



ROLE OF RELIGIONS
IN THE TURKIC CULTURE

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A Special Melody of the Bektashis in Thrace

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Abstract

From 1999 to 2003 with Éva Csáki we systematically visited Bektashi people who or whose parents migrated from Bulgaria to the European part of Turkey. I try to find answer to questions like: Is there any connection between the domed-form Hungarian and Bektashi melodies? What role do these melodies play in the music repertoire of the Thracian Bektashis? What is the Eurasian background of this melody form?, etc.

I examined the existence of these forms in the music of other Turkic peoples, and also in old and new European sources. It turned out that among the typical descending melodies of the Turkish and Hungarian folk music, the domed-form songs came as a foreign influence from the Western Art music. Similarly most probably these melodies came to the Bektashi music from the Turkish Art Music. In Hungarian folk music these songs form a large music style, which replaced older tunes and became today the most popular and most commonly used folksongs of the Hungarians. In Anatolian folk music it is a small, but accepted form, and in the religious music of the Thracian Bektashis it is a well defined melody group.

Key words: comparative musicology, Bektashis, Turkic people, Turkish art music, Sufi

Music plays an important role in the life of the Sufi Alevi-Bektashi people. There is music in all important moment of their life; it even helps approaching God in their religious *zikir* ceremonies. Yet, the number of books and studies have been written on Alevi-Bektashi music is very small.

What is more, the existing studies usually concentrate only on the repertoire of a single community and that way we can not get enough information on the real life of the melodies, and can not answer questions like: are these melodies specific to the given community, or are they living on a larger area? Or are these musical forms also to be found in different parts of the world?

We should remember that blood kinship, linguistic relations and cultural ties only rarely overlap. Let me mention an example for this phenomenon. I examined the music of the *Aday* Kazakhs living on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea on one hand, and that of the Kazakh people living in Bayan Ölgii (Western Mongolia). While the languages of these Kazakh groups are very similar, their songs are completely different. The compass of the *Aday* Kazakh melodies is very narrow,

and the typical melodic movements are convex, while Kazakhs in Mongolia sing wide-range pentatonic melodies undulating passionately up and down.

Of course, there are difficult sides of the comparative research: first we should collect, analyze and classify the musical repertoire of several people. That is why in the last twenty-eight years I have been doing comparative research among Turkic people, for example among Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, Azeris, Karachay-Balkars, Turkmens and Anatolian Turks.

One of our current researches with Éva Csáki is concerned with the *tassavvuffi* (Mystical Islam) hymns and the folk tunes of the Thracian Bektashis.

I have been recorded melodies among Sufi groups in Turkey first in 1989. This group belonged to the *Tahtadji* branch living around Mut, in the vicinity of Mersin. In 1991 I did research work among Alevis living in Çubuk county near Ankara. Then from 1999 to 2003 with Éva Csáki we systematically visited Bektashi people who or who's parents migrated from Bulgaria to the European part of Turkey and were settled down in villages of the Turkish-Bulgarian boarder and in the vicinity of Kırklareli. We recorded the musical repertoires, both laic and religious, transcribed the interviews, melodies and song texts, and finally analyzed the collected material. Based on this material, in 2006 we published the book *The Psalms and Folk Songs of a Mystic Turkish Order*, Academia Publishing House, Budapest.

Now I have time only to introduce the musical and historical background of a single melody type from this huge material. The characteristic feature of these melodies is that their first and last sections are moving lower than the middle sections. This form has two variants. In the case of the first form, the first, second and fourth sections are moving low, while the third section is moving in a higher register. I show the scheme of this melody type in example 1, and I will refer to this form now on as "small domed-form". In the melodies of the second type the first and the fourth sections move lower, while the second and third sections are moving in a somewhat (or even considerably) higher register. I will refer to the later form, shown in example 2 as "large domed-form".

<i>Small domed-form</i>			<i>b) Large domed-form</i>	
3. section			2nd section	3rd section
1st section	2nd section	4th section	1st section	4th section

Example 1. Skeletons of the domed-forms a) scheme AABA, b) scheme ABBA

On the next examples I show a few realizations of the musical schemes introduced above. The religious *nefes* melody in example 2 is a typical example of the small domed-form melodies. Its similar 1st, 2nd and 4th sections are moving in a low register, while the 3rd section moves three tones higher.

