethical sensibilities undergirding moral action,” parallel, in some ways, to the practice of listening to cassette-recorded sermons investigated by Charles Hirschkind (2006: 9). Ethical sensibilities in Alevilik derive from the moral code “*eline, diline, beline sahip ol*” (be the master of your hands, tongue, and loins) which achieves embodiment by avoiding the acts of stealing, lying, and committing adultery.

In a more scientific approach, ethnomusicologist Judith Becker and composer Joshua Penman (2009) investigated the links between music, listening, and ecstatic religious ceremonies. They found that subjects listening to music of their own choosing had stronger emotional responses (increased heart rate, being moved to tears) than to randomly selected music, suggesting the importance of the listener’s relationship to the music. From this point of view it is possible to speculate that *cem* attendees who are strongly moved by the music have a relationship to that music, and their patterns of response are reinforced over time by continued attendance. In view of the varied responses I observed in the *cem*, it is worth mentioning the work of Ruth Herbert (2011), who advocates expanding the concept of altered states to encompass a diverse range of experiences. I will discuss responses to music in contexts other than the *cem* in Chapter Seven.

## A GRASS-ROOTS CEMEVI IN ANKARA

In the 1990s, urban *cemevis* were a new phenomenon that established a public space for Alevi practices but twenty-five years later, standardized weekly worship services led by institutional *dedes* are not attracting the large crowds they once did. In contrast, Cevahir Canpolat, president of a grass-roots *cemevi* in Ankara, is gathering younger followers because of her assertive, more contemporary approach to Alevilik.

“This *cemevi* was built by occupation, not by permission” Cevahir *Hanım* told me (Interview, May 9, 2014). In 2011, she and a small group of Alevis, who were seeking a modest place to hold worship services, took over an abandoned café in the Yenimahalle neighborhood of Ankara. While their petitions and requests for meetings with local administrators were ignored, the municipality did notice the takeover, and a legal case was opened against them. When I first met Cevahir *Hanım* in February, 2012, she was facing the possibility of a five-year jail sentence. It made no difference that the group’s presence had rid the area of addicts and derelicts, and provided more neighborhood security. For Cevahir *Hanım*, the takeover was a question of rights; the people, not politicians, should carry out the Alevi credo of *hak* (truth, right in Turkish and Arabic), giving what is due. She says the state fears Alevis and their potential political force to contradict Turkish state policies, and for this reason, even *bir karış toprak* (a handful of earth the span of your palm), such as this small property, is difficult for Alevis to come by (Interview, May 9, 2014). With donations of private funds and labor, the group created a modest *cem* salon, meeting hall, and a burial preparation building.

Cevahir *Hanım* is committed to creating the best *cemevi* possible. To this end, she invites various *dedes* to conduct worship services, a practice that recalls rural Anatolia, where Alevi villagers saw many itinerant *dedes*, compared their strengths and weaknesses, and exerted more control over religious practices. This critical eye is lost in urban *cemevis* where the congregation sees the same *dede* week after week. Cevahir *Hanım* ensures that music is a dynamic element of the ritual by performing on the *bağlama* herself at *cems* and inviting other musicians to play—the congregation hears regional melodies and finds inspiration in a variety of mystical songs and hymns. She also includes a community *semah* after the assistants have completed their part. Her belief in personal agency drives community involvement in shaping the association’s direction in both ritual practice and political activity; for example, protesting Turkey’s state-sanctioned (Sunni-focused) compulsory religious education policies. This young association already claims an active, multi-generational community.

#### SMALL-TOWN, REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Personal connections were critical to my participation Alevi *cems* in small towns, since they are not generally open to the public as in urban areas. In the summer of 2012, I had met Güzel Erbağ *Dede* from Çorum at the Hacı-Bektaş festival in Nevşehir, and contacted him in the winter of 2013. I made two short trips to Çorum for the Hızır and Nevruz (Persian New Year) *cems* in February and March, respectively (and a last trip in May, 2014, for follow-up interviews). For my trip to Fatsa in Ordu Province in the fall of 2014, Cem *Hoca*’s sister was able to make arrangements for me, since the Çelebi parents, extended family members, and in-laws still live in the area. I attended a *cem* with a

Güvenç Abdal community in Ünye, a village near Fatsa, on the eve of Muharrem, October 23, 2014.<sup>1</sup>

I found some practices common to both small towns that differed from those of urban *cems*. First, prior to the start of the *cem* the assistants served tea to the congregation, and for a time there was chatting and socializing. Second, each community expects young people to attend *cems* in order to learn the *semah* and the roles of the assistants since there are no separate education classes. Third, while there was respectful quiet during laments for the remembrance of *İmam Hüseyin*, I did not observe members of the congregation crying as they had at the Kağıthane *cemevi*. Finally, the four adults who executed the *semah* at the *cems* in Çorum and Ünye moved with similar, but more individual, gestures, rather than the choreographed appearance of the urban *semah*. Yusuf *Dede* (my contact from Malatya who was studying at Istanbul Technical University) mentioned two additional points; first, in small towns and rural areas it is neither necessary to have twelve assistants for each *cem*, nor to consistently carry out all twelve parts of the *cem* as in urban worship services, and that those adults who can maintain concentration and spirituality should execute the *semah* in the *cem* and thus, teach it (by example) to others (Interview, November 10, 2014).

I observed a few important distinctions between the two small-town *cems*. In Çorum, the final, fast section of the *semah* involved a series of movements in which the two men swung their arms forward and backward, while turning, raising their knees, and

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<sup>1</sup> Güvenç Abdal was a thirteenth-century disciple of Hacı Bektaş whose followers originated in the Black Sea area, and spread to many areas of Turkey (<http://www.guvencabdal.org.tr/guven-abdal-tarihcesi> accessed June 17, 2015). Hubyar Sultan was a sixteenth-century sheik whose followers are concentrated in the Sivas-Tokat-Amasya-Yozgat region of Turkey (<http://www.hubyar.net/sayfa/26-hubyar-sultan39in-evlatlari.html> accessed June 17, 2015).

stepping backward quickly, which resulted in stamping sounds as they moved. The women raised their arms to shoulder level in a smoother motion. In contrast, the four adults who executed the *semah* in Ünye performed only one short section while the rest of the women swayed back and forth in a single line in the back of the *cem* salon.



Figure 6.9 Fast section of *semah*, Sultan Ana *cemevi*, Çorum.

Another feature of the service at the Hoçuklu *cemevi* in Ünye was the chanting of prayers without *bağlama* accompaniment, unlike the *cems* in Çorum that featured both *bağlama* and *kemane* players. Those leading the service included Ali *Dede* (my *bağlama* teacher's and İmdat *Dede*'s father), Emrah *Bey* (one of the *dede*'s senior assistants), and a *cami hoca* (mosque clergyman) who chanted the Qur'an in Turkish.<sup>2</sup> After returning to Istanbul, I asked Cem *Hoca* whether *bağlama* was played at all at *cems* in the Black Sea area. He explained that an *aşık* might play *bağlak bağlama* (musical pieces in a medley) in between prayers. Instrumental accompaniment is a recent addition to the worship service in Fatsa—within my teacher's lifetime.

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<sup>2</sup> When I expressed surprise that a mosque official would attend a *cem*, I was told that this one was a friend to Alevi.

I observed some additional regional differences in Fatsa area *cem* practices. For example, during the remembrance of *İmam Hüseyin*, *Ali Dede* mixed sugar and water and fed spoonfuls of the mixture to the assistants and to himself from a common bowl. Then assistants took the bowl around to the rest of the congregation and fed them spoonfuls of the water.<sup>3</sup> Another feature of this *cem* was that the men sit near the *dedes* while the women stand in the back of the salon. When everyone joined in the “Hû” chant, the women swayed in unison, which was a striking part of the service.

On this Muharrem eve, the service was shortened. First, evening prayers were chanted and then, we had a *sohbet* (conversation) about Alevilik and current politics. The men conducted the conversation—I was the only female who spoke during the *sohbet*, and probably the only non-Turkish, non-Alevi female at the *cem*. I asked whether the *cemevi* offers classes in *semah* or in the duties of a spiritual assistant, and was told by *Emrah Bey* that children were expected to learn by attending *cems*, and that in today’s world young people leave Alevilik. It appears that *cems* with more traditional practices in both urban and small-town locales are not attractive to young people. My host, *Doğan Çelebi*, a nephew of *Ali Dede*, sat on the raised platform with the *cem* officiators. As the leader of the Fatsa CHP, *Doğan Bey* was eager to give his views on current politics in Turkey and the world at large. We completed the *cem* after the discussion.

For Hubyar Alevis, traditional practices involve conducting *görgü cems* (literally, good manners) to resolve community disputes, and then a *birlik cemi* (rendered in

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<sup>3</sup> *İmdat Dede* explained that drinking sugar water during the remembrance of *İmam Hüseyin* is common at *cems* in Fatsa where he grew up, as is the practice of having the women standing in the back of the room in order to guard the door to the salon. I first observed these practices at a “village *cem*” conducted by *Sefa Dede* from Ordu Province at the *Okmeydanı cemevi* January 18, 2014.



English as unity assembly) to forget past differences and begin with a clean slate in the weeks before the fast. A community payment is determined and all families contribute: the final step in the process is for all present at the unity assembly to take a sip of water blessed by the *dede*, called *rıza suyu* (rendered in English as the water of consent) (Andrews and Temel 2010: 297).

Hızır (also known as Hıdırellez), a mysterious figure in Alevilik who helps people in distress, (similar to Elijah in Judaism) is an important personage. The Hubyar Alevi community at the Sultan Ana Cemevi in Çorum observed a fast (*oruç*) in for three days, and on the second evening, there was a sacrificial (*kurban*) communal meal held at the *cemevi* prior to the worship service.<sup>4</sup> During the *cem*, there were short recesses to accommodate smokers and pauses in the proceedings to give stage directions to the spiritual assistants or confer with the *dedes*. Güzel Dede, one of the *dedes* presiding over the *cem*, turned to me several times in the middle of the worship service and asked me directly whether I was able to make the recordings or videos I needed and whether I had any questions. The community conducted the service at their own pace and with these idiosyncracies.

Unlike sung prayers at the urban *cems* I attended in Istanbul, those performed at the Hızır and Nevruz *cems* in Çorum were often quite long, lasting fifteen minutes or more. Although there was a microphone for singing and speaking, the *aşıks* did not use electrified *bağlamas* like the *zakirs* at urban *cemevis*. The microphone thus featured the musicians' voices more prominently against the softer acoustic instruments. The *aşıks* sang in a declamatory style and filled in the vocal rests and the ends of lines and in

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<sup>4</sup> My *dede* host and his wife did not expect me, or his son, daughter-in-law, and their children to fast.

between verses with strums and melodic figures. One evening, a guest musician who goes by the name of *Aşık Dede* (his given name is Ali Büküçü) performed a lengthy *deyiş* on the violin (*keman*). Sitting on the carpet, he held the bottom of the instrument vertically against his right foot and bowed it with his right hand. Both the *keman* and the *bağlama* are commonly played at Hubyar *cems* (Andrews and Temel 2011: 297).

The *aşıks* (musicians) in Çorum were mature adults rather than older teens or young adults as at the urban *cemevis*. In fact, in an interview with İrfan Kümbet *Dede* and Öztürk Baz, a married man with a family, and one of the regular *aşıks* and at the *cemevi*, İrfan *Dede* referred to the musician as an *aşık adayı* (minstrel candidate), alluding to the maturity needed to participate as an assistant in worship (Interview, May 16, 2014).

While performing a *deyiş* for me, Öztürk *Bey* shed tears each time he sang the name of Ali, but, as mentioned above, I did not observe crying *aşıks* (or congregation members) at any *cems* in Çorum. The congregation was not expected to sing along, although a few of the members sang quietly if they knew some of the verses.

In contrast to urban Alevi practices, *Musahiplik* (ritual brotherhood) persists in the Hubyar community in Çorum. In traditional Alevilik, this relationship is considered more important than a blood relationship, and is a precondition for those who seek to pass through the Four Gates—*şeriat* (holy law), *tarikât* (spiritual path/brotherhood), *marifet* (spiritual knowledge), and *hakikat* (truth)—to achieve spiritual perfection.<sup>5</sup> With urban migration and the breaking up of small communities, the ritual lost much of its social significance for the younger generation of Alevis (Kehl-Bodrogi 1995:131). During the

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<sup>5</sup> *Şeriat* (holy law) is the Turkish term for Shari'a—Muslim law based on the Qur'an and its commentaries—but Alevis do not recognize Sunni interpretations of holy law.

Nevruz *cems* I stayed at the home of Hüseyin Aydoğdu *Dede* and his wife, as did the married couple who are their musahip brother and sister.

Similar to other traditional Alevi subgroups, the Hubyar consider children born within the community to be Alevi. Once children become young adults they are expected to make a yearly promise (*ikrar*) to follow the Alevi way and study for about one year with a guide (*rehber*) who warns initiates about the difficulties ahead and not to take on an irreversible process if they feel they are not prepared to make the commitment (Andrews and Temel 2011: 309).

#### RESOLVING A COMMUNITY DISPUTE

I was fortunate to attend a *görgü cemi* that was convened to resolve a dispute between one of my *dede* contacts and his congregation at an Istanbul *cemevi*. Irene Markoff writes about the role of the *dede* in presiding over the resolution of community disputes (2002a: 824). In this case, the dispute involved the *dede*'s behavior and *dedes* from other communities would be called to mediate.

A heated conversation between Ahmet *Dede* and a congregation member during a *sohbet* in the month of Muharrem (November) in 2013, was perhaps the precipitating event that brought about the *görgü cemi* four months later.<sup>6</sup> An angry congregation member came to the *meydan* to ask to be heard. The exchange between Ahmet *Dede* and the *talip* (seeker) revealed the *talip*'s resentment that Ahmet *Dede* was continuing in his capacity as spiritual leader in spite of the *dede*'s divorce and remarriage six or seven years ago. The *talip* accused him of having no control over his passions. Others in the

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<sup>6</sup> I am not using the *dede*'s real name in order to protect his privacy.

congregation began to express supporting and opposing opinions: a supporter said that anyone can find dirt in every *dede*'s past. Although separation and divorce do occur in modern Alevi family life, marriage is still regarded as a sacred institution in traditional Alevilik, with divorce as a last resort. While in the past Alevis could have been excommunicated for such grave offenses, urban *dedes* must now do their best to preserve social peace and unity (Bozkurt 2003: 89).

The *görgü cemi* was held several months later, in March 2014, at a *cemevi* where Ahmet *Dede* did not preside. First, we ate a communal meal of lamb and bulgur in the social hall. Afterwards, as we gathered in the *cem salonu*, I noticed that many of his friends and family members; his mother, his father (also a *dede*), several other *dedes* and a well-known *pir* (spiritual master), Ahmet *Dede*'s wife, several of his siblings, two *zakirs* who had regularly worked with him, and a several congregation members.

The *pir* began with an educational talk about prayer, during which more congregation members arrived, prostrating themselves in front of the *post* and greeting the officiators. We all stood up as Ahmet *Dede* and one his brothers entered the salon, greeted the other spiritual leaders and took their places on the platform. Ahmet *Dede* told the congregation that he had friends in every region, and even introduced me as an American academic researcher studying Alevilik. Although this ritual would last many hours, music was not excluded, and in fact the *dedes*, the *zakirs*, family supporters, and Ahmet *Dede* himself performed several *deyiş*. Eliot Bates notes that in this ritual “*saz ve söz*” (literally, *saz* and words, implying playing and singing) is a key enabler of reconciliation” (Bates 2012: 377).

The inquiry began with Ahmet *Dede* talking about the places he served, and about his recent resignation from the directorship of a local *cemevi*, under pressure from those in the congregation who could not accept his remarriage. He spoke of his dedication to Alevi causes, and asked forgiveness from the congregation. Participants then came to the *meydan* to question him about the gossip concerning his divorce, issues with other *dedes*, and the problems of today's Alevilik. He responded to all the inquiries, red-faced and perspiring profusely in his full suit and necktie. In the face of public judgment, his voice broke several times; another *dede* put his hand on Ahmet *Dede*'s shoulder as he wiped his eyes and whole face with a handkerchief. The *pir* stated that many in the community, including his accusers, were at fault because they had not come to this *cem* to resolve the issues. One *talip* declared that the divorce was not that important. Ahmet *Dede* asked for the prayers of the congregation, after which there were more prayers, short speeches, and *deyiş* were sung. After two-and-a-half hours there was an intermission. Many people left the salon to smoke, use the bathroom, get a breath of air, or eat snacks they had brought.

