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Between Debate and Sources

Defining Alevi Music

Abstract: Researchers have used the term ‘Alevi music’ in definitions and general evaluations of the music performed within Alevi communities over a vast region extending from the Balkans to the Middle East. However, what defines the specific ‘Alevi’ character of performances, musemes, texts or instruments used, oftentimes remains unclear or caught up in essentialist approaches to the field of study. In this paper, therefore, the question of *what* ‘Alevi music’ is, is replaced by a discussion of *how* the concept is addressed and discursively constructed. Discussing possibilities and constraints of determining the character of the very attribute ‘Alevi’, for example, in compounds such as ‘Alevi music’, it attempts to develop a methodological framework for further musicological inquiries in the field of Alevi studies.

Keywords: Alevi music, Alevi *Cem*, *Bağlama*, *Âşık*, Ethnomusicology

Introduction

Debates on how a sound and performance is accepted as ‘music’, how the concept of ‘music’ appeared, what ‘musicking’ includes and what style, form and other features a type of music displays are the issues of musicology, ethnomusicology and their secondary branches as well as of the other music-related disciplines of social sciences.¹ From an ethnomusicological standpoint, the fact that music and musical performance are elements of culture highlights the necessity that music must be addressed in its social and cultural context.² This approach makes the

1 For a discussion of the concept of ‘music’, cf. Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*, Urbana [Ill.]: University of Illinois Press, 2005, 16–26. For a deeper examination of the concept ‘musicking’, cf. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Middletown [Ct]: Wesleyan University Press, 1998. On the role of music in everyday life, cf. Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. For discussions on types, styles, forms and other aspects of music from a musicological perspective, cf. David Beard & Kenneth Gloag, *Musicology: Key Concepts*, (Routledge Key Guides), London & New York: Routledge, 2005.

2 For discussions of the scope, methods, and sources of ethnomusicology, cf. Jennifer C. Post, *Ethnomusicology: A Research and Information Guide*, (Routledge Music Bibliographies), New York et al.: Routledge, 2003; Nettl, *Study of Ethnomusicology* as

classification and analysis of any musical culture easier, allowing a broad interdisciplinary approach ranging from social- to natural sciences.

This article will present thoughts about the ongoing debate on ‘Alevi music’ and its sources in an ethnomusicological perspective.³ Speaking about ‘Alevi music’, I would like to note that I am using the term ‘Alevi’ to denote a complex of similar shared beliefs among many communities living across a broad region stretching from the Balkans to the Middle East.⁴ We must not forget that each of these societies across this vast region has a separate musical culture. Terms such as Alevi, Bektaşî, Kızılbaş and others are used in studies focusing on many different issues. Because the subject of this article is not the differences among these groups’ faith, culture and music, the concept of ‘Alevi music’ will be discussed in terms of Alevi societies’ common religious and cultural values such as the *cem* ceremony, *dedes*, *zakirs*, *âşiks*, etc. Details about these groups will be provided when necessary.⁵ Consequently, rather than providing a concrete definition of

well as Timothy Rice, *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

- 3 For more information on the debate on ‘Alevi music’, cf. Ayhan Erol, *Müzik Üzerine Düşünmek*, İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2009, 99–156; and Irene Markoff, “Gelin Canlar Bir Olalım: Türkiye’de Alevî-Bektaşî Ortak Bilincinde Bağlayıcı Güç Olarak Müzik ve Şiir”, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (ed.), *Geçmişten Günümüze Alevî-Bektaşî Kültürü*, (Kütüphaneler ve Yayınlar Genel Müdürlüğü; 3232), Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2009, 416–29.
- 4 To compare similar shared beliefs among some of these communities, cf. Martin van Bruinessen, *Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri*, Hakan Yurdakul (trans.), (İletişim Yayınları; 629), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999; and Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects*, (Contemporary Issues in the Middle East), Syracuse [NY]: Syracuse University Press, 1988.
- 5 For the usage of the terms Alevi, Kızılbaş, Bektaşî etc. in different contexts, cf. Doğan Kaplan, *Yazılı Kaynaklarına Göre Alevilik*, (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları; 461: İlim Eserler Serisi; 82), Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010, 27–38. For other comments on the use of the term Alevi, cf. Reha Çamuroğlu, “Türkiye’de Alevi Uyanışı”, Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga & Catherina Raudvere (eds.), *Alevi Kimliği*, Bilge Kurt Torun & Hayati Torun (trans.), (Türkiye Araştırmaları Dizisi), İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999, 96–103: 101–3; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkiye’de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Süfiliğine Bakışlar*, (Araştırma—İnceleme Dizisi; 56), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005, 19–21; idem, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*, (Araştırma—İnceleme Dizisi; 96), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007, 13–7; and Ali Murat İrat, *Aleviliğin ABC’si: Tarih, Sosyoloji, Siyaset*, İstanbul: Profil Yayınları, 2013, 15–24. For a discussion of the use of the term ‘Bektaşî’, cf. Rıza Yıldırım, “Bektaşî Kime Derler? ‘Bektaşî’ Kavramının Kapsamı ve Sınırları Üzerine Tarihsel Bir Analiz Denemesi”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 55 (2010), 23–58. For

what 'Alevi music' is, this article will address various approaches to questions and sources on the subject. The goal here is to consider the various ways in which we can discuss the subject of 'Alevi music'.⁶

Conceptualising Alevi Music

Discussions on how to construct a conceptual framework of what Alevi music is or how it appeared continue to be characterised by a lack of knowledge regarding discussions of this music's sources, its past and authenticity.⁷ In some studies, vagueness about how a piece of music is (or is not) identified as Alevi music and how it achieved (or did/could not achieve) this status demonstrates the difficulty in setting criteria for what constitutes Alevi music.

In order to explore the subject further, I would like to ask some questions about this issue. These questions demonstrate how difficult it can become to draw borders in discussions of Alevi music, and the need for a different contextual approach for each example:

- Is a musical performance by an Alevi musician but devoid of Alevi-related content (e.g. lyrics) considered Alevi music?
- Can a musical performance pertaining to Alevism by a non-Alevi be considered a resource for Alevi music?
- If a composer writes a classical or rock composition with lyrics by Pir Sultan Abdal, has s/he written Alevi music?
- When a melody collected from Alevism is performed with lyrics by a non-Alevi minstrel, is it considered Alevi music?
- Is there a particular environment for the performance of Alevi music? Is it performed only at *cem*s? If these pieces are performed outside of the *cem*, is it still Alevi music?
- Is there any such thing as Alevi music without lyrics? How do we know it is Alevi music?

studies on the historical bonds and interactions between communities where these terms are used, cf. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "Irak'taki Bektaşî Tekkeleri", *Bellekten* 71/261 (2007), 689–720; and eadem, *Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah: Formation and Transformation of the Kizilbash/Alevi Communities in Ottoman Anatolia*, (unpubl. PhD thesis, Cambridge: Harvard University, 2008).

6 I will not put 'Alevi music' into single quotation marks anymore for enabling a more fluid reading. It should be clear by now that I address it as a discursive concept and not as an essentialist object of research.

