

TURKISH FOLK MUSIC

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1. Turkish Folk Music

Turkish folk music (*Türk halk müziği*) combines the distinct cultural values of all civilizations that have existed in Anatolia and the past territories in Europe and Asia. In the same geography, its unique structure includes regional differences.

Turkish folk music contains the variety music of the Anatolian regions and its close districts. Apart from the classical music it shows up small provinces much more than big cities.

Folk music, as Turkish *türkü*, that generally deals with subjects surrounding daily life in less grandiose terms than the love and emotion usually contains in its traditional counterpart, Ottoman court music.¹

Most songs recount stories of real life events and Turkish folklore, or have developed through song contests between troubadour poets. Corresponding to their origins, folk songs are usually played at weddings, funerals and special festivals.²

The Anatolian Turkish folk music has distinctive forms of music. This kind of forms mostly called their poems' names like *koşma*, *destan*, *varsağı*, *mani*, *divan*, *karşılama*, and *semai* etc. They also called with performing way to expression called *maya*, *bozlak*, *uzun hava*, *kırık hava*, and *oyun havası* etc. It would be straighter to entitle this music as *türkü* (Ballad) which is a free form of song.

2. Music Types In Turkish Folk Music

Türkü, literally "of the Turk", is a name given to Turkish folk songs as opposed to *şarkı*. In contemporary usage, the meanings of the words *türkü* and *şarkı* have shifted: *Türkü* refers to folk songs originated from music traditions within Turkey whereas *şarkı* refers to all other songs, including foreign music. *Türkü* has two types as "with lyrics" and "instrumental".

3. Types of *Türkü*

1. *Lirik türküleri* (Lyric Ballad): *Aşk türküleri* (Love Ballads), *gurbet türküleri* (Homesickness Ballads), *asker türküleri* (Military Ballads), *ağıt* (Requiem), *ninni* (Lullaby).
2. *Taşlama* (Satire): Contains satire and comedy purpose.
3. *İş türküleri* (Proleterian Ballads): Treat the proletarian subjects.
4. *Anlatı türküleri* (Narrative Ballads): Retailing the social events.

¹ "The Ottoman Music". *Tanrıkörur, Cinuçen (Abridged and translated by Dr. Savaş Ş. Barkçin)*. Retrieved June 26, 2000. Tanrıkörur argues that the perceived differences between the traditional music genres stemmed from the cultural clash between the East and the West that emerged during the Tanzimat Era (1839-1908).

² Erdener, Yildiray (1995). *The Song Contests of Turkish Minstrels: Improvised Poetry Sung to Traditional Music* (Milman Parry Studies in Oral Tradition). Garland Science. ISBN 0-8153-1239-3., p 36

5. *Tören türküleri* (Ceremony Ballads): Weddings ceremony and religious ceremony.
6. *Oyun ve dans türküleri* (Folk Theatre and Dance)

Classically, *türkü* can be grouped into two categories according to their melodies. These are divided into free-forms or improvisations with no obligatory metrical or rhythmic form, known as *uzun hava*, and those that have a set metrical or rhythmic structure, known as *kırık havalar* (broken melodies). Both can also be employed at the same time.

4. Types Of Composition In Turkish Folk Music

I. *Uzun Hava*

There have irregular melodies. The following subtypes belong to this category: *barak, bozlak, gurbet havası, yas havası, tecnis, boğaz havası, elagözlü, maya, hoyrat, divan, yol havası, yayla havası, mugam, gazel*, and *uzun hava* (is used for the ones which don't fit into any other subtype). *Uzun hava* also involved in *türkü* and composition.

II. *Kırık Hava*

These have regular melodies. Following subtypes belong to this category: *deyiş, koşma, semah, tatyân, barana, zeybek, horon, halay, bar, bengi, sallama, güvende, oyun havası, karşılama, ağırlama, peşrev, teke zortlatması, gâkgili havası, dımıdan, zil havası*, and *fingil havası*.

III. *Bozlak*

Bozlak is a form of Turkish folk song from Central Anatolia accompanied by the long-necked *saz* (*bozuk saz*) and *ney* or *kaval*. The main subjects of the melancholic songs are separation and love. The songs begin with a very high pitched vocal and end in a low vocal.

Bozlak, which is a form of *uzun hava* (long tune) in Turkish Folk Music, has been a form of music starting from Central Anatolia and an expression of the cultures of the *Yoruk/Turkmen* and *Avshar* tribes which pursue a way of life based on *yaylak* (summer highland pasture) and *kişlak* (winter pasture). In terms of meaning, the word *bozlak* has the meanings of to shout, to yell, to cry out, and to burst out. The bursting out of the sorrow, desolation and the outbreak that the Turkmens and Avshars experienced in daily life to the nature caused the emergence of the *bozlak* culture. Turkmens, Avshars and the Abdals who existed among these tribes have transferred the tradition of *bozlak* to our day.