A SPECIAL MELODY OF THE BEKTASHIS IN THRACE

♩=116

Zan-net-me biz bu - gün ik-rar ver-mi - şiz,
 Bi-zim ik - ra - rı - mız kal-ü be - li - den,
 A - dem'-den Hav - va' - dan ev - vel er - mi - şiz.
 Ta e-zel bez - min-den sır - rı ce - mi - den.

Example 2. Small domed tunes (Sipos – Csáki 2009, № 592)

In example 3 I show a typical large domed-form melody with its first section moving low and ending on the final tone. The 2nd and especially the 3rd sections are moving in a higher register and are closing on the 4th or the 3rd degree. The last section again descends to the final tone.

Nefes

♩=200

Çe-rag - lar can - lar u - yan - mış,
 Gō-nül - ler şevk i - le yan - mış,
 İ - la - hi aşk - a bo - yan-mış,
 Er-kan mey - dan - da, dan - da.
 Hü. Hü.

Example 3. Large domed tunes (Sipos – Csáki 2009, № 575)

This melodic movement is different from the descending melodic lines of the majority of the Anatolian folksongs. At the same time it is very similar to the melodic pattern of the Hungarian “new style” folk tunes.

Some questions arise here: Is there any connection between the domed-form Hungarian and domed-form Bektashi melodies? What role do these melodies play in the music repertoire of the Thracian Bektashis? What is the Eurasian background of this melody form?, etc.

First let us examine if there are similar melody forms in the music of other Turkic peoples. There are no domed-form melodies in the Azerbaijani and Turkmen repertoire, here most of the melodies move on only a few tones (Sipos 2006). Similarly, one can not find this kind of songs among the pentatonic melodies of the Tatar, Chuvash and Bashkir people either (Vikár 1971, 1979 and 1999).

There are such songs in Kyrgyz music, but all of them are variants of Soviet art songs spread out in the one-time Soviet Union (Duşaliyev – Luzanova 1999) and my Kyrgyz recordings). There are similar song forms among the *jir* melodies of the Karachay-Balkar people as well, and these melodies are regarded by them very characteristic for themselves (Sipos 2001). However the most important melody group of their Adige-Kabard-Cherkess neighbors contains similar melodies in great quantity, and much evidence shows that Karachays learned these songs from the neighboring people.

After examining the folk music of the Volga-Kama and Siberian Turks, Sahas, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs and Turkmens it become evident that the melody forms in question do not or only sporadically exist in the folk music of the Asian Turks.

I examined 2500 melodies in the repertoire of the Turkish Radio and Television and 1500 melodies recorded by me in Anatolia (Sipos 1994, 1995, 2008). First I classified this huge material, which made possible to discover if these forms exist in it or not. As a result, I found only 9 pieces with *small domed-form* in the TRT repertory, and there was almost none in my own collection.

In the TRT repertory there are 10 *large domed-form* songs from various regions of Anatolia, mostly from more developed areas close to the sea shore (İzmir – № 2490, Burdur – № 3100, Manisa – № 1060, Aydın/Nazilli – № 801, Bilecik – № 2025, Urfa – № 2420, Trabzon – № 1284, Samsun – № 2823, Bodrum – № 716 and Uşak – № 1523). In my Anatolian material this form is represented by only a few melodies, among them the *Serenler zeybeği* song from western Anatolia showing Greek influences in rhythm and in melodic line too (example 4).

A SPECIAL MELODY OF THE BEKTASHIS IN THRACE

♩ = 96f

Se - ren - ler se - ren - - - ler
 Al - çak - ta yük - sek se - ren - - - ler
 Biz gi - di - yo - ruz e - fe - ler de
 Si - ze gal - sın ga - me - ra - lar.

Example 4. *Serenler zeybeği* (Sipos 2005, № 456)

Let us examine now if there are similar melodies among the songs of the Bektashis. A study on the music of the Thracian Bektashis written by Vahit Lütfi Salcı in 1940 contains only five melodies with no domed-form song among them. We have a more important and more abundant source, the *Bektaşî nefesleri*, published by the Istanbul Conservatory in 1933. It contains 88 *nefes*, some of them having small domed-form. I show one of them in example 5 with a Hungarian variant.

Aş - kın be - nim fü - zün - - dur
 Hat - ten zi - ya - de - sa - ki
 Tah - fîf i - çin e - lin - le
 Sun do - lu - bu - de sa - - ki.

Sır - ga lâ - bü kis pa - cısr - ta,
 Szár - nya az e - get hu - sîj - jî,
 Ha - sîj - ja a szép csil - la - gos e - get.
 A sze - re - tüm má - sat sze - rel.