7 Erol, *Müzik*, 113–23.

- Which elements—lyrics, instruments, musical form, performance practices etc.—are the fundamental criteria for Alevi music?

Many more questions could be asked. Clearly, the concept of Alevi music involves as much a discussion of performance, identity, environment and other dynamics as it does of content. This being the case, every dynamic in the conceptualisation of Alevi music can help us understand the ‘plural’ structure of this musical culture, but also to explain how it is seen as ‘singular’. In other words, just as we speak of Alevi communities above, we must not forget that when we say Alevi music, we are referring to a content that includes many Alevi musics, but are defining an Alevi music seen in the ‘singular’ due to various dynamics. Thus it is clear that every question above must be answered according to particular contexts, and in this sense, every mention of Alevi music must include a contextual explanation.

Here, we must examine the relationship between the concepts of ‘Alevi’ and music. Ethnomusicologist Ayhan Erol, who has made significant contributions to conceptual discussions of Alevi music, uses the concepts “oneness” and “difference” in the study of Alevism and Alevi music. He stresses that the unique quality of “oneness” among Alevi communities has its origin in the community’s fundamental reference points in defining itself (for example, Ali or the “path”).⁸ We can broaden these concepts through other musically-related references such as *cem*, *dede*, *zakir*, *âşık* etc. Erol states that the “oneness” of various Alevi communities who have undergone changes over time and space, and emphasise their differences by defining themselves as Nalcı, Tahtacı, Sıraç, Çepni etc., is achieved through masters of *saz* (“instrument/music”) and *söz* (“word/lyrics”), who speak in a language they can understand.⁹ Based upon this, we can say that in discussions of Alevi music, we must also be aware of the necessity of analysing the structural features resulting from the differences between Alevi communities in the context of the unity of Alevi belief. Erol stresses that the discussion should not be about Alevi music but rather about “types of Alevi music”. Just as with Alevism itself, he argues for a perspective that strives to understand it not in terms of *what* it is, but rather *how* the Alevis have turned it into Alevi music.¹⁰ This approach is an important starting point for answering the questions asked above, for discussing the various dynamics of Alevi music and for sketching

8 Erol, *Müzik*, 100.

9 *Ibid.*, 105.

10 *Ibid.*, 102.

preliminary conclusions about this music's (or these musics') social, cultural and geographical diversity.

Arriving at Terms for Alevi Music

The study of a musical culture means studying the unique structures of the social, cultural, religious and other conditions that form that culture. This being the case, one must examine the ways in which those who live and transmit that culture express themselves. Approaching the emic concepts of music and its terminology allows us to perceive the dynamics of that society's musical performance "from within".¹¹

Focusing on the terminology used in the performance of Alevi music may help us understand how this music is performed from the standpoint of belief. Folklorist Melih Duygulu has prepared a Turkish folk music glossary based on fieldwork over a large area of Turkey.¹² The terms collected from different Alevi communities which are relating to Alevi music may be enlightening: For example, the terms *arenleme*, *hayal* and *hayal demi* (all terms for "imagination/dream") used in the Malatya region;¹³ the term *ayet* ('verse' [of the Koran]) used for *deyiş* in the Erzincan region;¹⁴ *on iki makamda öttürmek* ("to sing in the twelve makams") used in Thrace;¹⁵ *peşrev* ("overture") applied to the music played and sung in the beginning of *cems* in the regions of Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş and Şanlıurfa¹⁶ and other expressions, provide information on how music is expressed among Alevi communities. In this sense, it is safe to say that the use of terms for Alevi music is an expression of the oral knowledge of Alevism in terms of faith. Fieldwork-based ethnographic studies of Alevi communities will be of great help in the study of different dynamics of the subject.

The subjects of terminology, emic discourse and language, oftentimes not considered in Alevi studies, constitute an important resource for studies outside

11 Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl states that "examples are legion; but clearly, each society has its unique conception of music and a terminology to reflect the conception"; cf. Nettl, *Ethnomusicology*, 23.

12 Melih Duygulu, *Türk Halk Müziği Sözlüğü*, (Pan Yayıncılık; 189), Istanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2014.

13 Duygulu, *Türk Halk Müziği Sözlüğü*, 45 & 231.

14 *Ibid.*, 62.

15 *Ibid.*, 348.

16 *Ibid.*, 368–9.

the area of music.¹⁷ It must not be forgotten that countless proverbs, sayings and expressions in addition to those mentioned above, such as *yol bir sürekin binbir* (“the path is one, the practices are thousand and one”), *üç can bir cem* (“three souls, one *cem*”), *gahi saz gahi söz* (“sometimes instruments/music, sometimes words/lyrics”) and *âşığın sözü Kur’anın özü* (“the word of the *âşık* is the essence of the Koran”) play an important role in the continuity of Alevism and in expressing the importance of music, oral tradition and faith. Studies accounting for these expressions and their underlying concepts are important for studying Alevism “from within.”

Musical Performance in Alevi *Cems*

The *cem* ceremony, signifying the unity of faith among Alevi communities, is a form of ritual worship shaped by music from beginning to end. In this sense, a conceptual definition of Alevi music in the context of ritual and musical performance requires an emphasis on the unity of the Alevi faith. As the fundamental indicator of this unity, the *cem* ceremony is the most important resource for Alevi music and can be defined as a ‘holistic musical form’ with its musical performance from beginning to end. All of the musical elements performed within it (*deyiş/nefes, düvazdeh imam, semah, miraçlama, tevhid* and *mersiye*) are performed as basic references of Alevi music over Alevism’s broad geographical distribution.¹⁸ However in the context of faith, the unity of the “path” displays

17 Aside from Gölpinarlı’s unique study on mysticism which includes Alevism (Abdülbâki Gölpinarlı, *Tasavvuf’tan Dilimize Geçen Deyimler ve Atasözleri*, İstanbul: İnkilâp ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1977), other works on the subject, though comprehensive, do not contain sufficient original samples and are not based upon field studies (Esat Korkmaz, *Alevilik ve Bektaşilik Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar, 2005). For an original, field study-based example on the subject from the Dersim region, cf. Erdal Gezik & Hüseyin Çakmak (eds.), *Raa Haqi—Riya Haqi: Dersim Aleviliği İnanç Terimleri Sözlüğü*, (Kalan Yayınları; 69), Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2010. To compare other similar studies, cf. Ahmet Günşen, “Gizli Dil Açısından Alevilik-Bektaşilik Erkân ve Deyimlerine Bir Bakış”, *Turkish Studies/Türkoloji Araştırmaları* 2 (2007), 328–50; Hüseyin Dedekargınoğlu, “Alevilikteki Tanım ve Terimler”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 60 (2010), 379–94; and Cem Erdem & Demir Tazegül, “Bektaşilik Öğretisinde Terim ve Kavramlar”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 55 (2010), 437–70.