About thirty minutes later, the congregation was recalled to the salon and we proceeded rapidly through a full *cem* with all twelve parts. The assistants performed the *semah*, then, Ahmet *Dede* and his wife went to the *meydan* to bow and receive the other *dedes*' blessings. One woman stood up and formally declared that the *cem* was completed and that the congregation accepted his leadership. People began to leave the salon quickly, ignoring Ahmet *Dede*'s offer to join in a community *semah*. After participating for nearly six hours all of us were spent and wanted to go home—it was dusk when we exited the *cemevi*.

This *görgü cemi* seemed to mix traditional ritual with community politics. On the one hand, the *cem* was an illustration of the effort to retain Alevi practices in a contemporary, urban setting. On the other hand, since Ahmet *Dede*'s accusers were not present and no punishment or restitution imposed on him, the resolution more ceremonial than practical. Perhaps the other *dedes* had intervened on behalf of Ahmet *Dede* at some point prior to the *cem*. Most importantly, the community did not excommunicate him (*düşkünlük*) for having a divorce, which almost surely would have happened in a former time and rural setting. The main issue concerned the character of a community leader—someone whose behavior was expected to be above reproach—rather than a specific dispute between two individuals. I conclude that there was an attempt to reaffirm through the *görgü cemi* in spite of the anonymity of urban society.<sup>7</sup>

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have described basic beliefs of Alevilik and the details of the music and ritual of the urban *cem*, and highlighted the differences between current urban and small-town practices, and rural *cem*s of the past. Urban *dedes* no longer act as legal authorities to resolve disputes as they did in small villages and are mainly responsible for spiritual guidance. The primary purpose of the urban *cem* is to educate congregations and young assistants in Alevilik. The ritual is flexible: on the one hand, *dedes* may opt to discuss rather than carry out the parts of the *cem*; on the other hand, the service has often been expanded for foreign researchers and guest officiators.

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<sup>7</sup> Ahmet *Dede* has continued to officiate at *cem*s in locations around Istanbul.

Zeynal Dede's description of the ideal spiritual experience in the *cem* prefaces my ethnographic descriptions of the rituals at the Kağıthane and Okmeydanı *cemevis*. I have attempted to account for the very different levels of participation of the two congregations through such factors as the pacing of the *cems* and the living environments of the congregations. I conclude that the enthusiasm of the *zakirs*, the pacing of the *cem*, and Zeynal Dede's more than twenty years of service as *cemevi* president are major factors contributing to an intense level of participation at Kağıthane.

I have also endeavored to understand my observations from the *cem* about by investigating the work of other ethnomusicologists who have examined the relationship of music, emotion, and altered consciousness. In her study of *Qawwali*, a form of South Asian devotional music, Quereshi (2009) noted a strong rhythmic framework, a loud singing voice, and increasing tempo as critical to arousing mystical emotions in listeners. Penman and Becker (2009) found strong correlations between subjects' physiological responses to music and their prior relationship to the music. The relationship of music and emotion in spiritual contexts is an area for further research.

Other voices outside of mainstream urban *cemevis* attest to the persistence of different approaches to Alevilik. Belief in justice and self-determination, and the willingness to take risks motivated the makeover of an abandoned café into a *cemevi* by activist Cevahir Canbolat and her congregation. In small-town Alevi communities in the Black Sea region, I found the retention of regional characteristics in such as unaccompanied chanting at the *cems* of the Güvenç Abdal community in Fatsa, and a violinist at the *cems* of the Hubyar community in Çorum. In each case, adults, rather than young people, assisted the *dede* in carrying out the service and the *semah* was not

rehearsed or synchronized. I have also described the circumstances and problems surrounding the *görgü cemi* convened to resolve community dissatisfaction over Ahmet *Dede*'s divorce, and its ceremonial, rather than practical, outcome. In Chapter Seven, I will discuss different venues for music performances outside of the *cemevi* and the different types of music communities.



## CHAPTER SEVEN MUSICAL COMMUNITY OUTSIDE THE CEM

This chapter presents several types of Alevi music events in contexts other than the *cem* including musical conversations such as *sohbets* or *muhabbets*, concerts, instruction and performance in education settings, and smaller gatherings including social clubs and informal meetings. Alevi come together to reaffirm community identity through these musical events as well as through the experience of the *cem*. Ways to participate in Alevi music through public media such as recordings, television and radio programs, and Internet sites are also discussed. Such participation strengthens the sense of belonging to the larger, imagined Alevi community. The chapter also includes interviews with current performers and producers of Alevi music; professionals such as Divani *Dede*, Cem Çelebi, and Sabahat and Hasan Akkiraz, and amateurs such as young *zakirs*.

### SACRED-SECULAR INTERSECTIONS

By the 1980s, new contexts for music once performed only in the *cem* were well established. Live concerts featured revivalist musicians who combined popular *türkü*s with *deyiş*, and their cassette recordings included *duvaz imam*, *türkü*s, and *deyiş*, a combination that blurred the lines previously dividing sacred and secular music. Moreover, the urban *cemevi* has served as a multipurpose space, hosting a variety of

Alevi music performances along with municipal and university auditoriums, *türkü* houses, and other commercial entertainment venues.

Even as Alevi music events have proliferated in public spaces since the 1980s, the debate continues over what music should be performed in what contexts. For example, Güzel *Dede*'s critique of the spontaneous, public *semah* in the central square at the Hacı Bektaş Festival (described in Chapter One) concerned a lack of spiritual preparation that he believes is necessary to carry out the peak spiritual experience of the *cem*. As previously mentioned, he is more conservative than his urban counterparts—*cems* at which he officiates are not open to the public. By contrast, Divani *Dede* has a broader concept of appropriate spaces for his *muhabbets*. He also does not object to television programs that feature Alevi ritual and *cem* music, but thinks the *semah* should not be performed at weddings or in bars. Cem *Hoca* told me does not usually like to play *deyiş* in formal concerts and thinks *dedes* are right for disapproving of *cem* music on recorded albums (Interview, April 5, 2013). Yet, he has performed *deyiş* at the Fatsalılar Derneği (Association for People from Fatsa) for Alevi audiences and recorded a number of them on his albums. Erkan Oğur, a popular non-Alevi interpreter of the repertoire, performs *deyiş*; for instance, those by Pir Sultan Abdal, along with *türkü*s; at his concerts, one of which I attended on December 22, 2014.

### The *Sohbet* and the *Muhabbet*

The *sohbet* (literally, “conversation”) can imply musical gatherings in addition to its nonmusical meaning. Based on my observations the main difference between the *sohbet* and the *muhabbet* appears to be that the former contains more conversation than

music, and the latter contains more music than conversation. *Dedes* and other Alevi may use these terms interchangeably; my understanding is based on what the specific events were called by *dedes* and others present. *Cemevis* sometimes schedule a *sohbet* as an opportunity to discuss a wide variety of topics including politics or legal matters (*Zeynal Dede*, interview, November 14, 2013). In this case a *sohbet* is just a conversational meeting without music. At other times, a *sohbet* may be included as part of a *cem*, particularly during Muharrem, when conversations about Alevi beliefs and laments in remembrance of the battle of Karbala take the place of the full worship service. The variety of interpretations of these terms indicates a level of flexibility or ambiguity in Turkish (and Alevi) culture not as prevalent in Westerner thought.

In November, 2013, I attended a *sohbet* at the Erenler *cemevi* (Erenler Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı, Erenler Culture and Education Foundation) where İmdat *Dede* was the religious director at that time. The event took place in the auditorium of the *cemevi* with the participating *dedes* seated on the stage. İmdat *Dede* and his father, Ali *Dede*, were among those giving short presentations and answering questions from the congregation. Several *dedes* sang *deyiş* and *mersiyes* while accompanying themselves on the *bağlama*. The last lament was sung a cappella by an office-holder in the congregation; many in the audience were moved to tears by her emotional delivery.

The *muhabbet* (literally, “conversation”) is an important form of social music making, consisting of singing, playing the *bağlama*, and discussing Alevilik. Sometimes the term *hasbıhal* (rendered in English as a friendly chat) is used instead of *muhabbet*. In such gatherings conversations are conducted mainly through song, and in Alevi song lyrics, *muhabbet* means love (Bates 2011: 10). In private gatherings in people’s homes,

instruments are passed around so that everyone participates regardless of their level of skill.

Divani *Dede* leads public *muhabbets* in Alevi associations, municipal auditoriums, and universities in cities in Turkey, Germany, France, Holland, and Belgium. *Muhabbets* are, in the Alevi context, musical and verbal exchanges of beliefs with a sense of sacredness. He sees them as an important way to build community, and owes his own spiritual development to such conversations. For those who are new to the faith, Divani *Dede* makes the basics of Alevi beliefs accessible without the complexities of the *cem* liturgy. He accepts many invitations to perform and talk about Alevilik without representing any institution and is in demand for his humility and straightforwardness.

One of Divani *Dede*'s gatherings, held at the Şahkulu Sultan Dervish Lodge in Göztepe, Istanbul, was designed for young adults who were interested in developing their spiritual knowledge and skills as *zakirs*. We perched on cushions in the small salon, sitting near the one large heater in the room. First, Divani *Dede* led the group in music making and then held a discussion about Alevilik. The attendees all told their stories; some had previously lost interest in faith, or had Sunni Muslim friends who had influenced them away from Alevilik, but all wanted to return and become more involved. While this event was rather informal, other programs that Divani *Dede* leads have a more formal presentation that begins with musical offerings of *deyiş*, a period of time for questions and answers, and then more music that includes the execution of sections of the *semah*.

For the last three years, Divani *Dede* has been training a select group of students whom he calls the Irfan-Mekteb-İ Öğrenciler (Students of the School of Learning). The programs they give are similar to the formal structure described above. Some of the musical selections are Divani *Dede*'s own works. The criticism, moral advice, and satire contained in the *deyiş* they perform encourage self-improvement, a basic tenet of Alevi belief. It is Divani *Dede*'s hope that his students will develop and deepen their knowledge of Alevi traditions; many of them are already capable of carrying out a *cem* (Interview, November 26, 2014).



Figure 7.1 Dertli Divani (left) performing with Students of the School of Learning

The emphasis on social harmony and inter-human relationships is considered a special, authentic trait of Alevilik (Markussen 2005: 74; Tee 2013). In Divani *Dede*'s words, “[t]o have everyone in agreement . . . is to cleanse ourselves from taking the rightful share—*hak*—of others.” According to Sunni Muslim belief forgiveness can only come from God, whereas in Alevilik the divine inside each person empowers us to

forgive each other. Divani *Dede* objects to the incorporation of *tövbe* (*tawbe* in Arabic—asking God for forgiveness) in urban *cems* and views it as a mark of assimilation.

The *muhabbet* in a municipal or university venue has a much different atmosphere from the more informal type at a *cemevi*. One of these events was held at a municipal arts theater in downtown Ankara, a venue with a stage, proscenium arch, and separate seating area for the audience. Before Divani *Dede* spoke and performed with his students, folklorist Piri Er gave a short talk on the changes in Alevism, making the whole event seem more like a lecture-demonstration. In addition, audience members behaved like theater goers, applauding after each musical segment, and after the completion of the *semah* movements. In a subsequent interview, I asked Divani *Dede* about performing the *semah* and Alevi sacred music on a public stage. He does not believe these performances represent a process of folklorization (Öztürkmen 2005) or that a secular venue for multiple uses, rather than a *cemevi*, detracts in any way from accomplishing his goal of building community. He welcomes the opportunity to show Alevi sacred music and religious practices via public media and believes he is staying true to his traditions (Interview, November 26, 2014). Cevahir Canpolat, the president of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi in Batikent, Ankara, is one among many Alevis who refer to Divani *Dede* as pure and unpolluted (personal communication, February, 2013).

In 2005, Divani *Dede* collaborated with several Alevi musicians including Hüseyin and Ali Rıza Albayrak to produce the album *Hasbıhal* (A Friendly Conversation), marking several years of live concerts and conversations about Alevilik that he had conducted all over Turkey. Ulaş Özdemir (b. 1976), Alevi musician, contemporary composer, and ethnomusicologist, was the production coordinator at Kalan

Müzik at that time, and has continued to participate with Divani *Dede* in *muhabbets* and on other projects as their mutual schedules allow. The *Hasbıhal* project also marked a change in Divani *Dede*'s focus from leading *cems* to giving concerts and *muhabbets*, and working with young *zakirs*. Divani *Dede* has become a powerful, influential figure for young Alevi who want to discover their heritage and become familiar with Alevilik. He maintains a strenuous travel schedule, shuttling between cities in Turkey and continental Europe for about three weeks each month to conduct these activities.<sup>1</sup>

### Representing Alevi Music: Four *Zakirs*

*Zakir* is one of several Turkish words (*aşık*, *sazende*) meaning a musician who plays and sings in a *cem*. In the last fifteen years or so the term has come to mean a performer and interpreter of Alevi music not only in a *cem* but also in non-religious contexts such as concerts and social clubs (Ulaş Özdemir, interview, February 26, 2014). In the past in rural Anatolia, such musicians were also generally older than those in their late 'teens and early twenties who currently play in urban *cems*. In some rural regions, the *dede* is both the spiritual leader and the musician, like Yusuf *Dede* from Malatya. Although the duties of leading the *cem* and performing music have come to be separate in urban areas, some of my contacts—İmdat *Dede* and Binali *Dede*—play in addition to the *zakirs*. Currently, most urban *zakirs* are young men, but there are a growing number of young women who are learning to be *zakirs* (*zakirlik* in Turkish), and also some retirees. Whatever the age of the person, a *zakir* must be a skilled musician with a good singing voice, be a good leader to accompany a community of worshippers, and have the time

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<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.dertlidivani.com> accessed January 15, 2015).

and dedication required to develop these skills. Today's *zakirs* want to perform and represent Alevi music in multiple contexts.

The four *zakirs* whom I interviewed play regularly at urban *cems* and at *muhabbets*. Three of them learned from *bağlama* players in their families, and two also took formal classes. Each began playing around the age of ten or twelve years. They all consider their participation as children in Alevi *cems* to be an important factor in developing familiarity with the music and ritual of Alevilik, and their enjoyment of it. Of the four, Berivan Canpolat has performed Alevi music the most extensively outside of the *cem* and has expressed a definite interest in continuing on that path. Özcan Özdemir (not related to Ulaş Özdemir) is a retiree, self-taught, and does not fit the young *zakir* model.

Turan Tandoğan, nineteen years of age at the time of our interview, has performed in *cems* since the age of ten years; he played regularly during 2012-2014 at the Okmeydanı *cemevi*. He studied a broad range of folk music with Cem Çelebi and subsequently learned *deyiş* from family books and study with his father, who was also a *zakir*. He commented that it takes a lot of time to practice and maintain his skills and familiarity with the music. He explained that he uses a number of different playing techniques—faster tempos to keep people engaged and to wake them up (*uyandırıyor*), and adding his own variations on rhythmic figures. He also watches other *zakirs* to learn their performance techniques. He commented that few Alevi families today take their children to *cems*, as his family did when he was little. Turan anticipates having less free time to participate after marriage, but he loves this job. He enjoys performing even if he hasn't had time to eat or take a shower, "I go running (*koşarak gidiyorum*) to the *cemevi*.



. . I call it my delight” (Interview, January 18, 2014). At the end of the year, Turan returned to military service and was not available for a second interview.

Erdoğan Mutlu, aged twenty-five years, began attending the Kağıthane *cems* at a very young age, and has been performing as a *zakir* there since the age of ten years. He explained that he learned much of the music by ear, from listening to radio programs. He believes that *Hazreti* Ali sent him a personal message to improve himself, something that he has carried out by performing as a *zakir* and a *semahçı*.

Erdoğan’s energetic and intense performances are based on his sense of mission that the *zakir* brings love to the *cem*, and carries the main responsibility for its execution. “When I don’t sing like that, the love doesn’t come” (*Ben öyle söylemezsem, aşkı gelmez*). He remarked that when the feeling of love comes to the congregation and overflows it is like an explosion (*patlama*). Erdoğan was often the sole *zakir* performing at the Kağıthane *cems* I attended, a task that requires a great deal of stamina. He and his friends never stop talking about Alevi beliefs “even in the bus station” he told me, “we are on the path” (*yolda gidiyoruz*) (interview, January 11, 2014). The term *yol* (path, road) is also found in the Turkmen language and is associated both with a shaman’s journey to the spiritual world and with Turkmen musical concepts (Zeranska-Kominek 1998: 265).



Figure 7.2 Erdoğan Mutlu and the author at the Kağıthane *cemevi*

Berivan Canbolat, twenty years of age, is well connected in the Alevi world. She is the daughter of Cevahir Canbolat, the president of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi in Batıkent, Ankara. As a result of the friendship that developed between her family and Divani *Dede* in the mid-1990s, she began attending *cems* with him when she was three or four years old.