The term *bozlak* means to scream, to revolt; to struggle and with this frame this term is used to deal with social concepts such as death, separate, and pain, and it is seen in the several parts of the country especially in the Middle Anatolia and *Çukurova* region, and two different style; Avshar style and Turkmen style is used in *bozlak* thus, using two different *makam* (tones) proves that it cannot be explained only through *kürdi* style.³

IV. *Ağut*

A ballad form of *uzun hava* is songs at funerals. It tells the good memories of died people. The structure of music is mostly including improvisation, without rhythm and short scale of melody.

V. *Maya*

Maya is a folk poem which consist of quatrain lines ends up “a a a b” form. The subject contains longing, love, separation and reproach. The melody turns in one octave and performed with the instruments called *bağlama*, *zurna*, *kaval*. The most known significant property of *maya* is La – Mi (A – E) fifth movement.

5. Scales

Although some of the scales, *ayak* (foot) employed in Turkish folk music melodies are similar to the some of the *makam* scales of traditional Ottoman/Turkish classical music, not all of the folk music scales have classical music counterparts, and there are important differences between the two concepts. The *makam* of Turkish classical music is not just a scale, but has certain rules of progression, which in some cases are quite detailed, and in the course of the development the whole scale of the *makam* is used. Though sometimes referred to as *makam* by exponents of Turkish classical music, the scales of Turkish folk music are more properly called *ayak* and are simply scales, with no rules of progression, thus bearing closer comparison with the concept of medieval church modes than do *makam*. Furthermore in many Turkish folk songs only part of the scale is used. Both forms of music are diatonic, but use notes that are additional to the 12 semitones of western music. In Turkish folk music, for example, some scales include the note B, others B flat, and still others a note roughly halfway between B and B flat.⁴

³ Rosie Ayliffe, *The rough guide to Turkey* (5th ed.) Rough Guides, 2003, ISBN 1-84353-071-6, p.1031

⁴ Bartok, Bela & Suchoff, Benjamin (1976). *Turkish Folk Music from Asia Minor* (The New York Bartok Archive Studies in Musicology, No. 7). Princeton Univ Pr. ISBN 0-691-09120-X., p 50

The scales of Turkish folk music are associated with different regions, and can be known by different names depending on the region, such as: *Beşiri*, *Garip*, *Kerem*, *Misket*, and *Müstezad*.

6. Time Signatures

A wide variety of time signatures are used in Turkish folk music. In addition to simple ones such as 2/4, 4/4 and 3/4, others such as 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 7/4, and 5/4 are common. Combinations of several basic rhythms often results in longer, complex rhythms that fit into time signatures such as 8/8, 10/8, 15/8, 7/16 and 12/8.

7. Instruments

Turkish folk musical instruments can be classified as follows:

- *Strings Instruments*

a) Played with a plectrum

b) Played with fingers

Saz, Baglama, Tar

- *Bow Instruments*

Kabak Kemane, Karadeniz Kemencesi

- *Wind Instruments*

Zurna, Kaval, Çigirtma, Mey, Tulum, Sipsi, Çifte

- *Percussion*

Davul, Nagara, Tef, Kaşık

Description:

Saz (Turkish Long Neck Lute)

Saz is the grandfather of the Greek bouzouki. It's originated in Central Asia where Turks lived before their westward migration. Like the guitar in Spain and the bouzouki in Greece, *saz* is

the most popular stringed instrument in Turkey. Although similar in shape to the Greek bouzouki, the construction, size and sound of the *saz* is different. These instruments have traditional tied frets that are movable and 3 courses of strings.

Bağlama

Bağlama is the most commonly used string folk instrument in Turkey. It takes different names according to the regions and according to its size such as *Bağlama*, *Divan Sazi*, *Bozuk*, *Çöğür*, *Kopuz Irizva*, *Cura*, *Tambura*, etc.

Cura is the smallest member of the *bağlama* family with the highest pitched sound. The member which is one size bigger than *cura* is the *tambura* which gives a sound that is one octave lower than *cura*. And the one with the deepest sound is the *divan* whose sound is one octave lower compared to *tambura*.

Bağlama has three main parts called *tekne*, *göğüs* and *sap*. *Tekne* part is generally made from mulberry trees as well as from woods of juniper, beech, spruce or walnut. The *göğüs* part is made from spruce and the *sap* section from homespun or juniper.