18 For an examination of forms performed in Alevi *cems*, cf. Hüseyin Yaltırık, *Tasavvufî Halk Müziği: Notalarıyla (İlahiler—Nefesler—Tatyanlar—Deyişler—Semahlar)*, Ankara: TRT Kurumu Müzik Dairesi Başkanlığı, 2003. For information on the *deyiş/nefes* forms, cf. Melih Duygulu, *Alevi-Bektaşî Müziğinde Deyişler*, İstanbul: Sistem,

great diversity according to its social, cultural and/or ethnic contexts. These differences demonstrate the diversity in the instruments, performance and repertoire that compose the dynamics of Alevi music. On the other hand, this does not prevent us from addressing the *cem* ceremony as a fundamental reference point. Here the abovementioned 'plural' structure is apparent and appears 'singular' from the standpoint of faith.

Erol, asking whether the music secures the progression of the *cem*, or the *cem* determines the music's division into forms, stresses that the *cem* is actually shaped within a musical form from beginning to end.¹⁹ The fundamental musical forms in this great form, are performed in *cems* in nearly every area over a wide region. Consequently, it is important that studies on the musical composition of Alevi *cems* show how this 'holistic form' is shaped. Here, the approach in terms of ritual and musical performance will show the interrelationship between dynamics such as performance practices, spatial composition (time, place, space) and interaction, as well as the 'holistic form' of all the pieces performed within the *cem*. From this standpoint, whether or not every *cem* is a 'musical work' in and of itself is a subject worth debating.²⁰

The relationship between *cems* and space is another subject that must be addressed in the spatial context of Alevi music. This subject, relating to the concept of sacred time, place and space in Alevi faith, involves many overlapping dynamics in disciplines including architecture, art history, sociology,

1997; and Nilgün Çıblak Coşkun, *Alevi Cemlerinde Nefesler, Nefeslerin Performans Teori Bağlamında İncelenmesi: Alevi Kültür Dernekleri Mersin Şubesi Örneği*, (Otorite Yayınları; 19), İstanbul: Otorite Yayınları, 2014; on the düvazdeh imams, cf. Armağan Coşkun Elçi, "Duvazlar/Duvazımaclar Üzerine Müzikâl Çerçeve", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 57 (2011), 131–74; on semahs, Armağan Coşkun Elçi, "Semah Geleneğinin Uygulanması", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 12 (1999), 171–84; and Neşe Ayışıt Onatça, *Alevi-Bektaş Kültüründe Kırklar Semahı Müzikal Analiz Çalışması*, (Bağlam Yayınları; 283: Müzik Bilimleri Dizisi; 8), İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2007.

19 Erol, *Müzik*, 122.

20 In addition to musical forms performed at *cems* such as *deyiş/nefes*, *düvazdeh imam*, *miraçlama*, *tevhit*, *semah* and *mersiye*, the *gülbanks* (prayers) sung recitatively in a musical expression by the dede and attendants, as well as the outcries of participants and additional musical elements, need specific musicological study. For a comparative analysis of the fundamental structure of *gülbanks*, and their changes according to *ocak* and *cem*, cf. Mehmet Ersal & Serpil Ersöz, "Alevi Gülbenglerinin Temel Yapısı Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 65 (2013), 53–80.

anthropology and more. The influence of the spaces where Alevi music is performed on the music itself, especially the music historically performed in *cemevis*, and its relation with sacredness, is an important point from which to broaden this discussion.²¹ The relationship between space and music, involving interactions between acoustics, performance practices and participants, will provide important insight concerning the question of *how* Alevi music has come into being.²²

At this point, it will be useful to look at the two fundamental building blocks, *söz* (“words/lyrics”) and *saz* (“instrument/music”) in ritual as well as in other contexts. These two elements have not been sufficiently addressed in discussions of Alevi music.

Sources of Söz, the Word

In the musical context, the sacredness of the *deyiş* and *nefes* in Alevism becomes an inseparable whole. The addition of the *bağlama*, considered the *telli Kur'an* (“stringed Quran”) to the words of the *âşiks*, considered the *konuşan Kur'an* (“speaking Quran”) are symbolically important in this unity. The expression

21 The most comprehensive study on the subject is a field study of historic *cemevis* by Mahir Polat (Istanbul University). Polat’s paper, “Lost or Imaginary? Looking for the Cemevi in Ottoman Architectural History”, which he read at a conference at Boğaziçi University (January 14, 2011) entitled *Alevi-Bektashi Communities in the Ottoman Realm: Sources, Paradigms and Historiography*, demonstrates the difficulty in making judgments on this topic without extensive field studies in Anatolia. Polat is presently conducting an inventory project on the existences of historic *cemevis*, and working on his doctoral thesis, *Architectural Features of Houses of Worship of Heterodox Islamic Communities in Anatolia*.

22 The presence of *bağlama* motifs and verses from various *deyiş* on some old gravestones in Alevi cemeteries illustrates the potential scope of the debate on space and music. Thus the issue of space in Alevism goes beyond *cemevis* and needs to be readdressed in every extension of sacred time and space. For comments on the subject of place/space, cf. Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Pas: Focault’dan Agamben’e Sivilleşmiş İktidar ve Gelenek*, Ankara: Phoenix Yayınları, 2005, 200–10; and Meral Salman, *Müze Duvarlarına Sığmayan Dergâh: Alevi-Bektaşî Kimliğinin Kuruluş Sürecinde Hacı Bektaş Veli Anma Törenleri*, Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2006, 170–1; for information on mythical time and space in the *âşık* poetic style, which includes Alevi literature as well, cf. Serkan Köse, “Âşık Tarzı Şiir Geleneğinde ‘Mitik Mekân’ ve ‘Mitik Zaman’ Algısı”, *Turkish Studies* 3.1 (2013), 1995–2012.

âşığın sözü Kur'anın özü (“the word of the *âşık* is the essence of the Quran”) highlights this importance.²³

Available written sources concerning the change and transformation of Alevi music from its earliest history to the present day are almost negligible. On the other hand, most Alevi literature and music are oriented to the transmission of oral tradition. On this point, Erol, emphasising the distinction between music and text in determining how Alevi music came into being, points to the texts as singular means securing the unity of Alevi music.²⁴

Written sources on the “word” element of Alevi music include texts such as Ottoman *vilayetname*, *erkaname* and *buyruk*, as well as folk poetry sources such as *cönk*, *divan*, and *mecmua*.²⁵ Studies of the Alevi poetic tradition in particular may also be considered as musicological resources. The fundamental approach here is to determine how these resources may function or be used in the context of Alevi musical studies. For example, musicologist Recep Uslu mentions the book *Bektaşî Nefesleri*, published by Derviş Ruhullah in the year 1921, and considered it the first collected anthology of *nefes*. Because it contains no notation or musical terms showing the relationship between the poetry and music such as

23 For more information about these expressions, cf. Ulaş Özdemir, “Le verbe de l’*âşık* est l’essence du Coran”, *La pensée de midi* (February 28, 2009): *Les chants d’Orphée: musique & poésie*, 66–70; Erol, *Müzik*, 102–9; and Banu Mustan Dönmez, “Törenselleşen (Cem) ve Dünyasallaşan Türk Halk Müziği Performansı İçinde *Âşıklık* Geleneğinin Konumu”, *C.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1 (2010), 33–7.