Berivan is already an accomplished musician, having been a long-time *bağlama* student of Erdal Erzincan. She began performing when she was only ten years old, and frequently plays at the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi and many other places as well. Berivan described a trance-like sensation that pervades her when she performs during *cems* that she refers to as *pervane*. The term, rendered in English as moth: in Sufi poetry, the moth that is attracted to the candle flame and is eventually burned and consumed by the flame, representing a mystical union with God (Schimmel 1975: 142). Berivan explained that she is not always aware that she goes into this state while performing, but hearing

recordings of her own playing in which the timbre of her voice changes confirms that she was in a trance state. *Pervane* also refers to a section of the worship service in which a young woman spins in the *meydan*. In addition, *aşıks* have, on occasion, taken the pen name *Pervane*.

Berivan is a member of Divani *Dede*'s Ankara group of Students of Education and Enlightenment (Mekteb-İ-İrfan Öğrenciler), and has traveled with him to Istanbul and to cities in Europe, participating in *muhabbets* and *cems*. She remarked that the group goes to play wherever they are invited, and that this obligation supersedes regular meals and getting adequate sleep during the trip. She says that a good *zakir* is "connected to the road" (*yola bağlı olmak*), sets an example for others, and must play good *bağlama*. She and her friends say "we try to play" (*çalmaya çalışıyoruz*) because it would be too egotistical to say "we play" (*çalıyoruz*). With further modesty, Berivan expressed a desire to continue as a *zakir* and after she completes her architecture studies at university. Unlike Turan, Berivan seemed unconcerned with the possible restriction of her time due to future work or marriage responsibilities (Interview, February 16, 2014). When I asked Berivan how she had felt about performing on the Çankaya, Ankara municipal stage with a prominent separation between the audience and Divani *Dede* and the students, she described the event as cold and theatrical (*soğuk ve tiyatro gibi*).

Özcan Özdemir is a retiree and had recently become a regular *zakir* at the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi in Batıkent, Ankara, at the time of our interview. In the 1970s when he was young there was no formal musical method or training for *bağlama* (Arif Sağ's music school was not established until the early 1980s). His father played *bağlama*, which inspired him to begin his own study. He taught himself the long-necked *saz* and

folk dance music in the 1970s, but in the 1990s switched to the short-necked *bağlama* as played on the *Muhabbet* recordings. He told me he learned [the album selections] by heart and could sing them all. Özcan Bey started to play for *cems* only after his retirement because of the amount of time—five to six hours each day—required to practice and become a skilled musician. He also believes that knowing the music by heart and developing one’s own interpretations of the music are very important for the enthusiasm and emotional quality of worship. Özcan Bey remarked at how commonplace it is to have programs of Alevi music and worship on public media like television, something that did not exist in his youth (Interview, May 19, 2014).

#### MUNICIPAL AND COMMERCIAL VENUES

Professional Alevi musicians may appear as part of the lineup at a variety of municipal and commercial entertainment venues. The sites run the gamut from the elegant 915-seat Cemal Reşit Rey (CRR) Concert Hall, located in Maçka, a wealthy section of Istanbul’s Harbiye neighborhood, to Kadıköy’s Nazim Hikmet Cultural Center, across the Boğaz Strait on the city’s Anatolian side, an older complex with an outdoor tea garden and several small conference and performance spaces with 50-250 seats each.



Figure 7.3 Lobby of the Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall.

### A Concert by Erdal Erzincan

*Bağlama* master Erdal Erzincan is a household name among Alevi and aficionados of Anatolian folk music, not only for his widely known music school and published *bağlama* instruction method, but also for years of recorded albums and live concerts. He performed at the CRR Concert Hall on April 7, 2014, commanding around a 70 percent attendance (approximately 650 patrons) in this venue that also hosts prominent performers of western classical, jazz, and popular music. The program, “Beş Bağlamas,” (Five Bağlamas) consisted of a performance on five different types of the instrument, each one representing a different Anatolian region.

A soft-spoken man, Erdal Erzincan quietly seated himself on a lone chair on the stage, surrounded by the instruments he would play. He told the audience that this was more than a concert—it was an exam—as he had carefully studied the five regions and their music in preparation for this concert. In every section of the concert, he played continuously, stringing multiple songs together. As he progressed through each section,

the applause for well-executed, difficult passages grew stronger and lengthier; at the end of the concert, Erdal Erzincan was rewarded with a standing ovation. Prominent *bağlama* masters and singers were in attendance, including Arif Sağ, one of his most important masters.

The program notes for the concert listed song titles, sources for the music and lyrics, the collector of the piece, and the arranger. Erdal Erzincan had collected two of the songs himself and arranged three of them, and two were designated his own compositions. This concert is, in some ways, reminiscent of the circumstances surrounding concerts of *kayagŭm sanjo*, and other Korean folk music genres that have been elevated to art music status and performed for urban, educated elites. In the 1970s performer-scholar Chaesuk Lee studied and published the *sanjos* of the five (and later, six) composer-lineage schools, whereas previous tradition dictated studying with only one master and becoming the bearer of that lineage (similar to *koto* schools and master in Japan).<sup>2</sup> As discussed in Chapter Five, to acknowledge a song's author, region, and sources persons is to affirm the shared contribution in the creation of Turkish folk music in oral tradition, and supersedes the concept of composition, or invention, of one person.

The behavior of the audience at the concert was interesting to note. On the one hand, given the extensive amount of arranging Erdal Erzincan had done for this performance—intellectual property subject to copyright—that could later be used to produce an album, it was not surprising that the venue officially forbade the use of recording devices. On the other hand, given the audience's love for this *bağlama* master,

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<sup>2</sup> *Kayagŭm* is a type of long board zither with twelve strings and moveable bridges, and the *sanjo* composition is a suite of movements in increasingly tempos and concentration of melodic motives. See Lee (1971, 2008).

their eagerness to capture some of his incredible performance, and a Turkish cultural orientation that rules are flexible, many audience members ignored the announcements. During the second half of the concert, ushers aggressively policed the auditorium, confiscating the cell phones of some patrons. The persistence of oral culture in Turkish folk music performance remains an issue with regard to attribution in folkloric resources, arrangements, and compositions, and, at the same time, retains dynamic and fluid dimensions.

### Launching a New Artist

In November, 2013, Cem Doğan, a graduate of the State Conservatory at Istanbul Technical University and a student of Erdal Erzincan, gave a concert to launch his first CD, *Temana* (Beyoğlu Metropol n.d.), at the (approximately) 850-seat auditorium in the Şişli Kent Kültür Merkezi (Şişli City Culture Center). The ticketing process was informal; one of Doğan's friends carrying a roll of tickets went around to those standing in line and asked for twenty Turkish lira (about \$10.00) per person, presumably to cover expenses. In the lobby, copies of the artist's newly recorded CD were on sale.

The concert was lengthy, since both fellow students and invited guests performed. Friends, family members, and fellow performers called out from the audience, made comments from the stage, and generally contributed to an informal, enthusiastic atmosphere. A back-up band that played a *duduk* (double-reed oboe), two guitars, a *daf* (frame drum), and a *bağlama* was available to the performers. After at least one hour of music and an intermission, Doğan took the stage and played all of the tracks from his album, to thunderous applause and call-outs in between songs. The final performers were Tolga Sağ, and Erdal and Mercan Erzincan. After the long applause died down, Erdal

Erzincan spoke, observing that few in the younger generation today learn and support traditional, regional folk music, and praised those who know the music and culture.

Alluding to the political situation in Turkey and the continuing difficulties Alevis face, he said, “We are passing through dirty times, and this music will get us through.” Finally, while standing on stage with his pupil, the master gave Doğan the *tezene* (plectrum) from his *bağlama*, symbolically passing the torch to his student.

### Benefit and Outreach Concerts

Alevi associations often sponsor concerts for charity, education fundraising, or community outreach. A municipal venue with a proscenium stage and passageways for the performers is more conducive to handling a long program of artists, and for this reason may be chosen over a *cemevi*. The concerts are free to the public, usually with a donation box stationed outside the entrance to the auditorium. Musicians donate their time, and, after expenses for the venue are covered the charity receives the remaining funds.

Charity concerts can be marathons, like the one sponsored by the Serçeşme Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği (Serçeşme Cultural and Solidarity Association) on Sunday, March 3, 2013, at the Nurettin Topçu Cultural Center in Bahçelievler, a western section of Istanbul. Announcements billed this concert as lasting from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m., with a formidable line-up of nine Alevi musicians including Cem *Hoca*, Ulaş Özdemir, and Divani *Dede*. Each performer was introduced by the emcee, performed for thirty to forty minutes, and was presented with a certificate of appreciation at the close of his/her segment. Busy performers may or may not be able to squeeze such appearances into their



hectic schedules, with the result that a completely different order of performers or last minute substitutions is the norm. Audience members often stay for a section of the concert rather than the entire performance. Cem *Hoca* was performing in this concert and offered me a ride. He introduced me to several of the performers, and we stayed for two hours of the concert, including his part in the show.

Some concerts are geared toward outreach beyond the Alevi community. The headquarters of the Hacı-Bektaş Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (Hacı-Bektaş Anatolia Culture Foundation) hosted a concert at the Bektaşlar Düğün Salonu (Bektashi Wedding Hall) in Ayazağa, Istanbul, on March 23, 2013. Many members of the foundation's nearby *cemevi* attended, but the event was also open to the public. Several officials gave speeches; Zeynel Şahin, the general president of the foundation, welcomed "our Sunni brothers" to the event and invited them to come to the local *cemevi*.

The concert was an interesting mix of programming. The first part of the program was popular entertainment—a rock musician sang popular Turkish tunes, and guests got up to dance the Black Sea horon, a line dance. Then, İmdat *Dede* performed several Alevi *deyiş*, accompanying women singers from the *cemevi*, and playing solos afterward. The guests were dressed for a Saturday night dance party; the men wore jackets and ties, and the women wore dresses, high heels, and make-up. Midway through the evening a plated meal was served to guests at long rows of tables. Typical of Turkish wedding halls, the tablecloths and napkins were gold lamé tablecloths; the chairs sported similar covers with fluffy knots of tulle fabric behind each one.



Figure 7.4 İmdat Çelebi *Dede* performing with local *cemevi* members

### *Türkü* Houses and Small Stages

Alevi musicians perform at *türkü* houses, social clubs, and other small commercial venues such as those in Taksim, a well-known tourist area. Some venues hire folk musicians as part of a broader lineup of performers including jazz and rock bands, whereas at *türkü* houses, the entertainers specialize in singing Turkish regional folk music. Small facilities may seat sixty persons, while larger houses can accommodate as many as one hundred fifty people. On a given evening the majority of patrons are fans of a particular musician and usually stay for most of the performance. *Türkü* houses serve alcohol, soft drinks, and food pay musicians well for an evening's performance. They are both a good source of revenue and a place to develop and maintain a musician's skills and stamina. A typical weekly lineup may include individual and group performers. Apparently, the "vast majority" of regulars at *türkü* houses are Alevi (Erol 2009:174).

In some circles, *türkü* houses are considered less prestigious than other performance venues, particularly because they serve alcohol. In Turkey, as in other Muslim countries, there has been an underlying tension between more conservative Muslims, who eschew the use of alcohol, and more liberal thinkers. A law passed by the Turkish assembly in 2013 banned the advertising of alcoholic products in stores, bars, and public media, and instituted a 10:00 p.m. curfew for alcohol sales in supermarkets and small shops.<sup>3</sup> Predictions by business leaders that the ban would significantly affect Turkey's nearly \$50 billion tourist industry appear to clash with then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's and the AKP's ideals of building a country based on pious Muslim values. The recent law illustrates conflicts between the values of the AKP and its followers, and those accustomed to a more cosmopolitan lifestyle.

### A Musical Evening with Cem Çelebi

Sıla Türkü Evi is located on a side street off busy Istiklal Street in the heart of Taksim, a major tourist area of Istanbul. As I approach the doorway I can see a stand-up sandwich sign with Cem *Hoca*'s picture on it; information about his appearance was also posted on the venue's Facebook page. Earlier in the day, he had sent a text message about his program to me and other friends and contacts. It's a good climb up three flights of stairs to the venue. The heavy, sliding entry door opens onto a long, narrow room, with a small stage at one end. Padded banquettes and tables and chairs with seating for about sixty patrons line the sides of the room; the kitchen is in the back. The room is dimly lit,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/05/28/turkey-alcohol/2366649/> (accessed June 7, 2013).

softening the garish colors of the reds, purples, and deep yellows of the banquette fabric. There are ashtrays on each table, and votive candles that a waiter lights once you are seated. Turkish folk music is playing loudly on the sound system. Patrons gather at Sila from 8:00 p.m. onward and order food, alcohol, soft drinks, and tea any time before and during the program. This is an evening for friends to spend together with one of them acting as host and picking up the tab.



Figures 7.5 Seating at Sila Türkü Evi

Cem *Hoca* arrives somewhere around 8:30 p.m. and cordially greets patrons and the owner.<sup>4</sup> Next, he begins his sound check—it is the norm to perform with an electrified *bağlama* and a vocal microphone. The sound system is provided by the venue. He tunes his instrument and fusses with the dials on the control board, plays short riffs, and speaks and sings into the microphone; he wants to get the sound right. The volume is turned up rather loud at *türkü* houses, I believe, so that patrons can experience the essence of the emotions conveyed in a song. Sometime between 9:00 and 9:30 p.m. Cem

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<sup>4</sup> The Turkish sense of time is flexible. For example, if someone says he will expect you at 4:00 p.m., it often means from that time onward.

*Hoca* starts the program with an official welcome at the microphone, and launches into a few well-known folk songs strung together as a set. He will tell a funny story and acknowledge close friends in the audience or someone he has invited to play or recite poetry. The first forty-five to sixty minutes is a warm-up for the technical skills he will show off later in the evening.

Cem *Hoca* has a broad knowledge of the music of many of Turkey's geographic regions: the songs deal with lost or unrequited love and social commentary, and include Alevi *deyiş*. He tailors sets of songs to patrons' hometown areas by gleaning this information in conversations when he first arrives or later during his breaks. Later in the evening, Cem *Hoca* plays dances from the Black Sea region where he grew up, which are popular with patrons, especially after they have consumed some *rakı*, the drink of choice at most *türkü* houses. When performing the music of Alevi poets-minstrels, he gives some information about their lives, and with a receptive audience, makes connections to Alevism and his own beliefs. Cem *Hoca* has a generous and open personality, and welcomes amateur musician and poet friends to play and recite during these evenings. He is known for good humor, patience, and an easy-going personality. During his breaks he stops at each table, talking animatedly with patrons and laughing easily at their jokes.

For the first two hours of the program, Cem *Hoca* has been warming up; playing a mix of popular *türküs*, dances, and his own complex arrangements of Alevi *deyiş*. At this point he begins to display some of his best instrumental pyrotechnics. During the *arasaz* Cem *Hoca* elaborates on the basic melody with tremolos and vibrato, scale runs, strums in different registers, and melodic sequences. He has developed his *improvizé* technique to a fine art and receives enthusiastic applause, whistles, and shouts of "bravo" both for

performing patrons' favorite songs and for well-executed, difficult musical passages. Cem *Hoca* is not only a highly skilled instrumentalist but also a very expressive vocalist. He said he pays attention to the words of love songs, and tries to convey their meaning to the audience (Interview, April 5, 2013). To the degree that he plays and sings *türkü* and Alevi music, and as someone who is endlessly in love with the music, he calls himself as an *aşık*.<sup>5</sup>

As the evening progresses and patrons ingest a fair amount of alcohol, they sing along more enthusiastically, gesturing and conducting with their hands and arms to express the lyrics of the songs. The more emotional the lyrics are, the more everyone seems to enjoy the song. Around midnight, they start to write requests for their favorites on paper napkins (*peçete*) and put these on Cem *Hoca*'s knee or on the nearby amplifier while he continues to play; some even give him money, although this is a less common practice. On the one hand, he tries to appeal to the patrons, playing as many requests as possible, and otherwise tailoring his programs according to what he learns from conversation and their responses to the music. On the other hand, Cem *Hoca* has mentioned in conversation that he would prefer it if people could just listen to his performance, instead of talking, playing with their cell phones, and taking selfies. Patrons also take videos of him playing a favorite song or executing difficult techniques playing; he makes performing look easy.