Example 5. a) No 199 in the book *Bektaşî nefesleri* published by the Istanbul Conservatory, b) a similar Hungarian melody

At the same time among my Thracian Bektashi recordings domed-form melodies form a well defined group (3% of the whole material and Sipos - Csáki (2009) Class 13).

Before comparing the Hungarian and Anatolian domed-form songs, let us take a tour in Europe, investigating if there are similar melody forms to be found there.

In old European sources domed-form melodies can be found among French songs from the 15th century (Paris – Gevaert (1875) 7 songs from 142, in Gerold (1913) 4 songs from 50). Among 147 German songs known from around 1530, there is only a single one. The form is rare in Gregorian religious music and among the melodies of the troubadours as well.

There are a few small domed-form melodies in Old Catholic song-collections, usually from the end of the 18th century, in Harmat – Sík (1983) 30 AABA form, one from the 17th century, the others from the end of the 18th century.

In European music the domed-form appears more frequently from the 16th century. Though we do not see clear neither the sources nor the development of this form, it is popular in the present day European art music.

Not very often large domed-form can also be heard in French, British, Canadian, Dutch, Spanish, Romanian, Czech and Moravian *folk music*. (Wiora 1952 shows examples from different European peoples). But in large quantity it can be observed only in the Hungarian folk music and in the folk music of British migrant living in the Appalachian region of America. The strong presence of the large domed-form in Slovak folk music can be regarded as borrowings from the Hungarians.

Hungarian and Anatolian folk music are dominated by descending melodies, and the melodic movement of the Hungarian “new melody style” are different.

The domed-form melodies got into Hungarian folk music through western church songs, and spread in Hungarian territory by the help of art song, and folk-like composed songs. Between 1850 and 1899, these composed songs spread to the Hungarian villages and people learned and modified them according to their own taste. Today the majority of folk melodies sung in Hungarian area are from this stock.

Is there any connection between the Hungarian and the Turkish domed-form tunes? Some Hungarian and Turkish domed-form melodies are very similar to each other. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the Turkish parallels of these Hungarian melodies are exceptional examples in the Anatolian repertoire.

Except the domed structure these Anatolian folk songs have little in common with the Hungarian tunes. The 2nd and 3rd sections of the Hungarian domed-form tunes are often the upward fifth-shift version of the 1st section. By contrast, the middle sections of the Anatolian melodies are only 3–4 tone higher than the 1st sections. Besides many of the Hungarian domed-form melodies are at least partly pentatonic, while Turkish melodies in general use diatonic scales.

What can be the source(s) of these Bektashi melodies? As we have seen there are only a few domed-form melodies in the folk music of the Anatolian and Asian Turks, so we need to search for their origin elsewhere. In theory they could have been of Bulgarian origin, but there are not any similar Bulgarian folk melodies. As there are similar Macedonian folk songs, Macedonian origin might be considered. Did these songs arrive to Bulgarian territory by the help of Bektashi *babas*, wandering to and fro in the Balkan?

The answer is no, because these Macedonian tunes are new, they were born in the socialist period of the one-time Yugoslavia.

At the same time these religious *nefes* songs might be created by well known composers of *Turkish Classical/Makam Music* because here the domed-form is very common (Signal 2004). We know that the repertoire of the Mevlevi dervishes was created by famous composers of the *Türk Sanat Müziği* of the 16th to the 20th century. As examples we list here the names of Köçek Dervish Mustafa dede (17th century), Dede Efendi (18–19th century) or Rauf Yekta (19–20th century).

The melodic progression of the *ascending makams* is of this type, and the *Hüseyin makam* being closest to the most typical Anatolian folksongs, has an ascending form as well. In example 6 I show a *Hijaz Hümayun* makam.

Aksak semai HİCAZ-HÜMAYUN Saz Sem. Veli Dede

Example 6. A *Hijaz Humayun* makam of the Turkish Classical Music (Signal 2004, 79)

CONCLUSIONS

Among the typical descending melodies of the Turkish and Hungarian folk music, the domed-form songs came as a foreign influence from the Western Art music. Similarly most probably the domed-form melodies came to the Bektashi music from the Turkish Art Music. In Hungarian folk music these melodies form a large music style, which replaced older tunes and became today the most popular and most commonly used folksongs of the Hungarians. In Anatolian folk music it is a small, but accepted form, and in the religious music of the Thracian Bektashis it is a well defined melody group.

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