24 Erol, *Müzik*, 133.

25 Many anthologies of Alevi-Bektaşî poetry on this subject have been published. To compare a comprehensive share of these, cf. Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergun, *Türk Musikisi Antolojisi*, 2 vols., (Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları; 191), Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1942–43; Turgut Koca, *Bektaşî Şairleri ve Nefesleri: 13. Yüzyıldan 20. Yüzyıla Kadar*, Istanbul: Maarif Kitaphanesi Yayınları, 1990; Abdülbâki Gölpinarlı, *Alevî Bektaşî Nefesleri*, Istanbul: İnkılâp Yayınları, 1992; Bedri Noyan, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşîlik ve Alevilik*, vol. 3 & 4, Ankara: Ardıç Yayınları, 2000–2001. Some of these anthologies contain examples of notation. Other works on oral and written culture, in particular the “Alevi-Bektaşî Classics” (Alevî-Bektâşî Klasikleri) publications by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, do not sufficiently emphasise the poetic tradition (or do not consider it ‘classical’). However a detailed examination of this tradition beyond anthological works is quite valuable for gaining understanding of the network of historical, social, cultural and religious relationships maintained for centuries between different Alevi communities.

“composer,” *makam* and *usul*, the book has been neglected in academic studies, yet it should be utilised as one of the foremost resources on the subject.²⁶

On the other hand, the centuries-long poetic legacy of minstrels such as Kaygusuz Abdal, Pir Sultan Abdal, Âşık Dertli, Âşık Veysel and countless others are a source for much information ranging from the *bağlama* and musical performance to the place of music in the context of faith, as well as historical information about Alevism. The same information may be obtained from the modern-day oral tradition as well as collected sources. For example, an examination of Âşık Dertli’s poem about the *bağlama*, “Where is Satan in this?”, and a study of the Ottoman archives for the period in which the poem was written, would allow a discussion of findings on music-related sources about music prohibition in relation with Alevism in the 19th century together with information on the importance of the *bağlama* for Alevi and its symbolic qualities.

Thus we can safely say that certain paradigms frequently encountered in discussions of Alevism—e.g. that this faith comes from a solely oral tradition, that it has no written culture, that it is essentially a village faith and was never practiced in the cities, and has thus lost its ‘traditional’ structure or has ‘modernised’ today—are indicative of an attitude that must be left behind. It should be remembered that in the context of music a sterile discussion on the separation of oral and written culture is not sound. Rather, in the context of music, all manner of resources concerning Alevism may be utilised. Yet, tired binary paradigms such as ‘oral/written’, ‘village/urban’, ‘traditional/modern’ etc. still force studies on the subject into narrow molds.²⁷

26 Recep Uslu, “İlk Derlenen Nefes Antolojisinin Türk Müzikolojisindeki Yeri: Derviş Ruhullah Ahmet Rıfki’nin Bektaşî Nefesleri”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 69 (2014), 101–17: 101.

27 Generally formed upon the Köprülü paradigm, these arguments form the basis for discussion about Alevi identity and the Alevi revival today. For a comprehensive critique of the Köprülü paradigm, cf. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, “The Vefâ’iyye, the Bektashiyye and Genealogies of ‘Heterodox’ Islam in Anatolia: Rethinking the *Köprülü Paradigm*”, *Turcica* 44 (2013), 279–300; and Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*, (Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Discussions of Alevi identity and the Alevi revival contain dynamics outside the scope of this article.

Sources on Saz, the Instrument/Music

Saz in the context of Alevi music is a vast subject, including elements such as melody, musical form, instruments and performance practices.²⁸ At first glance—again, according to clichéd paradigms—this subject may be thought to involve a discussion of the *bağlama*, but in reality it goes beyond the instrument to include all of the ‘musical’ dynamics of Alevi music. It requires the location of musical references concerning a musical culture about which there are almost no hints in the music history literature. Furthermore it is important to question the above-mentioned paradigm from the standpoint of music writing. The search for information on Alevi music in Ottoman music literature is like searching for a needle in a haystack. This subject has yet to be studied.²⁹

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- 28 For information on metric structure in Alevi-Bektaşî music, cf. Attila Özdek, “Alevi-Bektaşî Müziğine Özgü Bir Metrik Yapı Olarak (3+3+2+2) Kurulumlu 10/8’lik Ölçü”, Mehmet Yazıcı (ed.), *Geçmişten Günümüze Alevilik I. Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildirileri/Alewism [sic!] from Past to Present I. Internationa [sic!] Symposium*, vol. 2, Bingöl: Bingöl Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014, 204–23. For information on music codes in Alevi-Bektaşî music, cf. Seyit Yöre, “Alevi Bektaşî Kültürünün Müziksel Kodları”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 60 (2011), 219–44.
- 29 For a comprehensive examination of Ottoman-period musical literature, cf. Gülcan Gündüz, Serdar Bekar, Ramazan Şeşen & Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (eds.), *Osmanlı Musikî Literatürü Tarihi*, (İlim Tarihi Kaynaklar ve Araştırmalar Serisi; 10), İstanbul: IRCİCA Yayınları, 2003. For an up-to-date collection of historical writings on Ottoman music, cf. Martin Greve (ed.), *Writing the History of “Ottoman Music”*, (ITS; 33), Würzburg: Ergon, 2015. Studies of the place of folk music in Ottoman musical literature are few in number. For a study of the subject, cf. Songül Karahasanoğlu, “Osmanlı Dönemi Halk Müziği Örneklerine Bir Bakış”, *Osmanlı* (Ankara) 10 (2000), 735–8. For another aspect of the subject, and comments upon Sufi and musical traditions encompassing the Alevi and Bektaşî communities, cf. Recep Uslu, *Fâtiḥ Sultan Mehmed Döneminde Mûsikî ve Şems-i Rûmî’nin Mecmûa-i Güfte’si*, (İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti Yayınları; 106), İstanbul: Fetih Cemiyeti Yayınları; 2007, 58–63. For a treatment of Sufi music and folk traditions in the Selçuk lands by the same author, cf. idem, *Selçuklu Topraklarında Müzik: (Hoca Ahmet Yesvî’den Hz. Mevlâna’ya)*, Konya: Konya İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2011, 28–54. Also, for a significant study of the experiences, traditions and occasional musical performances of *derviş* communities in the Islamic world, most of which have also mixed with Alevi-Bektaşî communities, cf. Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Tanrının Kuraltanmaz Kulları: İslâm Dünyasında Derviş Toplulukları*, Ruşen Sezer (trans.), (Yapı Kredi Yayınları; 36), İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008.