In the last hour of the program, Cem *Hoca* is still going strong, playing elaborate arrangements and singing with great emotional involvement. Although the crowd has

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<sup>5</sup> As mentioned previously, the term *aşık* (bard) is derived from *aşk* (love), thus the musician can be seen as a lover, both on the earth and, as in Sufi and Alevi thought, as one seeking union with God through music.

thinned, his die-hard fans remain—mostly long-time fans and older people familiar with his repertoire. They are finishing their bottles of *raki* and the air is thick with cigarette smoke. The waiter brings a check for a group of five men; the host pays, and they all giving each other warm hugs and kissing each other on both cheeks before leaving. One of them gives a short, loud speech about Cem *Hoca* and his excellent performance—this is followed by another round of applause and whistles by the five men and the other remaining guests. A few songs later, it is 2:00 a.m., and Cem *Hoca* ends his program by thanking the few patrons who have lasted until now for coming to hear him, and mentioning the date of his next program. By now, his phenomenal energy for singing and playing seems somewhat subdued; he is still smiling and in performance mode, but he looks tired. He unplugs and packs up his *bağlama* quickly, throws on a coat, exchanges a final round of thank-yous and goodbyes with the patrons and the owner, and heads out into what is left of the night.

#### Sabahat Akkiraz at the Mekân

The Mekân, also in Taksim, is another small entertainment venue that tends to draw a younger crowd for its broad variety of rock music and Turkish pop. Similar to *türkü* houses, the venue depends on the sales of snacks and drinks rather than a cover charge or entry fee. With just a few high tables and bar stools near the stage, most patrons are expected to stand during the concert. Patrons order soft drinks, wine, and beer, but not hard liquor or platters of food as one would do at a *türkü* bar—the lack of tables and chairs made it more difficult to eat a meal.

Well-known Alevi singer Sabahat Akkiraz (b. 1955) (hereafter Sabahat *Hanım*), who is also a Turkish State Assembly Representative, gave a concert at the Mekân on

April 4, 2014. Although she trained as a traditional folk music singer, she tends toward a more eclectic sound. Her band includes several sizes of *saz*, a *duduk* (double-reed wind instrument), and conga drums and *cajon* among other percussion instruments.

A previous interview with Sabahat *Hanım*'s brother, Hasan Akkiraz, at their recording company, Arda Müzik, secured me an invitation to join them and the other musicians in the Mekân's green room prior to the start of the concert. I had hoped to ask Sabahat *Hanım* a few questions about her work, but this proved nearly impossible because of the steady stream of fans, family, and well-wishers who stopped in to exchange greetings and take a picture with the star. I was able to speak with Sabahat *Hanım*'s arranger and fellow performer, Mustafa Özarlan. When I asked him whether he thought young Turkish people have any interest in Anatolian folk music, he said, "of course" and went on to explain that they mix jazz rhythms with the music to make it more interesting. Markoff refers to Sabahat *Hanım*'s style as a "folk-infused modern sound" (Markoff 2001: 799).

Once the concert began, the band progressed rapidly through several songs in a short time; Sabahat *Hanım* sang only a few verses of each one. She appeared to execute the same pattern for each song—after each verse she sang, she turned to her band to conduct and move around the stage while they played the instrumental interlude. Every song on the program lasted about three minutes. Sabahat *Hanım* may have been trying to include a lot of songs in her program, but it is also possible that each musical selection was kept short since audiences today are much less familiar with older folk music (both *türkü*s and *deyiş* can have more than three verses) (Cem Çelebi, interview, April 5, 2013). I noticed that many patrons used cell phones to access the words to the songs so they



could sing along with Sabahat *Hanım*, a different situation than at Cem *Hoca*'s programs, where many of the patrons seemed to know the lyrics to his music and sang along from memory. In addition, the Mekân's light show positioned above the stage gave Sabahat *Hanım*'s performance a theatrical air, with banks of spotlights with rotating colored filters sweeping over the audience and the performers.

## UNIVERSITIES AND PRIVATE MUSIC SCHOOLS

In this section, I give an overview of instructional curricula and concerts I attended at Istanbul Technical University's State Conservatory, and of private music schools. State conservatories (*devlet konservatuari*) at public universities in Turkey offer more classes in folk music instruction than private universities, but Western music classes, from history to performance to composition, far outnumber courses in either Turkish classical or folk music.

In the conservatory at Istanbul Technical University (İTÜ), the divisions of Çalgi (Instrumental Music) and Ses Eğitimi (Voice Education) offer classes in *bağlama* performance and traditional singing, respectively, in addition to training in Western instruments and voice technique. Alevi music is not distinguished as a separate repertoire from regional music styles in either of these departments, or in the third division, Türk Halk Oyunları (Turkish Folk Dance).

Many private music schools offer lessons in guitar and other Western instruments to appeal to popular tastes. Instruction is not uniform; those familiar with the repertoire by specific Alevi poets and musicians are able to teach those pieces.

## Concerts at the İTÜ State Conservatory

Inside the entry hall of the main conservatory building at Istanbul Technical University (İTÜ) is a large bulletin board with posters and notices for performances. Although all of the university buildings are open to the public, there are fewer directional signs and less general information readily available than at American universities, so an outsider would have to ask a guard at the security booth or know where this information is located.

The vast majority of yearly concerts focus on Western music, with only a few featuring traditional Turkish music. To open the conservatory's small auditorium for the academic year, the faculty who teach Turkish folk and classical music presented a concert on the afternoon of November 13, 2013. Each of the two vocalists, one for folk music and one for classical, was accompanied by the appropriate instrumental ensemble for the style.<sup>6</sup> The first folk music selection was "Gitme Durnam Gitme" which also accompanies the Kırklar semahı, one of the types of semah frequently performed at the end of an urban *cem*. The vocalist first explained that she had chosen this since it was Muharrem, the month of mourning for Alevis, and then she sang accompanied by several *bağlamas*, a *kemençe* (spiked fiddle), the double-reed wind instruments *mey* and *çifte*, and a *daf* (frame drum). The folk music selections listed both the *aşıks* and their regions, whereas the Turkish classical selections listed only the composers' names.<sup>7</sup> The classical

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<sup>6</sup> Folk music instruments include the *bağlama*, *mey* (double reed wind instrument), and *kaval* (transverse flute); classical ensemble instruments include the *'ud* (Arabic lute), *ney* (vertical flute), and *kanun* (board zither).

<sup>7</sup> A system of culling young boys from conquered Ottoman lands and educating them to serve in various palace roles included conversion to Islam and taking a new name.

music singer performed several *şarkı* (classical song form) from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

Other performances I attended at İTÜ during the 2013-2014 academic year included a student concert of regional folk dances and a memorial concert for Cüneyd Orhon (1957-1999), a master of *klasik kemençe* (pear-shaped fiddle) who taught at the conservatory. Faculty members performed folksongs, Turkish classical pieces, and compositions for the instrument. Neither the programs nor those involved with the concerts offered any information about connections to Alevi music or identity. I conducted an online search of several state conservatories and universities in Turkey and discovered that like İTÜ they offer relatively few classes in Turkish folk or classical music study and performance.

### Dershane—Private Music Schools

*Dershane* or *müzik okullu*—private or neighborhood music schools—offer instruction on the *bağlama* in addition to guitar, drums, and other Western-style musical instruments.<sup>8</sup> Some of today's well-known Alevi musicians greatly increased their fame as a result of starting their own music schools. Arif Sağ, with his son Tolga (Arif Sağ Müzik, now called ASM Tolga Sağ Müzik Okullu), and Erdal Erzincan have schools with many branches in the neighborhoods of Istanbul and employ a large number of teachers who give private and group lessons. The *dershane* provides instruction for all

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<sup>8</sup> *Dershane* can also be a generic term for a variety of neighborhood schools, including those that offer preparation for centralized university exams.

levels of *bağlama* instruction and student interest, from those who study for a few years during middle or high school, to those who are serious performers—on arriving for my lesson at Cem *Hoca*'s school I might catch the end of the lesson of one of his very skilled students.

Cem Çelebi and his brothers, Nurettin *Abi* and İmdat *Dede*, opened their music school in 2007 at İmdat *Dede*'s urging. After graduating from the İTÜ State Conservatory and working for Tolga Sağ at ASM (Arif Sağ Müzik) for two years, (2000 to 2002), Cem *Hoca* was giving private lessons and performing. With his brothers as teaching substitutes, he was able to continue his busy schedule.

During the time I studied at the school, İmdat *Dede* was giving private and group lessons, not just substitute teaching for his brother. He appeared to be well known by Alevi families—I sat in on several meetings with families who brought their high-school-aged children to the school because they wanted their children to study with him. While sitting on couches in the main office, we ate pastries that the families brought, drank tea served by Nurettin *Abi*, and İmdat *Dede* talked about lessons and asked about the student's previous *bağlama* instruction. The discussion turned to *Alevilik* after the other topics were covered. Moreover, when members of a family kissed İmdat *Dede*'s hand it was an obvious indicator that the family was Alevi.

As I became more familiar with *Alevilik*, I initiated more conversations with Cem *Hoca* and learned more about the framed photographs and newspaper articles of Alevi poets and musicians on the walls in the hall and reception room. The general Turkish population is not familiar with such information—some may like a particular *türkü* and know the name of its author but not realize that he is an Alevi poet-minstrel.

I had a chance to observe a group lesson, called *meşk*—less expensive than a private lesson—led by İmdat *Dede*. Historially, *meşk* (lesson; model) was an instruction system for the oral transmission of Turkish music, involving the memorization of units of poetic text along with their rhythmic cycles, modes, and interpretation (Behar in O’Connell 2000: 121). Even though the students I observed all played with music notation (hand-written by Cem *Hoca*) in front of them, the oral tradition method of repeating small sections of music after the teacher appeared to be more important. The class consisted of about twenty students, from ten-year-olds to teenagers with varying levels of skill. Each time İmdat *Dede* played a short section, the students would play after him in unison. He then corrected any mistakes he had heard by repeating the particular phrase, both singing the *solfège* syllables and playing it on the *bağlama*. The procedure continued until İmdat *Dede* was satisfied that the mistakes were eliminated; then, they moved on to the next phrase. When they played through the entire song, he sang along. İmdat *Dede* also offers lessons at Alevi associations where he regularly presides over *cems*. On Thursdays from the early afternoon until his preparation time for worship, he teaches children and adult students for very low fees or without charging tuition if they cannot afford to pay.



Figures 7.6 and 7.7 Group Lesson at the Cem Çelebi Music School

Outside of formal lessons at the school, there was often musical activity in the salon (reception room). In addition to İmdat *Dede* and Cem *Hoca*, Nurettin *Abi*—the eldest of the Çelebi siblings and the school’s custodian—plays the long-necked *saz*. While waiting for students to arrive, in between games of backgammon, or at my request, İmdat *Dede* or Nurettin *Abi* would play some music. Others who might pick up a *bağlama* and strum a bit included former students dropping by to say hello, current students waiting for a lesson, or parents waiting during their children’s lessons. If I seemed interested at all in what students or parents were playing, they would modestly apologize, “Excuse me, don’t look at my fault” (*Kusura bakmayın*) or say, “I am still studying” (*Hâlâ çalışırım*).

## SOCIAL CLUBS AND PRIVATE GATHERINGS

Community organizations are among the least well-known places to hear Alevi music because they function more like private clubs than public venues. They may be located in less frequented areas and may announce their activities only to a select group. As mentioned previously, Cem *Hoca* mainly informed friends and fans of his performances by posting a notice on his Facebook page or sending a phone text. In this way community events are similar to private and impromptu music gatherings.

The Fatsalılar Derneği, with branches in İzmir, Ankara, and one in the Mecidiyeköy section of Istanbul, provides monetary and social support to families originating from Fatsa, a small town on the Black Sea. In some ways, this organization functions like an urban Alevi *cemevi*, but without a religious focus. The facility in Istanbul has hosted meetings, wedding celebrations, and cultural programs, and provides a long list of performers on the association's website.<sup>9</sup> Fatissa Restoran, where the association is housed, is a restaurant located halfway down the alley of a small business district away from the main square. There is only a tiny sign over the entrance to the building, and no signage in the entry hall, so one would have to know to take the elevator to the fourth floor. The restaurant is more elegant than a *türkü* house, with comfortably padded chairs and booths, white tablecloths, and wide windows on one side offering a view of the city. Moreover, those who smoke are expected to do so in the hallway, making it a more pleasant experience than a *türkü* house for non-smokers.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fatsalilardernegi.org/dernek-tarihcesi.html> (accessed August 5, 2014.)



Figure 7.8 Fatissa Restoran, Istanbul.

Around January, 2014, Cem *Hoca* began performing at Fatissa Restoran about every two weeks, and was also getting more offers for concerts, radio and television appearances, enabling him to quit performing at *türkü* houses. His programs at Fatissa are very similar to those he has given at *türkü* houses, but the atmosphere is much more homelike because members of his family are involved. His younger brother, Eren, manages these evenings, and his oldest brother, Nurettin *Abi*, and other siblings also act as hosts. As in a *türkü* bar, a kitchen staff prepares and serves food, soft drinks, tea, and alcohol. Patrons eat and drink while watching the show, and write their song requests on napkins. Cem *Hoca* plays some popular folk music, but at Fatissa he has the opportunity to play more Alevi *deyiş*, since the audience is usually mostly Alevi. Moreover, he has more flexibility about how long to play, and the number of breaks to take, etc. His repertoire is extensive enough—one thousand songs by his own reckoning—that he can perform nearly an entire program from a single region, as he did one evening, on finding out that all the patrons were from Erzincan. As at the *türkü* houses, Cem *Hoca* tries to make contacts for concert bookings.





Figure 7.9 Cem Çelebi at Fatissa Restoran

Private gatherings are the most intimate, personal way to experience Alevi music. This gathering occurred more as a natural extension of a shared meal than as a *muhabbet* where the bağlama is passed from person to person. After first meeting Cevahir Canbolat in the winter of 2013, I returned the following fall to interview her and her daughter, Berivan, to find out more about the café she and her supporters had turned into the Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi, and the political struggle with the local municipality. After spending the day talking with both women, the sun began to set, and in keeping with the famous tradition of Turkish (and Alevi) hospitality, they invited me to their small restaurant where they serve savory pastries and Turkish pasta prepared with yogurt. Several friends also came by to eat and discuss Turkish politics. Then Cevahir *Hanım* picked up her *bağlama* and began to sing; those who knew the lyrics joined in, and in between the songs there was more discussion of politics and the current situation of

Alevis. There was a sense that each of us had something to contribute; even I played a part with my simple questions.

Another impromptu gathering took place on the grounds of the Şahkulu Sultan Dergâhı, the restored dervish lodge. The first of two Sunday afternoon *cems* was well underway when I arrived, so I decided to wait until the second *cem* began rather than interrupt the one in progress. After walking around the grounds, I made my way to a covered pavilion where several *bağlama* players were seated on benches. The younger players were trying to pick out the tunes the older men were playing, but did not seem to know the *deyiş* very well and thus ended up watching. The songs were not familiar to me, but the strums and melodic phases were similar to those of music I learned from Cem *Hoca*. All of the *bağlama* players under the pavilion were men; a few other women came to sit and listen.

## ALEVI MUSIC AND THE MEDIA

Although the primary focus of this dissertation is live performance, it is important to mention several types of media that developed rapidly in the 1990s, making Alevi music available to a global public, including television, radio, compact disc recordings, and the Internet. These new communications networks, many of them privately owned, shifted the production and control of knowledge from traditional religious scholars like *dedes* to the broader public (Yavuz 1999:181). Music on this scale thus played a key role for Alevis in articulating and formulating and building authority for identity.

### Music Producers and Recordings

From the early years of the Turkish Republic until the 1960s, Alevi poet-minstrels performed at Halkevleri (People's Houses) and cultural festivals, and appeared on state-sponsored radio programs and high-profile record labels such as Columbia and RCA Victor (Markoff 2002: 796). Their music was regarded by the state as folk music rather than as a separate Alevi repertoire. Limits on programming were imposed in the 1970s by the state-run Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) when some leftist groups appropriated *türkü*s with politically oriented texts in order to express their contemporary struggles. Even so, some professionals promoted Alevi religious music on the air. The increase in public Alevi musical activity from the mid-1980s onward paved the way for the eventual recognition of some professional Alevi musicians, poets, and composers, and of musical pieces recognized as Alevi—at least by Alevis themselves—that have come to be performed and recorded.

Alevi musicians who perform *türkü*s may be featured on compilation compact discs in the general marketplace; however, in order to find entire albums geared for Alevi audiences that contain works by recognized Alevi poets and current musicians, one must seek out the smaller labels such as Güvercin, ASM, Kalan Müzik, and Arda Müzik. These and other recording companies, along with film enterprises, compact disc distributors, and stores selling musical instruments, instruction books, and equipment, are located in the Unkapanı neighborhood of Istanbul in the İMÇ—the Istanbul Manifaturacılar Çarşısı (Manufacturers Bazaar).