There are pieces called *burgu* (screw) at the end of the *sap* which is opposite to *tekne* part to which the strings are tied. These screws are used for tuning. There are pitches on the *sap* tied with fish line. *Bağlama* is played with a *mızrap* or *tezene* made from cherry wood bark or plastic and fingers are used in some regions. The later technique is called *şelpe*.

There are three string groups on *bağlama* in groups of two or three. These string groups can be tuned in a variety of ways. For example in the tuning style called *bağlama düzeni*, the strings in the lower group give 'la', middle group strings and upper group strings give 'mi' notes. Besides this type of tuning there are *kara düzen*, *misket düzeni müstezat*, *abdal düzeni*, *rast düzeni* etc. styles.

Tar

Tar is a Turkish folk instrument played with a plectrum (*tezene*). It is widely used in the Kars (a city in Turkey) region. It is also a commonly used instrument in Azerbaijan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Georgia. Its body is composed of two bowls of different size and is generally

made from mulberry trees. The *göğüs* section is covered with a membrane taken from the heart of water buffaloes or cattle. *Sap* section is from hard wood and fish line pitches are tied onto it. There are two main groups of strings on *tar*. Those in the first group are used in playing the tune and consist of three groups of two strings. The other group of strings is called *kök* and *zengi* that are tuned according to the mode to be used and enhance the tone.

Kabak Kemane

Kabak kemane is a bowed Turkish folk instrument that shows variation according to regions and its form. It is known that instruments known as *kabak*, *kemane*, *iklig*, *rabab*, *hegit* at Hatay province, *rubaba* in southeastern Turkey, *kemanÁa* in Azerbaijan and *gicak*, *giccek* or *gijek* among the central Asian Turks all come from the same origin.

Its body or the *tekne* part is generally made from vegetable marrow but wooden ones are also common. The *sap* is from hard woods. There is a thin wooden or metal rod underneath the body which is placed on the knee and enables the instrument to move to the left and right. The bow is made by tying horse hair on two ends of a stick. Previously strings made from gut called *kiriş* were used which were replaced by metal ones at the present.

Kabak kemane is an instrument without pitches and produces all types of chromatic sounds easily. Its sound is suitable for long plays and can be used for legato, Staccato and Pizzicato paces.

Karadeniz Kemençesi

Karadeniz kemencesi is a bowed Turkish folk instrument. As can be surmised from its name it is an instrument widely used in the Black Sea region. Its body is made from mulberry, plum and juniper woods. The wooden part of the bow generally rose wood or box wood. Horse hair is tied to the ends of the bow.

Kemence is a three-string instrument. While *kiriş* strings from gut used be put on *kemençe*, these days mostly metal strings are used.

Kemençe is an instrument without pitches and it is possible to get from it all types of chromatic sounds easily. It is generally played by pressing two strings at the same time and

getting parallel quarter notes. It is furthermore played with a special technique which is achieved with wrist movements.

Zurna

Zurna is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type. Because of its strong sound it is generally played in the open air, on occasions such as village weddings, sending off the boys to military service, sport encounters, folk dances and similar ceremonial events. It was the first melody instrument of the Mehter teams (Janissaries band) in the Ottoman period. It was also used in some traditional theater (*orta oyunu*) performances. It is generally accompanied with a drum. Because of the difficulty of its intonation and its high sound level, it is not used in musical groups. However, in the recent years it started to be used by some folk music groups.

Zurna has a sound range of nearly two octaves and has eight melody keys with seven of them on the front and one on the back. The key at the back is so located as to come between the first two notes towards the reed section at the front. The keys are generally round with 6-8mm diameters. The length of the instrument changes between 30 - 60 cm and widens out like a funnel starting from the part the melody holes end. This section is called the *kalak*. At the blowing end there is a thin pipe like rod over which the reed goes. This rod is called *metem*. A separate circular piece with a hole in the middle is put over the *metem* to help the breathing technique. This piece is called *avurtluk*. The most common *zurna* playing technique is the continuous playing technique where while the air collected in the cave of the mouth is blown out from the reed, inhaling through nostrils occurs simultaneously.

There are seven holes besides the melody keys on the *kalak* section which are smaller in diameter. They are called *şeytan deliği* (devil's hole) or *cin deliği* (genie's hole). They can be closed with wax or a similar material according to the sound hunting of the player.