As an initial step into the subject, the analysis of various musical resources such as the collected works of Ali Ufki (17th century),³⁰ who departed from the Ottoman *edvar*³¹ tradition and examined the folk music of the period, in the context of their relationship with Alevism would yield interesting questions. For example, parts of Ali Ufki's chief work, *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz*, mention Hacı Bektaş Veli or Hallac-ı Mansur, and could be examined focusing on these.³² In addition, lyrics similar to those of the countless *deyiş/nesfes* in the modern-day Alevi musical repertoire could serve as a valuable resource. These poems and melodies, provided by Ali Ufki along with notation, await a new comparative analysis in the context of Alevi music.³³

The entries on music, and especially on performers and on instruments, in another important 17th-century source, Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname*, are also of a depth that deserves reevaluation.³⁴ Such studies could discuss whether or

30 For more biographical information about Ali Ufki, cf. Cem Behar, *Ali Ufki ve Mezmurlar*, (Pan Yayıncılık; 11), İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 1990.

31 The manuscripts of the Ottoman music theory books which were written between the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries are called *edvar* (literally "cycles"). For more information about the *edvar* tradition, cf. Cenk Güray, *Bin Yılın Mirası: Makamı Var Eden Döngü: Edvar Geleneği*, (Pan Yayıncılık; 161), İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2012.

32 For a study of the *türkü* in the *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz* by Muammer Uludemir, cf. Ali Ufki, *Mecmuâ-i Saz ü Söz Türküler: Çalgısal Semailerin Nota Çevirileri*, Muammer Uludemir (trans.), İzmir: s.n., 1992. Also, for two pieces concerning Hacı Bektaş Veli and Hallac-ı Mansur in the *Mecmua*, cf. *ibid.*, 13, 69 & 101. A detailed examination of the work will yield further examples.

33 For a detailed examination and translation notes about the *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz*, cf. Ali Ufki, *Hâzâ Mecmûa-i Sâz ü Söz, Ali Ufki: (Çeviriyazım ve İnceleme)*, M. Hakan Cevher (ed.), İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Devlet Türk Musikisi Konservatuvarı Yayınları, 1993.

34 For significant studies evaluating Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* as a musicological resource, cf. M. Kemal Özergin, "Evliya Çelebi'ye Göre XVII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Ülkesinde Çalgılar", *Türk Folklor Araştırmaları* 262 (1971), 5956–9; 263 (1971), 6006–9; 264 (1971), 6031–4; 265 (1971), 6046–52; and Ersu Pekin, "Evliyâ Çelebi Müzik Değişiminin Neresinde?", Nuran Tezcan (ed.), *Çağının Sıradışı Yazarı Evliyâ Çelebi*, (Yapı Kredi Yayınları; 3008), İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009, 307–45; eadem, "Evliya Çelebi'nin Müzik Kaynakları", Hakan Karateke & Hatice Aynur (eds.), *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nin Yazılı Kaynakları*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2012, 286–341; and eadem, "Evliya Çelebi'nin Çalgı Listeleri", *İstanbul Araştırmaları Yıllığı* 3 (2014), 51–77. For another article evaluating the *Seyahatname* from a folk literary standpoint, cf. Sabri Koz, "Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nden Türk Halk Edebiyatı Üzerine Notlar", Nuran Tezcan (ed.), *Çağının Sıradışı Yazarı Evliyâ Çelebi*, (Yapı Kredi Yayınları; 3008), İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009, 239–58.

not a piece of music or musical form treated by Ali Ufki as a *türkü*, or an instrument referred to by Evliya Çelebi as a “folk instrument” could have had social or cultural value for Alevi communities.³⁵ Similarly, an examination of Ottoman works from that period which are sometimes treated in the context of *âşık* music and sometimes in that of *tekke* music, or a comparative study of pieces written on Ottoman-period instruments (from Ottoman sources as well as the writings of Western travelers), as well as a contextual analysis of this in order to establish their possible relationship with Alevism is needed.³⁶

A comparative examination of such sources as well as instruments taken from various field studies would yield information on the dynamics (fret system, scales, tone, structural features, symbols etc.) of Alevi music. This allows the examination of how the *bağlama* has achieved its present form. On this point, the language of the research performed for the creation of a national music as part of building the nation, must be reappraised critically. In particular the relationship between the *bağlama* and the *kopuz* need to be rediscussed in a way that includes Alevi music.³⁷

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- 35 The reason for the mention of Ali Ufki and Evliya Çelebi is that works written about the period in which they lived play an important role in the way that folk music, music of the intellectual elite, religious music and their instruments are mentioned without discriminating between them; cf. Cem Behar, *Saklı Mecmua: Ali Ufki'nin Bibliothèque Nationale de France'taki [Türç 292] Yazması*, (Yapı Kredi Yayınları; 2590), İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008, 68. For example, the details provided on an instrument called *tel tanbura* (stringed *tanbura*) in both sources, provide important details for discussions on the historic development of today's *bağlama* and two-string *ruzba* which are the most popular instruments among the Alevi communities (cf. *ibid.*, 182–3).
- 36 For an anthology of music from the Ottoman period to the present, including discussions of *âşık/tekke* music, cf. Ergun, *Türk Musikisi Antolojisi*. For a discussion of *âşık* music in the past, cf. Metin Özarslan, “Âşıklık Geleneği İçinde Âşık Müziği ve Kimi Problemler”, *Erdem* 13.38 (2001), 399–409. For a collection of writings about Ottoman-period instruments, especially by foreign travelers, cf. Bülent Aksoy, *Avrupalı Gezginlerin Gözüyle Osmanlılar'da Müzik*, (Pan Yayıncılık; 29), İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2003.
- 37 For a detailed examination of the place of folk music in the construction of national identity in Turkey, cf. Özgür Balkılıç, *Temiz ve Soylu Türküler Söyleyelim: Türkiye'de Milli Kimlik İnşasında Halk Müziği*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015. For an important work about the *bağlama* which highlights part of this process, but which must be approached critically, cf. Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal, *Ülkelerde Kopuz ve Tezeneli Sazlarımız*, Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1975. Vahit Lütfi Salcı's work presents some of the most comprehensive discussions of Alevi music in this period. He criticises the collection efforts of the period as being “from outside” and mentions the importance of approaching especially the “hidden” Alevi music “from

Although the Ottoman archives do contain *fetvas*, court records and reports by various authorities on the subject of Alevi *cems* including singing and playing music, they provide no information about this music or its performance. For example, reports about men and women gathering together performing *cems* with singing and instruments led to accusations and rumors such as *mum söndü* and others, but there are as yet no studies of the role that music played in such accusations. This subject should also be addressed within the framework of the disciplines of musicology and history to compare the general musicological and historical features of the period in which these accusations were documented.³⁸

It must be stressed once again that the information obtained from the study of both oral and written sources will not be used (or useable) to draw conclusions about the ‘original,’ ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ Alevi music; that is, this will not be an “archaeological” effort. In the area of music, this appears impossible.³⁹ Yet starting with this information, it may allow the observation of Alevi music’s change and transformation through history, and allow different perspectives about the historical course of Alevism itself. For this reason, the importance of an interdisciplinary comparative approach to historical studies of Alevism again becomes apparent.

within”; cf. Vahit Lütfi Salcı, *Gizli Türk Halk Musikisi ve Türk Musikisinde (Armoni) Meseleleri*, İstanbul: Nümune Matbaası, 1940; and idem, *Gizli Türk Dini Oyunları*, İstanbul: Nümune Matbaası, 1941.