Arda Müzik, one of several well-known Turkish recording labels, was started in 1999, when Hasan Akkiraz (hereafter, Hasan *Bey*) took over the directorship from his uncle.<sup>10</sup> His uncle had produced albums of popular Turkish music along with those featuring Alevi folk music, but Hasan *Bey* and his sister, Sabahat *Hanım*, took an additional interest in both recording contemporary Alevi musicians and capturing the repertoires of older, rural musicians. The Akkirazs, who are particularly interested in the geographic “triangle” of Sivas, Malatya, and Maraş, have been for some years recording elder *dedes* and other masters who also worked the land throughout their lives. For example, the album *Hıdır Dede Sesinden (Sounds From Hıdır Dede, Arda 2012)* reflects this *dede*’s rural, rough-hewn singing style. One *duvaz imam* from this album was analyzed in Chapter Four. Hasan *Bey* likens rural *dedes* to American blues masters whom

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the albums use the Arda Müzik label only while others include Akkiraz Müzik Film Yapım (Music Film Production).

he describes as leading humble lives and earning a living at farming or other manual labor (Interview, December 18, 2014).<sup>11</sup>

Sabahat *Hanım*, Hasan Bey's older sister and co-owner and director of Arda Müzik, is a principal recording artist for the company and a beloved Alevi singer. She developed an impressive singing talent as a child, and has worked with Arif Sağ and many other Alevi and non-Alevi artists. Although the family emigrated to Germany during her teenage years, Sabahat *Hanım* did not give up her artistic development and began her recording career in the early 1980s. The family members are educated, urban dwellers, and, like other revivalist musicians, they retain the view that Alevi folk traditions were at one time simple and spontaneous, and are rooted in unlettered rural people—a view that reflects both Kemalist nation-building projects from the early years of the Turkish Republic and revivalist associations linking authenticity with a long-ago rural past.

Hasan *Bey* was about twelve years old when the *Muhabbet* cassettes were first released in the early 1980s. He characterizes the series of seven recorded by “the first professional Alevi musicians” as a labor of love rather than a profit venture. Originally issued by the Şah Plak label, the recordings were re-released in compact disc format by Arda Müzik after it purchased the older company (Interview, December 18, 2014).

The Akkiraz family connection to the Sivas-Malatya-Maraş areas of Anatolia is one of Sabahat *Hanım*'s primary claims to her authenticity as an Alevi performer. She began to sing folk music from an early age in what is now considered the heartland of Alevi folk tradition and history. As Sheldon Posen writes, “A performer's connection

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<sup>11</sup><http://www.biyografi.info/kisi/sabahat-akkiraz>  
<http://www.biyografi.net/kisiayrinti.asp?kisiid=4706> (accessed June 6, 2015).

with tradition—his ‘authenticity’—if it was promoted, became an emblem of that performer’s persona” (1993: 129). Hasan *Bey* believes that the only true Alevi practices left are being carried out in this area of Anatolia, where women still worship the sun and moon, and *cem* ceremonies are not shared with outsiders. He elaborated further by emphasizing that this is the *otentik* Alevi music they try to uncover and preserve by making trips to rural areas to meet with *dedes* and musicians and to collect *deyiş* and other music.<sup>12</sup> Sabahat *Hanım*’s commercial fame does not impress people in rural areas: in one village she and her brother were apparently kept waiting for one week before they could meet with the *dede*.

Arda Müzik is not solely dedicated to producing recordings of rural Alevi performers, as evidenced by the enormous variety of compact disc albums displayed on wall-to-wall shelves in the reception area of the company office. Albums for sale include those by popular artists with mixed musical styles, as well as those of jazz and rock musicians. Most of my hosts in Istanbul were young professionals who very much preferred Western-style popular music and mixed styles to Turkish folk music. All of them spoke English and, I think, identified with western culture. When I invited them to attend *cem*s or concerts of traditional music, no one was interested. “That’s village music” or “that’s what my grandparents listened to” was the response.

Albums of Alevi music, whether produced with Alevi audiences or a global market in mind, tend to portray the music as ancient, timeless, and unchanging through the use of certain photos and illustrations. The front cover of *Firkat*, a solo album by

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<sup>12</sup> Both Sabahat *Hanım* and Hasan *Bey* use the word “otentik,” but it is a borrowed word; it is unclear whether it has the same meaning as the English term “authentic.”

Muharrem Temiz (Arda Müzik 2004), shows him playing the *bağlama* in front of a stone and wood wall. Even the recordings released by research organizations are often studio-produced. The album cover of *Alevi ve Bektaşî Deyişleri*, a two-CD set produced by Gazi University’s branch of the Türk Kültürü ve Hacı-Bektaş Veli Araştırma Merkezi (Turkish Culture and St. Hacı-Bektaş Research Center), features a drawing of an old man with a beard, perhaps a dervish, seated on a stone with mountains in the background and playing what appears to be a *kopuz*—an older type of Turkmen folk lute. In contrast to the impression given by the album cover, all of the tracks on the compact disc are professionally arranged and performed by conservatory-trained vocalists and instrumentalists rather than recorded in traditional contexts. In another example, Turkish Sufi Music, an album featuring Ali Ekber Çiçek, is marketed to a global public by juxtaposing the phrases “the dry sunbaked hills of Anatolia” and “a sophisticated musical form rarely heard” to convince the buyer that the music is exotic yet complex enough to be interesting. Such marketing methods resemble the ways that the pan-Andean “authentic” music is marketed, with urbanized ensembles that include *zampon* (panpipes), *charango* (small, stringed guitar), and *kena* (vertical flute) (Rios 2008; 2012).

### Radio and Television Programs

*Telli Turnam* (The Stringed Crane) is a weekly one-half hour program broadcast on one of several Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) music channels hosted by Musa Eroğlu (b. 1944).<sup>13</sup> The show features guest artists who converse and perform with the

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.trtmuzik.net.tr/> (accessed February 3, 2015).

host in front of a live audience, with Alevi music included as part of the repertoire. Musa Eroğlu, from Mersin in eastern Anatolia, has influenced many generations of traditional folk musicians. The Turkish Ministry of Culture recognized him as a State Artist in 1998.

The music performed on the show appears to be familiar to the audience; frequent camera pans show them singing along or clapping in time to the songs, although it is possible that the words are projected on a studio screen so that audience members can be seen singing. As each song is played, its title and source person(s) appear on the screen for the benefit of home viewers. It is likely that the TRT carefully controls the program's content, and does not allow the performance of any songs that may have been appropriated by radical political groups critical of the state. It is also likely that the audience members are pre-selected—there is a mix of women with and without headscarves. Although the TRT Müzik channel website does not currently provide access to archived programs of *Telli Turnam*, there are quite a few YouTube postings of the episodes.

Yön Radyo (Radio) is headquartered in Okmeydanı, not far from Cem Çelebi's music school.<sup>14</sup> The station's director, Yüksel Kılınç, explained that Alevi music is included as part of their traditional music offerings rather than treated as a separate program category (Interview, December 7, 2014). In addition to daily news and other programming, there are seven online channels. Alevi music can appear on both the "Türkü" and "Anatolia" channels; the others include "World," "Ethnic," and "Rock." In spite of the lack of a separate channel for Alevi music, it is interesting to note that the

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Cranes are an important symbol in Alevi poetry, in that they mate for life (divorce is generally not accepted in Alevism), and one type of *semah* is named after their graceful movements.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.yonradyo.com.tr/> (accessed December 4, 2014).



five most recent posts of twelve pages of the “Music News” section of the website (dating back to 2010) feature three well-known Alevis. One story profiles the vocal methods of singer Cavit Murtezaoğlu, two articles highlight Arif Sağ, (also the current president of MESAM), and a fourth gives details about a memorial concert for Berkin Elvan, the Alevi youth who died as a result of the Gezi Park protests of June 2013.<sup>15</sup>



Figures 7.10 and 7.11 Studios at Yön Radyo

The Cem Vakfi (Cem Foundation), created in 1995, privately owns Cem TV. The foundation’s president, Izzettin Doğan, is a controversial figure for many Alevis. Cem TV broadcasts a variety of general news, travel, human-interest programs, and those focusing religious content, such as “Cem İbadet (Cem Worship)” and “Cem Dünyasından (From the Cem World).” The current Alevi-Bektaşî Federation president hosts the two named programs that explain Islam and *Alevilik* from the Cem Vakfi’s point of view. During Muharrem and other important religious celebrations, there are broadcasts of

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<sup>15</sup> On the way to buy bread during the protests in Taksim Berkin Elvan was hit in the head with a tear gas canister, remained a coma for many months, and died in March 11, 2014. Vigorous protests occurred in Turkey and all over the world.

*cems*, *muhabbets*, and musical performances. As mentioned previously in Chapter Three, the Cem Vakfi is the principal promoter of the *cami-cemevi* project; that is, the mosque-Alevi assembly house, in which the two facilities are built together. There has been much disagreement among Alevis as to the sincerity of this project; many feel it is one part of the state's assimilationist agenda directed at them. In addition, in 2013 Arda Müzik and other small record labels resolved to boycott Cem TV and Radio in response to the foundation's alleged illegal use of their artists' works on the stations.<sup>16</sup>

### Alevi Music on the Internet

If one is familiar with the name of an Alevi musician or the first line of a song (authored or anonymous), it is easy to find a wealth of performances on the Internet. Videos are posted both by fans of the artists and by the artists themselves. *Cem Hoca's* İzmir Konseri (concert) performed at Ege University in December 12, 2012, is accessible on YouTube in its entirety from a professional recording, and in individual songs from fans' cell phone recordings.<sup>17</sup> *Cem Hoca* has also posted some of his television appearances on Barış TV, Cem TV, and *Ezgiler* on TV 52—a music program hosted by Ata Bahir Çağlayan.

The Turkish government has periodically tried to control access to Internet media. In March 2014, just prior to local elections the Turkish government blocked access to Twitter, and access to YouTube one week later in the name of national security breaches.

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/cem\\_tvye\\_boykot\\_karari-1150727](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/cem_tvye_boykot_karari-1150727) (accessed January 25, 2014) and <http://dersimnews.com/manset/muzik-sirketlerinden-cem-tv-ve-cem-radyoya-yayin-yasagi.html> (accessed February 3, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1nPE0qnK40> (accessed August 15, 2013).

Turkey's Constitutional Court, ruling in favor of free speech, lifted the bans on May 29, 2014.<sup>18</sup>

#### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CEM ÇELEBI

The sixth of seven children, Cem Çelebi (b. 1977) grew up in a small village on the outskirts of Fatsa District (current estimated population 108,635) in Ordu Province.<sup>19</sup> One sister remarked that they were rich in food, which they farmed themselves, but not in money (personal communication). Their father tried several occupations over the years and at one point recruited his two daughters to weave carpets to sell. Cem *Hoca* describes his father as very strict, with little tolerance for rowdiness, as when his older brothers played ball games in the house.

Cem *Hoca* started playing the long-necked *bağlama* secretly at the age of five or six years. His older brothers had apparently broken musical instruments in the midst of their roughhousing, so Cem was not allowed to have one.<sup>20</sup> He remembers memorizing the finger positions while watching his older brother, İmdat, play the *bağlama* and begging his mother to let him practice while she did the housework, when the others were not at home. He sat in front of her and practiced, propping up the instrument's neck with pillows. The rest of the family was shocked to discover that he had been teaching himself to play. He learned folk music from cassette tapes, radio and television programs, and

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-top-court-rules-youtube-ban-violates-freedom-of-speech.aspx?pageID=238&nID=67172&NewsCatID=339> (accessed January 24, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.citypopulation.de/php/turkey-ordu.php?adm2id=TR90206> (accessed January 21, 2016)

<sup>20</sup> The Çelebis all sing and several of them play the *bağlama*.

local performances by traveling musicians, since the family could not afford to pay for a teacher. Cem *Hoca* began singing *deyiş* around the age of eight; his father made him play late into the nights, sometimes for Alevi elders who came to the house. Even at this tender age, a voracious desire to learn as much music as he could, established Cem *Hoca*'s career path as a musician. He began to perform for school ceremonies and gave his first large concert in high school—a benefit for a student with kidney disease.

While Cem *Hoca* was studying in the State Conservatory at Istanbul Technical University (1996-2001), he performed at *türkü* houses during the evenings to help pay family debts. Those years were times of both rapid musical development and dire financial straits: sometimes he had to choose between buying new *bağlama* strings or a bowl of soup. With classes by day and performances at night—sometimes until 5:00 a.m.—there was little time for rest; “I would have given the world for five minutes of sleep” (personal communication, February, 2015).<sup>21</sup> In spite of these difficulties, he believes he was playing better at that time than other performers with more established reputations, and began to develop his repertoire along with the musical techniques that would shape his style.

Cem *Hoca* describes himself as an addict (*eroınman* in Turkish) with regard to his compulsion to practice and perfect musical techniques. He tries to bring something new to each concert; for example, additions to the *arasaz* that he refers to as *improvizé*. If I had to pause to work out a troublesome musical phrase during one of my *bağlama*

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<sup>21</sup> When I was expected to perform in one of Cem *Hoca*'s programs, sometimes he introduced me very late in the evening. As I struggled through my fatigue to play, I realized it was nothing compared to the exhaustion he must have experienced during his university years.

lessons, Cem *Hoca* would practice his own technically demanding exercises. Five or six hours of daily practice is not enough for him.

Cem *Hoca* is an *Alevi* by heredity and in practice. He counts the beliefs of his family as a primary source of culture and learning, and names revivalist musicians as his musical masters. Like the *zakirs* I interviewed, Cem *Hoca* believes that words and music are equally important in all of the pieces he plays. His repertoire includes music by contemporary and past Anatolian poets, particularly those loved by Alevis, including Pir Sultan Abdal (1480-1550), Aşık Veysel Satioğlu (1894-1973), and Mahzuni Şerif (1940-2002). He emphasized that they are among his musical guides and sources of inspiration; the more he plays and studies their poetry, the more depth of meaning he finds. Like many Alevis today, he interprets their messages as humanistic and inclusive of all faiths.

Cem *Hoca* relies on a variety of music performances for income outside of his music school, but it is a struggle for him and other musicians who want to avoid commercialization. When I first met him in the summer of 2012, he was performing weekly at *türkü* houses in tourist areas like Taksim, but by January, 2014 he had switched to more upscale venues like the Fatissa Restoran in Mecidiyeköy and Sazende in Ankara. Cem *Hoca* has given concerts at large venues such as Ege University's Yunus Emre Theater, (December 6, 2012), a 625-seat venue named for the thirteenth-century Turkish poet and Sufi mystic, and at smaller halls such as the 140-seat theater at Nazim Hikmet Cultural Center in Kadıköy (January 25, 2014). In 2008, he performed the solo part in the Aşık Veysel Oratorio *Kara Toprak* (Black Earth), a composition by composer by Murat

Kodallı, for *bağlama* solo, symphony orchestra, and chorus (Interview, March 2013). The performance can be viewed on YouTube.<sup>22</sup>

Although he most often performs solo, Cem *Hoca* also appears on radio and television programs with musicians who include western instruments in their ensemble. In a guest appearance on *Ezgiler* that aired November 13, 2014, he performed “Şemsiyemin Ucu Kare “(The Edges of My Umbrella) with the program’s host, Ata Bahri Çağlayan, who played the long-necked *bağlama*, and several other musicians on electronic keyboard, and various percussion instruments.<sup>23</sup>

Cem *Hoca* believes in maintaining a wide range of regional folk music styles, and he can be critical of other musicians who specialize in the music of only one region or play only one type of *bağlama*. He also avoids concert producers who expect a pop sound achieved with a mix of Turkish and Western instruments. In his view, performers of more popular westernized styles or Turkish *arabesk* music can name their fees.<sup>24</sup> Most producers in Turkey and Europe will not support artists who play a traditional repertoire: those who do have an interest often have limited financial resources. Cem *Hoca* more frequently performs at small venues where his style is appreciated, and for little or no remuneration at Alevi-sponsored charity and cultural events. He has not garnered big recording contracts thus far; *Yalan Dünya* (The Transitory World) was recorded in 2006 (Güverçin Müzik) and *Itikat* (Faith) in 2012. His current finances do not allow him to retain a publicity agent, and he has not always had good luck with publicity connections

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<sup>22</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPBRGaaktqE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPBRGaaktqE) (accessed June 15, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvjRoc2JJDQ>.

<sup>24</sup> Arabesk is a popular music of emotions and the inner self, centering on themes of loneliness, oppression and self-destruction (see Stokes 1992).

recommended by friends, so he relies on friends and influential fans, as well as his own efforts to book appearances.