The instrument which changes between 60 and 30 cm. in length as we have already mentioned is divided into three types according to its sound: *Kaba zurna*, *orta kaba zurna* and *cura zurna* (*zil zurna*). They are generally made from wood of trees such as plums, apricots, walnut, saber etc.

Kaval

Kaval is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type. It is known as the instrument of the shepherds. It is also called *guval* and *kuval* in different regions. The belief that the shepherd

leads his sheep flock with his *kaval* is a wide spread belief among the people. The word *kaval* is probably a derivative from the word *kav* which means hollow on the inside.

Its sound range is about 2.5-3 octaves. It is widely used instrument in the folk music groups of today and can be used as a solo instrument within an ensemble. *Kaval* preserves its sound characteristics when played together with other instruments.

As *kaval* are not produced to any defined standards what can be said about its dimensions has to be very general. Its length may vary between 30 cm and 80 cm and its diameter is approximately 1.5 cm. It has 7 melody keys on the front and one underneath. Besides these, there are also 4 other keys at the lower section of the instrument called *şeytan deliği* and *Hazreti Ali*.

Kaval are divided into two main types as *dilli kaval* and *dilsiz kaval* and are generally made from the wood of the plum tree.

Çığirtma

Çığirtma is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type. *Çığirtma* is made from the wing bone of the eagle. It is known to be used mostly by the shepherds and is an almost forgotten instrument today. It has a total of seven melody keys with six on the top and one underneath It is about 15-30 cm long.

Mey

Mey is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type. It consists of three parts. *Ana gövde* (main part), *kamış* (reed) and *kıskaç* (clip). The clips mounted to the end of the reed and can be pushed up and down on the reed and thus enabling tuning by providing one note variation in the sound.

Mey which is made of wood from plum walnut, beech etc. has sound distance of about one octave. It has a total of eight melody keys with seven on top and one underneath. There are three types of *mey*: *Cura mey*, *orta mey* and *ana mey*. *Mey* is called Balaban in Azerbaijan.

Tulum

Tulum (bagpipe) is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type. It consists of three parts with *deri kısmı* (leather section), *nav* and *ağızlık* (mouth piece). The air is stored in the leather

section and is let into the *nav* section by pressing the bag under the arm. *Nav* is the part where the melody is played. It also has two parts called *analık* and *dillik*. *Ağızlık* is the section which sends the air to the leather bag of the pipe.

Tulum is used in Turkey at Trabzon, Rize, Erzurum, Kars, Northern and Eastern Anatolian regions and in Thrace. *Tulum* which is generally made from lamb or kid skin is called *gayda* in Thrace.

Sipsi

Sipsi which is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type is made from bone, wood or reed. The reed ones are more common. It has a second smaller part at the end which is made of reed that produces the sound. This part is completely taken into the mouth and the air is blown. It is most widely used in the Aegean region the instrument has a total of six melody keys with five on the top and one underneath.

Çifte

Çifte is a Turkish folk instrument of the wind type. It is made by tying two reed pipes side by side. Two small reed pieces which produce the sound are added to the ends of both reeds. These two small reeds are taken into the mouth cavity and it is played by blowing the air at the same time.

There are two *çifte* types known as *demli çifte* and *demsiz çifte*. In *demli çifte* one of the reeds does not have any pitch keys and it just produces a background sound. There are melody keys on the other red and the main melody is played through them.

Çifte is also known as Argun, Argul, Kargin or Zambir at different regions.

Davul

Davul (drum) is the oldest known percussion instrument. It can be in different sizes and is generally used in open spaces on occasions such as weddings, folk dances or different ceremonies. It consists of a circular wooden frame and a hoop made from two skins and covered with skin which is put on the frame with the help of strong strings or leather ribbons.

It is played while hung on the shoulder with knitted or leather strap. The skin on one side of the drum is thick while on the other is thinner. The thin one is made from goat, the thick one from sheep skin. The thick skin side is hit with a *tokmak* and the thin skinned one with a light wooden stick. It is possible to scan or treble with the thin stick. The drum can either be played hung to the shoulder or holding it under the arm and using hands.

Nagara

Nagara (Koltuk Davulu) is a Turkish folk drum or percussion instrument. It is placed under the arm and beaten with hands. It is longer compared to the regular drums and its diameter is smaller.

Tef

Tef (tambourine) is a Turkish percussion instrument. It consists of a metal or wooden hoop over which a skin is stretched. There are two types of tambourines, with or without the cymbals.

Kaşık

Kaşık (spoon) is a Turkish percussion instrument. The ones made from boxwood are particularly favored. The handles are taken between the fingers and the oval parts are held towards the inside of the hand in a back to back position. There are also different holding styles.

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