- 38 For information on the prohibitions and *fetvas* leveled upon Alevism due to defamation during the Ottoman period, cf. Mustafa Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussu’ûd Efendi’nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı: Fetvâ-yi Ebussu’ûd Efendi*, İstanbul: Şule Yayınları, 1998, 173–8; and Ahmed Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda Rafizilik ve Bektaşılık*, İstanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1932. For accusations of being “busy with singing and playing night and day” in Ottoman documents and similar charges, cf. Saim Savaş, *XVI. Asırda Anadolu’da Alevilik*, (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları; 4), Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2013 [2002], 32–3.
- 39 Erol argues that approaches based solely on attempts to define authenticity through origins are analytically useless. He recommends that authenticity should be conceived as a process with contextual and incidental qualities. From this standpoint, he emphasises that music we perceive as ‘authentic’ is actually music that we have appropriated for ourselves (cf. Erol, *Müzik*, 43). For a detailed examination of the difficulty of working “archaeologically” on the subject of music, including a discussion of theories about the origins of music, cf. *ibid.*, 31–68.

Alevi Music as the Union of *Saz* and *Söz*

Studies of the performance of Alevi music in Alevi communities show that these communities have lived socially, culturally and historically for centuries within a network of relationships, through music composed of the union of *saz* and *söz*. *Deyiş* collected up to the present day demonstrate that sometimes a particular melody is performed with different lyrics, and sometimes the same lyrics are sung with different melodies.⁴⁰ The combination that emerges here shows that the lyrics and melodies have circulated for many years (or centuries) in a manner that reinforces the ties among different Alevi communities.⁴¹

In these networks of circulation, the importance of performers such as *dedes*, *âşiks* and *zakirs* is obvious.⁴² For example, in my study of Âşık Mücrimi (1882–1970), the printing of the poems of Mücrimi—who never left his home region of Malatya-Maraş-Antep—in the Muğla Halkevi Magazine in the 1930s, the appearances of his poems in 1950s fieldwork recordings from Erzurum and Sivas as well as the use of his recorded poems by various artists in later periods serve as evidence that these networks of circulation have survived to the present day.⁴³ The fact that Mücrimi’s works are circulating in different regions provide important evidence that Alevi communities living across these regions interrelate via music and literature. Another aspect of the issue is the circulation of the minstrels themselves. Âşık Davut Sulari, a contemporary example of a traveling minstrel, kept this tradition alive until recent times.

A musical study of the circulation of lyrics and melodies will provide important knowledge about the historical and sociocultural relationship between different Alevi communities and the Alevi *ocak* system. This in turn will illustrate

40 Duygulu, *Deyişler*, 13; Onatça, *Kırklar Semahı*, 48 and Erol, *Müzik*, 113.

41 Adding dance to the relationship between the word and music, it is possible to conduct a similar study of *semahs*. Because dance involves different dynamics, it is not addressed specifically here. For a thesis on historical writing and the perception of Alevism in the context of *semahs* since the nation building process, see Fahriye Dinçer, *Formulation of Semahs in Relation to the Question of Alevi Identity in Turkey*, (unpubl. PhD thesis, Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2004).

42 For a study of transmission of tradition by Alevi *dedes*, *âşiks*, and *zakirs* in the context of the relationship between ritual, text and music, cf. Janina Karolewski, “Ritual Text and Music in Turkish Alevism: Dimensions of Transmission and Bearers of Knowledge”, Hendrik Schulze (ed.), *Musical Text as Ritual Object*, (Historical Performance Practices; 2), Turnhout: Brepols, 2015, 91–110.

43 Ulaş Özdemir, *Şu Diyâr-ı Gurbet Elde: Âşık Mücrimi’nin Yaşamı ve Şiirleri*, (Pan Yayıncılık; 126), Istanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2007, 17.

how different communities known by names such as Alevis, Bektaşis, Kızılbaş, etc. and studied under different categories, each with different political meanings attributed to them, have diverged while maintaining their common values, and the type of diversity and interaction in which they exist.⁴⁴ This knowledge also demonstrates that narratives focusing on seclusion, when e.g. Alevi communities fled for centuries from Ottoman torment and “took refuge on the mountaintops,” lived unaware of each other and did not come into contact with different Alevi or Bektaşî communities, must be reexamined.⁴⁵

Discussion of Alevi Music from the Early Republic to the Present

Uslu writes that based on records in the archives of Muallim İsmail Hakkı, the first pre-Republican collection and notation of Bektashi *nefes* were conducted in the early 1900s, and later, in 1917, Cavide Hayri Hanım’s notations were published.⁴⁶ This was the same period in which researchers such as Baha Said Bey and Niyazi (Ramazanoğlu) Bey were conducting field work in Alevi communities and publishing their work.⁴⁷

Concurrently with the national music studies in the early Republican period, researchers such as Vahit Lütü Salcı, Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergun, Rauf Yekta and Halil Bedii Yönetken were conducting various research and collection projects on Alevi and Bektaşî music.⁴⁸ The debate during this period concentrated on

44 According to Erol despite the various musical practices and related forms of discourse as well as the enormous range of modes of expression, discussions of Alevi music should begin from a common point like Ali, and the *söz* on which the music takes form (Erol, *Müzik*, 102).

45 Cf. the studies mentioned in footnote 27 of this chapter.

46 Uslu, “İlk Derlenen Nefes Antolojisi”, 105.

47 For a comprehensive collection containing all of Baha Said Bey’s works, cf. Baha Said Bey, *Türkiyede Alevi-Bektaşî, Ahî ve Nusayrî Zümreleri*, İsmail Görkem (ed.). İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2006. For Niyazi Bey’s report on his study of the Tahtacı in the Adana region, cf. Serdar Sarısır, *İttihat ve Terakki Dönemi Tahtacı Araştırmaları: Niyazi Bey ve Adana Bölgesi Tahtacıları*, (Kömen Yayınları; 92), Konya: Kömen Yayınları, 2012.

48 For the two-volume collection of Bektaşî *nefes* by the Istanbul Conservatory Committee composed of Rauf Yekta, Ali Rifat, Zekaizade Ahmed and Suphi Bey, cf. Tasnif ve Tespit Heyeti (= Rauf Yekta, Zekaizade Ahmed Bey, Ali Rifat & Suphi Bey) (ed.), *Türk Musikisi Klâsikerlerinden Bektaşî Nefesleri*, 2 vols, (Türk Musikisi Klasiklerinden; 4–5), İstanbul: Feniks Matbaası, 1933. For Halil Bedii Yönetken’s collection notes on the subject, cf. Halil Bedii Yönetken, *Derleme Notları 1*. İstanbul: Orkestra Yayınları, 1966,

whether this music was ‘religious music’ or ‘folk music’. Evidence of similar debates can be seen in Köprülü’s historical studies during the same period. From this standpoint, the debate about Alevi music continued parallel to the process of constructing a national music as part of Republican ideology.⁴⁹ The interest in Alevi music during the early Republican period proceeded with increasing collection efforts, in which many examples of Alevi music continued to be evaluated within the scope of ‘folklore’ research. Many researchers, such as Bela Bartok, Muzaffer Sarısözen and Ursula-Kurt Reinhard, as well as local and foreign private researchers, collected and notated Alevi music, parts of it later entered the repertoire of Turkish Radio and Television (TRT). However these works were generally classified as Turkish folk music, and addressed as “Turkish music” rather than “Alevi music.”⁵⁰

Thus the discussion of Alevi music may be expanded by reexamining pieces collected in different periods, according to the conditions of their collection, and through a comparative analysis. Rather than arriving at a ‘whole’ however, the goal here is to examine the changes in Alevi musical performance, and a reexamination of the collectors’ approaches.