## MUSIC—CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

One result of the folklore collection projects of the early Turkish Republic was loss through standardization. Ege University musician-scholar Gani Pekşen, whose research focuses on the Tahtacı, a subcultural group of Alevis in the Mediterranean Sea area, explained that TRT-produced versions of folk songs taught in conservatories are not a fit with older, regional Turkish songs, nor with the way that women *aşıks* (bards) sing (see Cinar 2008). Moreover, as songs are passed down through generations, grandchildren might not be able to play the music their grandparents played. In addition, stylistic nuances and complex musical tunings are abandoned as artists copy the styles of more popular, revivalist Alevi performers (Interview August 9, 2012). Privatized repertoire collection of musical materials in Anatolia means that musicians can be in direct contact with their sources rather than having to contend with mediation through state or another agencies.

The entry of Alevi music into the public sphere as a result of the work of revivalist musicians in the mid-1980s, and the proliferation of mediated music in the 1990s and onward, brought about an increase in neighborhood music schools. Although İTÜ's state conservatory produced such notable graduates in traditional *bağlama* as Arif Sağ (b. 1945), Erdal Erzincan (b. 1971), and Cem Çelebi (b. 1977), they started their own music schools rather than teach in universities. Unlike academic institutions that are subject to the degree requirements and curriculum limitations, private music schools can

offer individualized instruction to students who show promise at an early age, as well as group lessons for those who have an interest in music study, but may not continue to an advanced level. The flexibility of private music schools attests to the greater success and influence of this type of education setting. As mentioned earlier, it is common for young, urban *zakirs* to study in private music schools today. Highly talented students like Berivan Canbolat and Cem Doğan, who have worked closely with an urban *bağlama* master like Erdal Erzincan, have developed a master-student relationship that in some ways replaces that of past rural settings in a process that perpetuates dimensions of oral transmission.

One popular interpreter of Alevi music, Erkan Oğur (b. 1954), is regarded with a great deal of respect, perhaps even that accorded to *dedes* even though he is neither Alevi nor part of the clergy. Turkish musicologist Okan Murat Öztürk believes that fans view Oğur's collaboration with musician Ismail Hakkı Demircioğlu as compatible with the humanistic ideals of today's *Alevilik* (Interview, February 18, 2014). One track performed by the two musicians is included in the album *Aleviler'e II* (Kalan Müzik 2015).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have presented contexts for Alevi music performances outside of the *cem*; *sohbets*, *muhabbets*, concerts, music instruction settings, social clubs and private gatherings have blurred former distinctions between sacred and secular contexts. I have also discussed the *muhabbets* of influential musician and *dede* Dertli Divani that both



introduce people to Alevi traditions and train young *zakirs*. I have related the musical and faith-based learning processes of several *zakirs* and their desire to represent Alevi music: having attended worship services from an early age with their families was a particularly important factor in their ongoing participation in *cems*.

I have discussed the balance professional musicians maintain between giving performances for which they are paid, and donating their time and talents to the Alevi community; for example, benefit and outreach concerts sponsored by Alevi associations. The musical evening at the wedding hall (a neutral location rather than a *cemevi*) in Ayazağa, Istanbul, sponsored by an Alevi association, was important for welcoming speeches aimed at Sunni neighborhood residents. The program included performances of rock music, Black Sea dances, and Alevi *deyiş*.

I have described performances by Alevi musicians at *türkü* houses, supper clubs, and other small venues, and compared the different styles of Cem Çelebi and Sabahat Akkiraz. My ethnographic account of a musical evening with Cem Çelebi illustrated the ways that he cultivates a relationship with the audience, talking with patrons during breaks, tailoring his program to their regional interests, and playing requests. Cem *Hoca*'s story is similar to that of other talented Alevi musicians from areas in Anatolia who gained training and experience in a large city. Ironically, his family's dire financial straits served his musical development during his years at Istanbul Technical University. His dedication to a traditional performing style is a challenge in the face of more popular Turkish music styles, and audiences who are less familiar with his repertoire.

I have discussed the influence of private music schools over universities for their ability to accommodate students of wider age ranges and flexibility in curriculum. If

Alevi music repertoire is included in conservatory courses of study, it is included as part of the vocal, instrumental, or folk dance departments rather than set apart as a separate body of music.

I have presented the ways that Alevi music is available on compact disc recordings, through broadcast media, and the Internet. Hasan and Sabahat Akkiraz, co-owners of Arda Müzik, who collect the music played by musicians and *dedes* in the Sivas-Malatya-Maraş area, follow a similar approach to that of other revivalist musicians and producers. A number of labels like Güvercin, Kalan Müzik, and Arda Müzik have produced albums specifically for Alevi audiences since the early 1990s. In spite of performances by trained urban professionals with innovative styles, much of Alevi music is marketed as ancient and unchanging, as illustrated by album covers and marketing copy. I have discussed Alevi and Turkish folk music presented on TRT programs, and privately owned Cem TV and Cem Radio stations, and Internet posts by fans and musicians on such sites as YouTube. Cem *Hoca* has also posted some of his television appearances. The Turkish government has periodically blocked access to YouTube and other social media, but the courts have reversed such decisions.

Changes in the Alevi music repertoire have come about through standardized versions of TRT-produced folk songs (including some works by poet-minstrels), urbanization, and the circulation of arrangements by more popular Alevi performers. Older tunings and interpretations are lost as *bağlama* students with busy, urban lives find it easier to learn from local and commercial sources than to travel to find regional

musicians, although the relationship between a talented student and a revivalist bağlama musicians can replace the master-student relationship from past rural times. As Alevi music has become more accessible in a global market, it has also had to compete with popular music trends: keeping the music appealing to urban, educated audiences while maintaining ties with traditional musical elements has proved to be a challenge. In Chapter Eight I offer conclusions and discuss topics for further research.

## CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSIONS

### CONTEMPORARY ALEVI MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Alevi music currently performed in urban and small-town areas is a fluid, loosely constructed, rather than fixed, body of music, with both notated and orally transmitted dimensions. The works that have come to be recognized as Alevi include different types of sung poetry music of the *cem* proper, such as *duvaz imams*, *tevhids* and *semahs* (also executed as movement), and *deyiş*, attributed to Şah Hatayı, Alevi-Bektaşî dervish-lodge poets and *aşıks* from the thirteenth century onward, and twentieth-century *aşıks*. The use of the *koşma* verse form, although favored by Alevi *aşıks* and poets, is not exclusive to their works. Musical characteristics include a characteristic cadence at the ends of phrases, and both regular and irregular rhythmic groupings—3+2+2+3 expressed in 10/8 meter is fairly common. Alevi music is essentially monophonic, whether performed by a soloist or a group, but the effect of multiple courses of strings and stacked chord-like configurations lends a sonorous texture to the music.

In Alevi music, as in the broader Turkish folk music repertoire, acknowledging connections to rural sources is of paramount importance: new arrangements must therefore preserve the essential features of a song—lyrics, vocal melody, and meter. Performers have some flexibility in elaborating the melody of verses and refrains, and the length and quality of instrumental interludes, but the main features must be clearly rendered.

My research found that context, time, and place, including the presence of an Alevi audience, largely determine what music is performed. Sung poems such as the *duvaz imam*, the *deyiş*, and the *semah*, once played exclusively in the *cems* of a rural past, may retain strong associations with ritual, yet they began to enter the public listening sphere in the mid-1940s through early radio programs, cassette recordings, and festival performances (but were referred to as folk music). *Dedes* disagree on the appropriateness of including *semah* and sung prayers and hymns in cultural events: some advocate the celebration and promotion of Alevi culture while others maintain that the *cem* is a spiritual practice and should not be presented in other contexts (Sokefeld 2008: 158). In Chapter Five, I discussed the *deyiş* as a crossover category of sung poem performed in many different situations such as *cems*, festivals, *muhabbets*, *türkü* houses, and social clubs, contexts that run the gamut from sacred to secular. In addition, the use of the terms *deyiş* and *türkü* have different implications; the former associated with Alevi repertoire and style, and the latter indicating a broader association with Turkish folk music.

Music plays a fundamental role in constructing Alevi identity, both in a larger, imagined community (Anderson 2006) and in local face-to-face interactions. Music on compact disc, radio and television programs, and the Internet—YouTube, Facebook, and Alevi association websites—connects Alevis in cyberspace. Convening in person for music events enables Alevis to socialize with other insiders and learn and reinforce cultural narratives. Such events and activities create bonding or *communitas* (Turner 1974) by virtue of the common experience of participation.

## REVIVAL—SOCIOCULTURAL AND MUSICAL

The Alevi sociocultural revival movement went public in 1989-90, launching the rise of public *cemevis*, an Alevi print culture, and renewed interest in Alevi heritage and faith practices. Umbrella associations connected Alevis in Turkey and those in migrant communities in continental Europe and the United Kingdom. The revival movement occurred on the eve of new communication technologies including some radio and television stations with an Alevi viewpoint (Yavuz 2003: 183-184). New media contributed to increasing the profile of revivalist musicians who were infusing new life into traditional repertoire through musical innovations and the use of the short-necked *bağlama*, which became the standard type of *saz* in urban *cems* and at private music schools.

As Livingston (1999) argues, a critical factor in music revivals is the role played by core revivalists. Central to the Alevi music revival are professional musicians who were infusing new life into traditional repertoire through musical innovations and the use of the short-necked *bağlama*, which became the standard type of *saz* in urban *cems* and at private music schools. Their work resulted in greater interest in Alevi music and *bağlama* study in private music schools and in *cemevis*. Musicians Arif Sağ had established private music schools in the early 1980s, and his now-famous pupil, Erdal Erzincan, later established his own school with extensive branches—these schools employ many teachers in multiple urban locales. Alevi musicians in migrant communities in European cities gained students in private music schools, and *cemevis* began to offer *bağlama* classes focusing on the music of the *cem* (Klebe 2008). Currently, professional musicians

and *dedes* who play *bağlama* travel among these urban areas to give concerts and participate in Alevi music events.

Alevi revivalist musicians are in a unique position. On the one hand, in order to make a living, they perform a wide variety of regional Turkish folk music, negotiating their musical identities in terms of authenticity to different audiences, as when Sabahat Akkiraz performed at the Meykân in Taksim, or in the various concerts and musical programs given by Cem Çelebi. Alevi musicians strive to maximize their popularity and respectability, and consider themselves “the representatives of ‘real’ Alevi music” (Erol 2009a: 178; quotes in original). On the other hand, they frequently donate their time to Alevi community events and charity performances, and it appears, in these situations, that they do not regard performing and music production as a commercial business. I conclude that the revival of Alevi music cannot be reduced merely to a commercial enterprise on the part of the artists, nor to modes of consumption on the part of fans and aficionados. A commitment to traditional styles may mean less fame and income, but keeps professional Alevi musicians connected to the community, making music together, sharing repertoire and playing techniques, and performing with *zakirs* and *dedes*. The combination of these activities and attitudes constitutes a musical community as defined by Shelemay: “the outcome of a combination of social and musical processes” that creates connections among those participating in musical activity (2001: 365).

## MUSIC AND COMMUNITY

Membership in the Alevi community is more than a matter of self-declaration and recognition by others. Barth (1993) posits that identity, as a social construction, must be

understood as a relationship between events and human behavior as interpreted within a cultural system of meanings. Music making in the form of the shared Alevi repertoire reenacts this relationship. The performance of sung poems that contain social criticism and moral examples reinforces the belief system of *Alevilik* and its values and mores, but is open to individual interpretation.

For Alevis, an important element of community is the connection between music and spiritual (*ruhsal, manevi*) feeling. *Dedes* described the progress of building enthusiasm (*coşku*) through participation in sung poetry, up to and including the *semah*—the peak of worship and feeling. Research conducted by Becker and Penman (2009) found that subjects listening to music of their own choosing had stronger emotional responses (increased heart rate, being moved to tears) than to randomly selected music, suggesting the importance of the listener's relationship to the music. From this point of view, it is possible to speculate that those congregation members who display strong emotional responses to *cem* music have a relationship to that music, and that patterns of response are reinforced over time by continued participation, similar to spiritual arousal cultivated in the enactment of Sufi ritual (Qureshi 1986; Shannon, 2004). I observed that *zakirs* experience strong emotional responses to the music they perform, in addition to the responses they evoke in the congregation. Although such responses in other performance contexts were not always as evident as in *cem*s, I observed audience members in secularized contexts, such as at *türkü* houses, singing along, conducting, and moving to the music. Cem *Hoca* spoke of deep love for the music he performs, and as such, calls himself an *aşık* (lover, enraptured one).



## ALEVIS AND TURKEY'S SOCIOPOLITICAL SPHERE

Alevi today are still not unified in their understandings of *Alevilik*, or in practices of faith. Yet, both those who have strong ties to ritual and those who identify culturally as Alevi consider themselves to be modern citizens, and use words like *ilerici* (progressive), *ileri* (modern, advanced), and *insanlık* (humanism). Alevi maintain that they have always practiced the values of universal ideology such as humanism and modernism (Vorhoff 2003), and that this ideology is expressed in the music of their poet-musicians. The legacy of revivalist musicians and the sociocultural revival movement is that of a new authenticity for Alevi music and ritual. Revival collapses time and space in order to create contemporary meaning—new symbols disguised as the old (Bohlman 1998). The practice of music and ritual in the present provides legitimacy and a sense of continuity, both within the community and in confronting state politics that attempt to control Alevi difference.

The Turkish state's continuing agenda to achieve a uniformly pious (Sunni) society begs the question of whether there is a place for ethno-religious diversity in the country's climate of Islamist identity politics and increasingly exclusionary attitudes toward difference. Some scholars interpret this agenda as part of the search for Ottoman roots through the shared beliefs of Islam (Karpas 2000), while others have more recently described it as economic expansion and world influence in the Ottoman model (White 2013), yet neither vision provides a place for minorities. Although Alevi have sought the help of the European Court of Human Rights on issues of compulsory religious education and providing state funds for *cemevi* utilities, the rulings have not changed state attitudes or policies toward Alevi. A larger, continuing contention between the state and the

larger Alevi community is that of the state's refusal to grant *cemevis* equal status with that of mosques, although Alevi communities in European cities have received recognition as religious communities.

The practice of Alevi music remains a central and highly valued social activity, reinforcing Alevi belonging and boundary maintenance in multiple contexts. Musical participation is an act of resilience and stamina, and serves as a symbol of faith and collective action as Alevis continue to challenge Turkish state governance in its attitudes toward human rights, education, and religious piety.

## CONTRIBUTION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In this dissertation, I have illustrated the role of music in creating Alevi identity and community. The complexities of claiming Alevi difference as a religious and ethnic minority in Turkey are matched by multiple discourses and opinions within the community regarding the meaning of Alevi identity. Music also plays a complex role in constructing Alevi identity through musical and social processes: music making creates social solidarity, provides spiritual and devotional inspiration, and both generates and reinforces the cultural capital shared by revivalist musicians and their supporters.

In my Introduction to the dissertation, I offered the reader my initial impressions of Turkey and described the development of my research questions and fieldwork. Chapter Two provided frames for the theoretical approaches and issues that arose from my research, including concepts of modernity, minority, and ethnicity in the relationship between Alevis and the state, and theories of social participation, musical revival, and *communitas* and the music collective in community formation and music making. In

Chapter Three, I provided a look at Turkey's socio-political trends since the founding of the Republic, and discussed folklore collection projects, the rise of Islamist political parties, and other events and circumstances that affected Alevis and music practices. In Chapters Four and Five, I analyzed and discussed several types of sung poems in the Alevi repertoire before situating them in their performance contexts. I illustrated the ways that mystical songs (*deyiş*) are a crossover genre performed in several contexts, talked about the problems of categories of songs and their implications for listening audiences, and described the ways the repertoire provides devotional and moral inspiration to Alevis. Sections on *bağlama* performance practices, authorship, and Sufi poetry provided important background information to understanding Alevi music. In Chapter Six, I introduced the *cem* ritual and Alevi beliefs, compared different levels of participation in two urban *cemevis* and speculated about possible reasons for the discrepancy. I also compared practices in urban and small-town *cems*, noting ties to older, regional practices, and idiosyncratic procedures of the particular communities. In Chapter Seven, I described contexts for music performances outside of the *cem* including *muhabbets*, *sohbets*, commercial concerts, benefits, social clubs, folk music houses, and music schools. Ethnographic descriptions in both Chapters Six and Seven were designed to provide the reader with a palpable sense of my fieldwork experiences as a participant in *cems* and concerts.

Several areas of endeavor in the dissertation provide opportunities for further research. First, *deyiş* is an important song type meriting further research, as it is performed at a variety of sacred, devotional and secular events including *cems*, *muhabbets*, social clubs, and *türkü* houses. The performance of *deyiş* in multiple contexts

begs the question of how they are understood and valued by listeners. An audience reception study would shed more light on the apparent importance of their devotional inspiration and/or aesthetic enjoyment for Alevis and for non-Alevis as well. Audience reception remains an understudied area of ethnomusicology; similar to Western musicology, ethnomusicologists value performance over audience perceptions. In addition, the difficulty with categories—*deyiş* versus *türkü*, would provide insight in to music marketing practices, and musician and audience perceptions.

Second, I framed a preliminary investigation of the relationship of music and emotional feeling in the *cem* by comparing attendees' responses with those described by Regula Qureshi (1986) in her study of the Sufi *Qawwali* event and deep emotional responses to music in the work of Penman and Becker (2009). Emotional responses to music and their correlation with spirituality present a topic for further research that would necessitate inquiry beyond highlighting the pacing of the *cem* and the tempos of sung poetry in this dissertation. Such an investigation could include interviews with participants, not only at *cems* but also at *muhabbets* and social clubs, and could also provide material for collaborative study with other ethnomusicologists with regard to faith-based groups. In addition, a more detailed study of neighborhood conditions near urban *cemevis*, including existing sectarian hostilities, could reveal a greater depth of information about living conditions that may influence participants' behavior during and after the *cem*.

Third, the trend toward codification of urban *cem* rituals and the influence of newer leadership on young Alevis are indicative of continuing evolution in Alevi ritual. In addition, the changing role of *zakirs* as more central to the *cem* and their interest in

representing Alevi music in many different contexts are topics for further inquiry. An important dimension of this topic is ways that the role of women is changing in *Alevilik* as more young women are already training and performing as *zakirs*, and the leadership roles they may assume in the near future.

Finally, the evolving nature of Alevi identity is worthy of long-term study. Individual perceptions of identifying as an Alevi in terms of culture, ethnicity, and belief are still not uniform, in spite of the rhetoric of spokespersons who portray Alevis as a single community. A legacy of regional and idiosyncratic practices persists on many levels in small towns and urban areas, while different political stances drive umbrella organizations: no individual or association speaks for all Alevis. Some urban Alevis see themselves as a Muslim sub-group, while others, like rural Alevis in Ovacık, a town in the Munzur Valley in eastern Anatolia, maintain, “We are not Muslim.”<sup>1</sup>

My research repositions Alevi music and expressive practices as dynamic, lived experience rather, than in terms of polarizing discourses on preservation and assimilation. The small differences and range of Alevi practices I found among urban *cemevis* and small-town settings, the varied opinions of institutional *dedes* and board presidents, and the performances of professional musicians, *zakirs* and other musicians in the continuum of contexts attest to the variety and complexity of expressive practices and construction of Alevi identity. Alevis have reconstructed and connected narratives and practices of tradition—implying time depth and history—that legitimize *Alevilik*, while they participate in local, national, and global discourses as modern, educated, urbanites. Concepts of tradition (*gelenek*) and modernity (*çağdaşlık*) exist in tandem for Alevis.

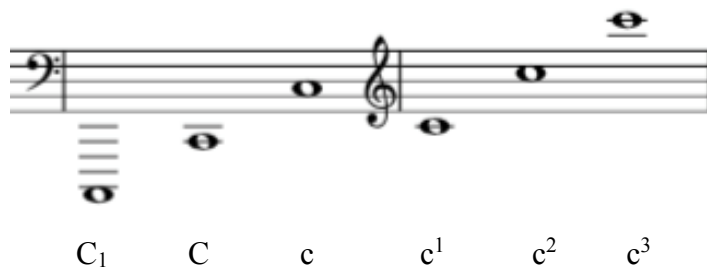
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<sup>1</sup> Michael Benanav: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/travel/finding-paradise-in-turkeys-munzur-valley.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/travel/finding-paradise-in-turkeys-munzur-valley.html?_r=0) italics in original (accessed August 8, 2015).

The contradictions between universal ideals in *Alevilik* and particularist claims of cultural, ethnic, and faith differences raise several questions. If self-ascription is the contemporary criterion for being Alevi, then how or why should others treat such a group separately? Moreover, what is the current significance of the hereditary system of *dedes* and their followers? If *Alevilik* is truly universal and accepts all people and all paths — *yol bir sürek binbir* (one road, one-thousand and one ways), then what is the nature of assimilation that many Alevis fear from a Sunni state? Scholars have used the label “heterodox Muslim minority,” but how does the phrase correlate with the ways that Alevis define themselves? The shifting meanings of this and other discourses have made my study of the voice of Alevis a complex and fascinating one, and have caused me to carefully consider and reevaluate the terms we apply as categories of analysis.

## Appendix A

### Bağlama Tunings



Courses of Strings:	III.	II.	I.	
Cura	g g <sup>1</sup>	d <sup>1</sup> d <sup>1</sup>	a a <sup>1</sup>	
Short-necked	A a	g g	d d <sup>1</sup> d <sup>1</sup>	(bağlama düzeni)
Long-necked	G g	d d	A a a	(standard)
Divan	G <sub>1</sub> G	D D	A <sub>1</sub> A A	(standard)

## Appendix B

### Poetry Texts and Translations

#### Duvaz İmams

##### “Hata Ettim Huda”

(Musical Example 4.4 - first two verses)

Hata ettim huda/Kabul eylesin (I have erred, May God accept it)  
Muhammed Mustafa/Kabul eylesin (Muhammed Mustafa/May he accept it)

Ali'nin düldülü/Gamberi bine (May Gamber ride Ali's mule)  
Zülfikarı kaza/Kabul eylesin (The fate of Ali's sword Zülfikar/ May God accept it)

##### “Allah Medet yâ Muhammed yâ Ali” “Help-me-Allah, and Muhammed and Ali”

(Musical Example 4.6 - first two verses)

Allah medet yâ Muhammed yâ Ali (Help Allah, and Muhammed and Ali)  
Bizi dergâhından mahrum eyleme (Don't deprive us of your court)  
Pirim Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş Veli (My sage, sultan St. Haji Bektash)  
Bizi dergâhından mahrum eyleme (Don't deprive us of your court)

Ademi Safiyullah atam hakkı için (Ademi Safiyullah the footsteps of right)  
Muhammed Mustafa hatem hakkı için (For the sake of the seal of the prophets of Muhammed Mustafa)

Eyyüb'e verdiğin sitem hakkı için (You rebuked Eyyub for justice)  
Bizi dergâhından mahrum eyleme (Don't deprive us of your court)



“Muhammed Mustafa ey Şahı Merdan” (Muhammed Mustafa, Allah, Ali)  
(Musical Examples 4.7 - first two verses)

Muhammed Mustafa Hû ey şahı merdan (Muhammed Mustafa, Allah, Ali)  
Hû Ali’yyel murtaza Hû sana sığındım (Allah, Caliph Ali, Allah, I take refuge in  
you, Oh Lord)  
Hû Hatice-İ Fatima, Hû Hasan’İ müçteba (Allah, Hatice Fatima, Allah, Hasan the  
chosen)  
Hû Hüseyin’İ Kerbala Hû sana sığındım (Allah, Huseyin at Kerbala, Allah, I take  
refuge in you, Oh Lord)

### Deyiş

“Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana” “I Ran into A Lament in the Morning”  
words by Derviş Ali (Musical Example 4.10)

Sabahtan uğradım ben bir figana (I ran into a lament in the morning)  
Bülbül ağlar ağlar güle getirir (The nightingale’s crying yields the rose)  
Bakın şu feleğin daim işine (Look at the permanence of this fate)  
Her bir cefasını kula getirir (Fate brings every kind of hardship to  
people)

Depreştirme benim, dertlerim duman (Don’t bother me I am absorbed in my pain)  
Muhabbet şirindir vermiyor aman (Conversation is sweet; it gives no mercy)  
Üstümüzde dönen çark ile devran (With the wheel of fortune that turns upon  
us)  
Felek bizi haldan hala getirir (Fate brings us from state to state)

Derviş Ali’m der ki nefesim hakır (I am Derviş Ali, my breath is truth)  
Hak diyen canlara şük şüphem yoktur (Those who speak truth are not doubted)  
Cehennem dediğin dal odun yoktur (There is no branch or wood in hell)  
Herkes ateşini burdan getirir (Everyone brings their own fire from here)

Third verse, “Sabahtan Uğradım Ben Bir Figana”  
words by Pir Sultan Abdal (Musical Example 4.9)

Pir Sultan Abdal’ım sözlerim hakır (I am Pir Sultan Abdal, my words are truth)  
Hak diyen kullardan hiç şüphem yoktur (Those who speak truth are not doubted)  
Cehennemde ateş olmaz nar yoktur (In hell there is no pain without fire)  
Herkes ateşini bile götürür (Everyone even brings their own fire)

“Aman Hey Erenler Mürüvvet Sizden”<sup>1</sup> “Courage From You, Saints”  
words by Şah Hatayı (Musical Example 4.13)

Aman hey erenler mürüvvet sizden	(Courage from you, saints)
Öksüzem garibem amana geldim	(I am a needy orphan seeking your mercy)
Şu benim halime merhamet eyle	(Have mercy on my condition)
Ağlayı ağlayı meydana geldim	(I come crying, crying to the town square)
Şahın bahçesinde bir garip bülbül	(A curious nightingale in God’s garden)
Efkarım artmakta halim pek müşkül	(My worry grows; in my difficult state)
Koparmadım asla kokladım bir gül	(I never plucked, I only smelled a rose)
Kafir oldum ise imana geldim	(Although I was an unbeliever, I have come to believe)
Muhammed Ali’nin kullarımdanım	(I am from the people of Muhammed and Ali)
Al-i aba nesl-i Hayderindenim	(My ancestors are descended from Caliph Ali)
İmam-ı Ca’fer’in mezhebindenim	(I am from the sect of Imam Cafer)
Derdimend Hatayi dermana geldim	(Poor Hatayi, I come for your cure)

Türküis

“Gönül Sana Nasihatim” “My Advice to You, Heart”  
words by Aşık Veysel Satıroğlu (Musical Example 4.15)

Gönül sana nasihatim	(My advice to you, heart)
Çağrılmazsan varma gönül	(If you are not called, don’t go, heart)
Seni sevmezse bir güzel	(If a beauty does not love you)
Bağlanıp da durma gönül	(Don’t get hung up on him/her, heart)
Ne gezersin Şam’ı Şark’ı	(Why do you go to Damascus, the East)
Yok mu sende hiçbir korku	(Aren’t you afraid of anything?)
Terk edersin evi barkı	(If you abandon home and hearth)
Beni boşa yorma gönül	(Leave me, don’t tire me, heart)

<sup>1</sup> Text source: <http://www.turkuyurdu.com/aman-hey-erenler-muruvvet-sizden-14292.html> (accessed October 30, 2014).

Yorulursun gitme yaya Hükmedersin güne aya Aşk denilen bir deryaya Çıkamazsın girme gönül	(You will be tired, don't go on foot) (You rule the sun and the moon) (And the so-called sea of love) (You won't be able to leave, don't go there, heart)
Ben kocadım sen genceldin Başa belâ nerden geldin	(I grew old, you grew young) (You are a nuisance, where have you come from?)
Kâhi indin kâh yükseldin Şimdi oldun turna gönül	(Falling, rising, in turn) (Now you are a crane, heart)
Bazı zengin bazı züğürt Bazı usta bazı şeyirt Bazı koyun bazı aç kurt Her bir renkten derme gönül	(Some are wealthy, some are poor) (Some are masters, some are disciples) (Some are sheep, some are hungry wolves) (All sorts collected together, heart)
Veysel gönülden ayrılmaz	(Veysel can't be separated from the words of the heart)
Kâhi bilir kâhi bilmez Yalan dünya yârsız olmaz İster saçı sırma gönül	(Knowing, not knowing, in turn) (Transitory life is impossible without love) (Everyone wants a shower of silver/gold lace, heart)
“Diktiğimiz Fidanlar” words by Dertli Divani (Musical Example 4.18)	“The Shoots We Planted”
Diktiğimiz fidanların Meyvasını yiyemedik Ne suçu vardı onların Dur be zalim diyemedik	(We could not eat the fruit) (Of the shoots we planted) (Whatever was their fault) (—Hold on tyrant!— we cannot say)
Sana ne bana ne hep diye diye Böylece yem olduk ağaya beye	(Saying what's it to you, what's it to me?) (Thus we're fodder for lord and master)
Tabip yaramı azdırdı Tatlı canımdan bezdirdi Beni bir yarin sevdası Diyar be diyar gezdirdi	(The doctor caused my wound to smart) (Inflamed by my sweet soul) (The love of the beloved sets me) (To wandering through foreign lands)
Yanmışam kör cahil dostun elinden Bıkmış usanmışam acı dilinden	(I have been hurt by the hand of the blind, ignorant friend) (I have grown tired and disgusted with

reproaches)

Der Divani senlik benlik  
Bizi yıkan bu cahillik  
El ele gönül gönüle  
Verelim olalım birlik

(Divani speaks freely of conceit)  
(This ignorance casting us down)  
(Hand to hand, heart to heart)  
(Let us give and be as one)

Yolcu yola gitmez yola bahane

(The uncommitted wayfarer is at fault with  
the way)

Bundan kula sultana ne şahane

(And so, what concern for the subject one to  
the Sultan or Shah?)

(Translation by Paul Koerbin, used with permission)

“Şaha Doğru Giden Kervan”

“The Caravan Going Toward God”

(Source Person - Hıdır Ersoy; Collector - Ahmet Yamacı).

Şaha doğru giden kervan  
Çok ağlattın güldür beni  
Düşmüşem elden ayaktan  
Tut elimden kaldır beni

(The caravan going to God)  
(You made me cry; make me laugh)  
(I am unable to do anything)  
(Hold my hand and raise me up)

Tut elimden ferman eyle  
Gel bu derde derman eyle  
Götür yâre kurban eyle  
Öldür derse öldür beni

(Hold my hand and cure me)  
(Come and cure my suffering)  
(Take me to the lover, and sacrifice me)  
(Even to my own death)

Arıdım balıdan ayrıldım  
Ne şirin dilden ayrıldım  
Bülbülüm gülden ayrıldım  
Gülistana kondur beni

(I was a bee; I left the honey)  
(I left a beautiful heart)  
(I was a nightingale; I left the rose)  
(Put me in a garden of good)

Tut elimden düşmeyelim  
Doğru yoldan şaşmayalım  
Derdim çoktur deşmeyelim  
Böyle yâre bildir beni

(Hold my hand; let us not fall)  
(Let us not veer from the path)  
(Let us not talk about my pain)  
(Make me thus known to the lover)

## Glossary

### A

*abi* – older brother (from *ağa bey*); a term of respect for a sibling, elder, or a male with specialized knowledge, like a bus driver, musician, or business owner.

*abla* – older sister; a term of respect; a term of respect for a sibling, elder, or a female with specialized knowledge, like a bus driver, musician, or business owner.

*aksak semai* – limping rhythm; an off-balance, irregular meter (3 + 2 + 2 + 3 or its variations) in Turkish folk music, often notated as 10/8 meter.

*akustik bas* – acoustic bass guitar (a borrowed phrase).

*alt* – bottom; used to designate the courses of strings on a *bağlama*.

*ana* – mother; refers to the wife of a *dede*.

*arasaz* – musical material between verses in a *türkü* or other musical piece.

*arabesk* – popular Turkish emotional music centering on themes of loneliness, oppression and self-destruction.

*aranjör* – musical arranger (a borrowed word).

*aranjman* – (musical) arrangement (a borrowed word).

*asimile olmuş* – be assimilated; in this case the expression refers to Alevis using practices associated with Sunni Muslims.

*aşağı* – down, below; describes a downstroke on the *bağlama* strings.

*aşık* – lover, also enraptured, also itinerant minstrel (see also *sazende*, *zakir*).

*aşık adayı* – minstrel candidate; one *dede*'s term for a musician who has not reached spiritual maturity.

*aşk* – love, passion, ecstatic love of God.

*aşkile* – with love; the *dede* calls out to the congregation to participate with love as they pray.

*aşkile yanma* – burning with love (for God); the feeling has been expressed in Sufi poetry and ideally, *cem* participants feel this too.

*âyîn* – a composed cycle of sung and instrumental music for Mevlevi Sufi worship.

## B

*bacılarımız* – our women; *bacı* refers to a woman with whom a man has a platonic relationship, like a sister or extended family member.

*bağlak bağlama* – music played in a medly on the *bağlama*.

*bağlama* – most often refers to the short- and long-necked Turkish folk lutes played by urban Alevi.

*bağlama düzeni* – term for the la-sol-re tuning for the short-necked *bağlama*.