In addition, various musical works in various formats over history, such as wax cylinder, 78rpm, LP and EPs, cassettes, CDs etc. could be evaluated in the context of Alevi music.⁵¹ For example, the recordings of Alevi *âşık*s and *dedes*

41–4 & 62–88. For Vahit Lütfi Salcı’s studies of Alevi music, cf. Salcı, *Gizli Türk Halk Musikisi*; and idem, *Gizli Türk Dini Oyunları*. For a work by Eugène Borrel based on Vahit Lütfi Salcı’s collection notes, and the first detailed study of Alevi music in French, cf. Eugène Borrel, “Sur la musique secrète des tribus turques Alévi”, *Revue des Études Islamiques* 8 (1934), 241–50.

49 Dinçer’s unpublished PhD thesis, which mentions the above *semahs*, may be examined in this context; Dinçer, *Formulation of Semahs*.

50 To the researchers mentioned, we must also add organologist Laurence Picken’s unparalleled work on the folk instruments of Anatolia. Picken’s work deserves examination in the context of the relationship between Alevi music and instruments (Laurence Picken, *Folk Musical Instruments in Turkey*, London et al.: Oxford University Press, 1975).

51 For a comprehensive study of the development of recording techniques in Turkey and the world since their beginnings, which includes details of the phonograph, gramophone and 78rpm periods along with a catalog of recording from this period, cf. Cemal Ünlü, *Git Zaman Gel Zaman: Fonograf—Gramofon—Taş Plak*, (Pan Yayıncılık; 83), İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2004. For a study of early period folk music recordings from the first decade of the 20th century, cf. Dorit Klebe, “Geleneksel Türk Halk Müziğine Ait Olarak Yirminci Yüzyılın İlk On Yılında Yapılmış Erken Dönem Ses Kayıtları”, Oğuz Elbaş, Mehmet Kalpaklı & Okan Murat Öztürk (eds.), *Türkiye’de Müzik*

which we encounter on 78rpms from the early Republican years have yet to be studied in the scope of repertoire, performance and identity (to examine how they express themselves). Not only can these performances provide information about the dynamics of Alevi music in that period. It can also illustrate the route that Alevi musical performance—which continues today—has taken. In addition, data about these performers' regions and Alevi *ocaks*, as well as the minstrels who wrote the songs in their repertoires, may yield new findings about the above-mentioned networks of circulation.

Today's studies of Alevi music generally approach it from the standpoint of Alevi identity.⁵² Discussions about the 'Alevi revival' or 'Alevi music revival' of the 1990s in particular await research in relation to the mobilisation of Alevis and Alevisms scattered throughout the world today.⁵³ This mobilisation involves vertical social movement as well as horizontal mobility and wandering. Generally approached in terms of village vs. cities, this phenomenon involves many major and minor dynamics today, from movement within cities to international movement.⁵⁴ Thus the study of Alevi communities and Alevis' networks among themselves may reveal a variety of social and cultural factors influencing musical performance from past to present.

Kültürleri Kongresi Bildirileri, (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayını: Bilimsel Toplantılar; 50). Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 2011, 143–49.

- 52 Cf. Irene Markoff, "Alevi Identity and Expressive Culture", Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus, & Dwight Reynolds (eds.), *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, Vol. 6: *The Middle East*, New York & London: Routledge, 2002, 793–800; Bedriye Poyraz, *Direnişle Piyasa Arasında: Alevilik ve Alevi Müziği*, (Ütopya Yayınları; 152), Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi, 2007; and Erol, *Müzik*.
- 53 To compare various sources which address the Alevi revival and identity movement from different aspects, cf. Çamuroğlu, "Alevi Uyanışı"; Şehriban Şahin, "Bir Kamusal Din Olarak Türkiye'de ve Ulus Ötesi Sosyal Alanlarda İnşa Edilen Alevilik", *Folklor/Edebiyat* 29 (2002), 123–62; and Elise Massicard, *Türkiyeden Avrupa'ya Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması*, Ali Berktaş (trans.), (Araştırma—İnceleme; 217), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007. For thoughts on the Alevi musical revival, cf. Erol, *Müzik*, 131–56 and Banu Mustan Dönmez, *Alevi Müziği Uyanışı*, Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2014.
- 54 For studies on the mobilisation of the Alevis from different standpoints, cf. Martin Sökefeld, "Alevi Dedes in the German Diaspora: The Transformation of a Religious Institution", *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 127 (2002), 163–86; idem, "Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora", *Global Networks* 6.3 (2006), 265–84; and Elise Massicard, "Alevism in the 1960s: Social Change and Mobilisation", Hege Irene Markussen (ed.), *Alevis and Alevism: Transformed Identities*. İstanbul: İsis Press, 2005, 108–35.

Comparative Studies of Alevi Communities

Yet another dimension of 'Alevi music studies' is the lack of comparative work on communities such as the Bektaşî, Baba'î, Bedreddini, Kızılbaş, Tahtacı, Kırklar, Kaka'î, Shabak, Ahl-i Haqq (Yaresan) and others, which are spread over a vast region from the Balkans to the Middle East, and which possess a common music-based *cem* ritual.⁵⁵ The lack of comparative studies of Alevi communities across this vast region and their music, sung in languages such as Kurdish, Arabic, Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek and their dialects, has led to a Turkocentric musical study, and in Turkey to the lack of discussion outside of the paradigms of nation building.