*bağlamak* – to tie; origin of the name of the *bağlama* since each fret is tied individually around the neck of the instrument.

*batın* – esoteric, hidden.

*benim* – mine.

*beste* – composition.

*besteci* – composer.

*bey* – mister or sir; formerly a tribal leader title.

*bilimden gidilmeyen yolun sonu karanlıktır* – “a road that does not follow science leads to darkness” attributed to Hacı-Bektaş, the patron saint and founder of the Bektaşî dervish order.

*bir karış toprak* – “a handful of earth the size of your palm” meaning a very small amount.

*bozkurt* – refers to the young militant members of Turkey’s ultranationalist National Action Party who were called “grey wolves.”

*bülbül* – nightingale (common in Sufi poetry).

*büyük şehir* – greater municipality.

## C

*cami* – mosque.

*cami hocası* – mosque clergyman.

*can gözünü açmak* – “to open the eyes of the soul;” refers to a spiritual-emotional state in which one can shed tears, thus feeling the pain of martyred İmams.

*canım* – dear one; my dear; my soul.

*canlar* – friends, brothers.

*cem* – literally, assembly; also refers to the Alevi worship service.

*cemevi* – literally, assembly house; the urban building for Alevi worship and social activities.

*cem salonu* – assembly hall; the hall where the worship service takes place.

*cura* – a small, six-stringed member of the saz family (see *ruzba*).

Ç

*çağdaşlık* – modernity.

*çalgi* – instrumental music.

*çalmaya çalışıyoruz* – we try to play.

*çarpma* – from *çarpmak* (to attract or strike/hit), a hammer-on stroke for the *bağlama*, or a vocal technique in which the voice moves up quickly from the main tone sung.

*çekme* – from *çekmek* (to pull away) a pull-off stroke for the *bağlama*.

*çeyrek* – quarter; refers to a quarter tone in Turkish folk music theory.

*çifte* – pair; can refer to objects or people—in the case of people it means a couple.

*çirağcı* – light keeper; the spiritual assistant who lights candles or electric lights symbolizing Allah, Muhammed, and Ali.

D

*daf* – a Turkish frame drum.

*davranış* – behavior; the Office of Religious Affairs calls Alevi *cems* “behavior” but does not recognize them as worship.

*dede* – grandfather; also title for an Alevi spiritual leader.

*dede saz* – the smallest sized saz.

*delil* – evidence or testimony.

*delil duvazı* – an alternate term for a *duvaz imam* prayer (also *delil yakma*).

*demek* – to say or express.

*dergâh* – dervish lodge.

*derleme* – a notated score or recording of music collected in rural Anatolia.

*derleyen* – collector (of a musical piece).

*dernek* – association, organization.

*dershane* – a neighborhood school for music or academic preparatory classes (see *müzik okullu*).

*devlet konservatuvarı* – state conservatory.

*devriye* – song about mystical existence common to Sufi and Alevi worship.

*deyiş* – type of song about mystical love common to Sufi and Alevi worship.

*dinleti* – concert (see *konser*).

*divan saz* - a saz with five strings—a single string in the middle and two pairs of strings on either side.

*din* – religion (Alevi prefer the term *inanç*—belief).

*duduk* – a double-reed wooden aerophone indigenous to Armenia.

*düm-tak* – mnemonic cues for drum strokes.

*durak* – the final tone of a Turkish folk mode or musical piece (see *karar*).

*duvaz imam* – prayer to the twelve *İmams* in Alevi worship.

*düşükünlük* – shunning or excommunication.

*düzenleme* – an arrangement (of musical material).



## E

*eline, diline, beline sahip ol* – “be the master of your hands, tongue, and loins;” the main watchword for Alevi ethical practice.

*eroınman* – addict, junkie.

*eş* – one of a pair or mate; spouse.

*eşitlik* – equality.

*ezan* – call to prayer broadcast from mosques (adhan in Arabic).

## F

*fani dünya* – transitory life, the mortal world, see *yalan dünya*.

*fasıl* – a suite in Turkish classical music; an ensemble including wind, and plucked and bowed stringed instruments.

*felsefe* – philosophy (some would rather think of *Alevilik* as a philosophy rather than a spiritual or religious belief).

## G

*gelenek* – tradition.

*geniş* – wide, open; wide strokes on a *bağlama*.

*gırtlak* – a range of singing techniques that use the larynx.

*gitar havasında* – in a guitar-like manner.

*görevler* – duties or responsibilities carried out by spiritual assistants in the *cem*.

*görgü cemi* – a *cem* to resolve community disputes (see *halk mahkemesi*).

*gözcü* – watchman or manager; the spiritual assistant who keeps order and silence in the *cem*.

*gül* – rose (literally, and a common image in Sufi poetry).

## H

*hak* – right; truth; a rightful share of peace, contentment; also God.

*hakikat* – truth; one of the four gates to spirituality along with spiritual knowledge (marifet) holy law (şeriat), and brotherhood (tarikât).

*halk mahkemesi* – people’s court *cem* (see *görgü cemi*).

*halk oyunları* – folk dance.

*hanım* – Mrs. or madam, lady, wife.

*hasbıhal* – a friendly chat; see *muhabbet*.

*haya* – modesty.

*hizmeti çağrısı* – the part of the worship service when the spiritual assistants are called to the center of the salon.

*hizmetler* – services, as in the duties performed by the spiritual assistants in the *cem*.

*hoca* – teacher or master.

I

*ibadet* – worship.

*ibadethane* – literally, place of worship.

*ikrar* – declaring; in *Alevilik*, beginning at eighteen years of age, adults make a yearly promise to follow the tenets of faith.

*ilahi* – hymns with a special repeated refrain sung during the *cem* (see *tahlil* formula).

*imece* – voluntarism.

*imam* – a Muslim religious leader.

*imam-hatip* – the title given to primary schools staffed and taught by Sunni Muslim preachers.

*improvizé* – elaborations on the *arasaz* with a personal interpretation.

*inanç* – belief (Alevi prefer this word to *din* when talking about their faith).

*iyi akşamlar* – good evening.

*iznikçi* – shoe keeper; the spiritual assistant in charge of guarding the shoes of the *cem* attendees.

## K

*kadınları okutunuz* – “educate your women” attributed to Hacı-Bektaş, the patron saint and founder of the Bektaşî dervish order.

*kanun* – a metal-stringed board zither played with metal finger picks.

*kapak* – the sounding board of the *bağlama* (see *ses tablası*).

*kapalı* – closed; keeping the plectrum close to the sound board while strumming the *bağlama* strings.

*kapıcı* – doorman; the spiritual assistant in charge of guarding the door during the *cem*.

*karar* – repose; the final tone of a Turkish folk mode or musical piece (see *durak*).

*karı* – traditional Turkish term for wife.

*kaval* – Turkish transverse flute.

*kaynak* – source (person or group in the case of musical material).

*keman* – a Western violin.

*kemane* – a spiked fiddle.

*kemençe* – a long, narrow fiddle from the Black Sea region in Turkey.

*kendiden geçmiş* – leaving oneself; can refer to a trance.

*kırklar* – forty; refers to the forty saints who executed the first *semah* in the story of Muhammed’s ascent to heaven.

*klasik gitar* – classical guitar (a borrowed phrase).

*klavye* – the flat part of the fingerboard on the neck of the *bağlama*.

*koca* – traditional Turkish term for husband (also master).

*koma* – comma; a musical interval based on dividing a whole tone into nine equal parts, in the Turkish *makam* (modal) system.

*komalı* – playing with microtonal intervals.

*konser* – concert (see *dinleti*).

*konuk evi* – guest house.

*kopuz* – a newer term used by revivalist musicians to refer to a Central Asian plucked lute.

*kültür merkezi* – cultural center.

*kurban* – sacrifice; in Alevi tradition it refers to a sheep that is ritually killed and its meat is cooked and served to the congregation and the hungry.

*kurbancı* – sacrificial food keeper; the spiritual assistant in the *cem* who distributes food to the community after it is blessed by the *dede*.

*kusura bakmayın* – “don’t look at my fault” it means excuse me.

## L

*lokma* – morsel; food blessed by the *dede*.

## M

*mahlas* – a Turkish poet-minstrel’s pen-name (or nickname) that appears in the last verse of his or her song.

*makam* – the Turkish modal system similar to Arabic *maqam*; also a single modal scale.

*manevi* – spiritual (a twentieth-century term; see *ruhsal*).

*marifet* – spiritual knowledge; one of the four gates to spirituality along with holy law (*şeriat*), brotherhood (*tarikât*), and truth (*hakikat*).

*marifet geliyor* – the one with the spiritual knowledge is coming.

*meclis* – assembly; the informal name for Turkey’s Grand National Assembly (see Büyük Millet Meclisi).

*merhaba* – hello.

*mersiye* – a musical lament performed in a *cem*.

*meşk* – model or lesson; a group music lesson A system of teaching in oral tradition whereby units of poetry, melody, rhythm and style are memorized through repetition after a teacher.

*mevlut* – a Muslim memorial service.

*mey* – double reed aerophone in Turkish folk music.

*meydan* – center or town square; the center of the *cem* sanctuary where the truth must be told.

*miraçlama* – sung poetry telling the story of Muhammed’s ascent to heaven.

*muhabbet* – gathering where music is played and Alevi faith is discussed (see *hasbıhal*).

*musahiplik* – a mutual responsibility between non-related men or between two married couples to provide mutual encouragement and moral guidance.

*musahiplik cemi* – a ceremony to pair non-related males or couples to provide mutual encouragement and moral guidance.

*müezzin* – person (a male in Turkey) who chants from the Qur’an.

*mühür* – position of the feet in which the right toes cover the left toes; spiritual assistants stand before the *dede* this way.

*mümsöndü* – literally, the candle went out; a derogatory expression implying an Alevi sexual orgy (in the dark) after a *cem*.

*mürşit* – spiritual mentor or guide.

*müzik* – music.

*müzik okullu* – music school (see *dershane*).

O

*ocak* – hearth; refers to the hereditary lineage of Alevi spiritual leaders along with their congregation members.

*olmazsa olmazı* – indispensable, absolute must.

*oniki hizmet* – the twelve services performed by spiritual assistants in the *cem*.

*orta* – middle; used to designate the courses of strings on a *bağlama*.

*oruç* – religious fasting.

*otentik* – a borrowed term from English that does not translate exactly as “authentic.”

*ozan* – Turkish bard, performer of music and epic tales.

*özgün bir yorum* – originality of interpretation in musical performance.

## P

*parmakla* – with the fingers; a technique of plucking the *bağlama* with only the fingers  
(see *şelpe*.)

*patlama* – explosion.

*perde* – fret on a *bağlama*.

*pervane* – moth; also propeller; the single woman who spins in the *cem* is like a moth attracted to the flame of God.

*peçete* – napkin; patrons in a *türkü* bar write down their song requests on napkins.

*peyikci* – newsgiver; the spiritual assistant in charge of announcing the *cem*.

*pir* – spiritual master.

*post* – the sheepskin on which the *dede* sits and metaphorically refers to the position of authority of a *dede* or Sufi *shaykh*.

## R

*rakı* – anise-flavored Turkish alcoholic drink similar to Greek *uzo*.

*rehber* – spiritual guide and assistant to a *dede*.

*rızayız* – “we consent” to have the *dede* preside over the *cem*. Traditionally the congregation is asked three times by the *dede* and responds three times before the *cem* can begin.

*ruhsal* – spiritual (a twentieth-century term; see *manevi*).

*ruzba* – a small-size *saz* (see *cura*).

## S

*sakkacı* – water carrier; the spiritual assistant who distributes water in remembrance of İmam Hüseyin.

*sallanma* – from *sallanmak* (to sway); pushing strings back and forth on the *bağlama* frets to bend the tones.

*saz* – the family of Turkish folk lutes of different sizes.

*sazende* – the musician who sings and plays the *bağlama* in the *cem* (see *aşık* and *zakir*).

*secde* – prostrate oneself in prayer by kneeling and touching one's head to the floor.

*semah* – the set of sacred, ritual movements that is the spiritual zenith of the *cem*.

*semah dönmek* – to turn (or whirl) the *semah*.

*semahcı* – spiritual assistants who perform the sacred ritual movements culminating the *cem*.

*semâ'î* – one section of the Mevlevi dervish liturgical cycle that accelerates in tempo; also one of the musical movements in a classical Turkish suite.

*ses eğitimi* – vocal music education.

*ses tablası* – the sounding board of the *bağlama* (see *kapak*).

*ses vibratosu* – the rapid alternation of up and down strokes to produce a tremolo-like sound (see *tırıl*).

*soğuk ve tiyatro gibi* – “cold and theatrical.”

*sohbet* – conversation; also a conversation or meeting to discuss Alevi beliefs.

*soru-cevap* – a pattern of questions and answers between voice and instrument, or two instruments.

*söz* – word or words.

*süpürgeci* – sweeper; the spiritual assistant in charge of ritual carpet sweeping in the *cem* (often performed by a group of three women).

*süsleme* – ornament or decoration; different vibrato techniques on the *bağlama*.

## Ş

*şelpe* – a technique of plucking the *bağlama* with only the fingers (see *parmakla*).

*şeyh* – sheikh (*shaykh* in Arabic); – head of a religious order, family, or tribe.

*şeriat* – holy law; one of the four gates to Alevi spirituality, along with spiritual knowledge (*marifet*), brotherhood (*tarikât*), and truth (*hakikat*).

## T

*tahlil* formula – “*la ilahe illallah*” is a sung refrain common in Sufi and Alevi worship.

*taksim* (*taqsim* in Arabic); a section of musical improvisation on a core melody; also a solo instrumental form.

*talip* – seeker or petitioner; traditionally belonging to the group under a particular *dede* and his *ocak*.

*tanbūr* – a fretted, plucked, long-necked lute similar to the *bağlama*.

*tarikât* – brotherhood; one of the four gates to Alevi spirituality along with spiritual knowledge (*marifet*), holy law (*şeriat*), and truth (*hakikat*).

*tasavvuf* – spirituality.

*tavır* – manner, style.

*tavırlı* – a stylistically correct performance in relation to regional origin.

*tessetür* – the veil covering a Muslim woman’s hair.

*tevhid* – hymn of unity sung during the *cem*.

*tezekâr* – ewer keeper; the spiritual assistant who offers a pitcher of water, basin, and towel for washing and drying the *dede*’s hands (usually carried out by two assistants).

*tezene* – plectrum (pick) for Turkish folk lutes.

*tezene takma* – from *takmak* (to strike); a *bağlama* playing technique of striking the course of strings one at a time in sequence.

*tırl* – the rapid alternation of up and down strokes to produce a tremolo-like sound (see *ses vibratosu*).



*tövbe* – the act of atoning for one’s sins (*tawba* in Arabic).

*Türk sanat müziği* – Turkish art music

*Türk halk müziği* – Turkish folk music

*türkü* – a Turkish folk song.

*türkü evi* – folk song house; a small venue where musicians perform regional Turkish folk songs while patrons eat, drink, and socialize.

U

*ud* – (*‘ud* in Arabic) Arabic lute played also in Turkey.

*ulema* – religious scholars who are considered the main interpreters of Shari’a law.

*umma* – the larger Islamic community.

*usul* – a pattern of long and short beats that defines the beat and metric structure of a piece of (art and folk) music.

*uyandırıyor* – from *uyandırmak* (to wake someone up); “he (they) are made to wake up.”

*uydurma* – an invention, fabrication; (can refer to music) versus an authentic connection to the past.

Ü

*üst* – top; used to designate the courses of strings on a *bağlama*.

V

*vakıf* – charitable foundation.

*veli* – saint, protector; an honorific title

Y

*yalan dünya* – transitory life, the mortal world, see *fani dünya*.

*yol* – path or road; for Alevi it means the spiritual path.

*yola bağlı olmak* – “to be connected to the road” in Alevi belief.

*yol bir sürek binbir* – “one path, one thousand ways;” an Alevi maxim that refers to reaching a deep acceptance of Allah, Muhammed and Ali.

*yol evladım* – “I am a child of the path” is a common phrase among Alevi believers.

*yoldayım* – “I am on the path” is a common phrase among believers.

*yorum* – individual (musical) interpretation.

*yöre* – region or place.

*yukarı* – up; describes an upstroke on the *bağlama* strings.

## Z

*zahir* – apparent, superficial.

*zakir* – the musician who sings and plays the *bağlama* in the *cem* (see *aşık* and *sazende*).

*zakirlik* – the art of being a *zakir*.

*zeybek* – a Turkish folk dance from the Aegean region.

*zikir* – a Sufi ritual of prayer, song, and movement in which the name of God is invoked.

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