In order to address this subject comparatively, I would like to relate a few notes about the *cem* repertoire (*kelams*) considered sacred by the Ahl-i Haqq of Iran, similarly to the Alevis of Anatolia. The dynamics and sensitivities surrounding the relationship of music and faith becomes apparent, for example, in the advice and efforts of Pir Seyid Nasreddin Haydari, a living saint of the Ahl-i Haqq, about the construction of the sacred *tanbur* and against its use as a meta.⁵⁶ Likewise, the letter of permission allowing Ali Akbar Moradi to release a four-CD album of sacred *cem* repertoire for the first time in history⁵⁷ as well as Seyid Nasreddin Haydari's recent announcement prohibiting unauthorised release of the sacred

55 For a comparative study of the *bağlama* and *tanbur* in the context of Alevi and Ahl-i Haqq music, cf. Ulaş Özdemir, "Ehl-i Hak'ın Kutsal Sazı Tanburun Kimliği ve Bağlamayla İlişkisi", Pinar Ecevitoglu, Ali Murat İrat & Ayhan Yalçınkaya (eds.), *Hacı Bektaş Veli: Güneşte Zerresinden, Deryada Katresinden: Uluslararası Hacı Bektaş Veli Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, (Dipnot Yayınları; 85), Ankara: Dipnot Yayıncılık, 2010, 420–30. For other attempts at comprehensive studies of music in Alevi communities, cf. Jean During, "Notes sur la musique des Alevis-Bektachis et des groupes apparentés", Alexandre Popovic & Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachiyya: Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, [=Special Issue of *Révue des Études Islamiques*], Istanbul: İsis Press, 1995, 85–9; as well as Irene Markoff, "A Cross-Cultural Examination of the Expressive Culture of Turkish-Speaking Alevi/Bektashi and Alevi/Babai (Bobai) Communities in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains of Southern Bulgaria: In Search of Origins and Parallels with Turkish Alevi/Bektashis and Tahtacis", *Congrès des musiques dans le monde de l'islam/Conference on Music in the World of Islam. Assillah*, 8th–13th August 2007. http://ligne13.maisondesculturesdumonde.org/sites/default/files/fichiers_ataches/markoff-2007.pdf. 7 pp.

56 Partow Hoosmandrad, *Performing the Belief: Sacred Musical Practice of the Kurdish Ahl-i Haqq of Guran*, (unpubl. PhD thesis, Berkeley: University of California, 2004), 47 f.

57 Ali Akbar Moradi, *Iranian Kurdistan: The Ritual Maqam of The Yarsan*, (4 CDs & booklet), Paris: Inedit, 2002, 22 f.

kelams in book or other formats⁵⁸ bear witness of these dynamics of music and faith. This further poses the question of how to approach both the musical and religious legacy of a community that believes in the common values of Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli in particular; a legacy that we have thus far studied as ‘music’, but which its practitioners see and hold as a holy relic in the context of Alevism.

This question also leads to another subject in the context of Alevism, that of ‘authority’, and reveals an important point in Alevi music. Beyond opinions that the *dedes* had lost their authority, which appear frequently in discussions of the Alevi revival, there is a need for a general discussion of authority in Alevism, particularly concerning the use of all manner of oral, written, or visual material relating to Alevism and the right to speak on the subject.⁵⁹ This issue also relates to the modern-day institutionalisation process of Alevism.⁶⁰

To our initial questions about Alevi music, we may add:

- Is it possible to speak of an Alevi musical legacy? What are its sources?
- Can there be a discussion of authority relative to Alevi music?
- Do this music’s most significant carriers, the *âşıks*, *dedes* and *zakirs*, have authority or a say in how Alevi music is performed? If such authority exists, how is it exercised?
- Relative to this issue, how much authority do religious leaders (*dede*, *mürşid*, *pir*, *postnişin*, *dedebaba* etc.), who do not perform music, have?

58 This was announced via social media pages and various forums. For an example of one such announcement, cf. Yari Yarsan Facebook Page Photo (Access date: March 1, 2014): <https://www.facebook.com/yariyarsan/photos/o.274238239264903/1467122663499616/?type=3&theater>.

59 To compare various discussions about the *dedes*’ authority in Alevism, cf. Sökefeld, “Alevi Dedes”; David Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*, London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 135–7 and Markus Dressler, “The Modern Dede: Changing Parameters for Religious Authorities in Contemporary Turkish Alevism”, Gudrun Krämer & Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, (Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia; 100), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006, 269–94.

60 For an introductory discussion of authority in Islam, cf. Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads*, New Brunswick [NJ]: Transaction Publishers, 1989. For another discussion of the social institutions and power in Alevism, cf. Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Alevilikte Toplumsal Kurumlar ve İktidar*, (Mülkiyeliler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları; 17), Ankara: Mülkiyeliler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları, 1996.

Clearly, the broader the discussion of Alevi music, the more issues emerge concerning Alevism itself. The goal here is to provide an idea of the extent of this broadness, and illustrate the need for more interdisciplinary and comparative approaches to Alevism and its music in particular. From this standpoint, the question of Alevi music has no single answer, and the question of *how* it is constructed as such appears to be a vast ocean that may be answered in many different contexts.

Conclusion

Years ago at a conference on Hacı Bektaş Veli in Ankara, a fellow academician, a historian, asked me this question: “When we hear a piece of music, what is it about that music that seems ‘Alevi’ to us?” The answer to this question is hidden in the answers to the questions posed above. But this answer is concealed more in the answer to *how* than of *what*. We may then ask the question in this way: “How is it that this music sounds like Alevi music?” My goal in this article was to examine what the sources necessary to answer this question might be, and provide an idea about how to depart from clichéd paradigms in which Alevi music has been discussed thus far.

At the same time, the answer to my friend’s question brings up a variety of *musemes*⁶¹ which compose Alevi musical culture. The impression these leave upon the listener relate to that listener’s knowledge of Alevism. On the other hand, the feeling that makes one say “this is Alevi music” also stems from the relationship that the listener has established between one or more of its components (lyrics, sound, melody etc.) and Alevism. It is thus safe to say that this interpretation is inextricable from a knowledge of Alevism that includes a variety of social, cultural, religious and psychological factors, and is transmitted through various

61 A reexamination of Philip Tagg’s concept of *museme* together with codes of Alevi music may yield interesting results. This semiotic method of musical analysis by Tagg, who further developed Charles Seeger’s *museme* concept, is based on Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theories and Umberto Eco’s canonisation theories. In this sense, it provides an important approach to other discussions in this volume. For Tagg’s detailed studies on this subject, cf. Philip Tagg, “Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice”, *Popular Music* 2 (1982), 37–69; idem, *Kojak: 50 Seconds of Television Music: Towards the Analysis of Affect in Popular Music*, New York: Mass Media Music Scholars’ Press, 2000; and idem, *Music’s Music’s Meanings: A Modern Musicology for Non-Musos*, New York & Huddersfield: Mass Media Music Scholars’ Press, 2012. I would like to thank my colleague Dr. Evrim Hikmet Öğüt for her comments on this subject.

musical vehicles. Just like the other issues above, this subject also is awaiting work from a standpoint of finding an answer to the *how* rather than an essentialist approach.

Clearly, the idea of finding an 'original' or 'authentic' Alevi music is fraught with problems. The object of this article is not to seek and/or find this. According to Erol, there is no way of knowing whether a newly found, recorded or notated melody reflecting Alevi tradition contains characteristics of Alevi music of the past.⁶² Yet, the impossibility of knowing this is not an obstacle to approaching the issue from a different angle. The lack of quantitative and qualitative studies of Alevi music cannot rescue studies of this subject from certain vicious circles.

More interdisciplinary studies and a broader examination of the subject will allow the questioning of clichéd paradigms and their replacement with new points of view. In this way, rather than addressing Alevi music as a single concept, type, style or similar category, it will become easier to examine this music within different contexts, and come closer to finding social, cultural and historical evidence concerning Alevism and Alevi communities.

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62 Erol, Müzik, 113.

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