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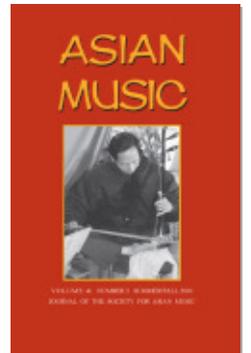
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Synthesizing Identity: Gestures of Filiation and Affiliation in Turkish Popular Music

Songül Karahasanoğlu and Gabriel Skoog

This piece is an analysis of the process of spontaneous synthesis in Turkish popular music. Utilizing Edward Said's distinction between filiation and affiliation and paying particular attention to instrumentation and the *kürdi makam/* Phrygian mode duality as a connotative element in Turkish popular music, we will examine the ways by which musicians create, maintain, and modify a musical identity. The development of Turkish popular music over the last 100 years has been impacted both by influences from within, such as the foundation of the Republic and the coup of 1980, and influences from abroad, particularly those mediated through ever-changing media technologies. While our analysis is based upon popular musical recordings from the late 1990s, as we shall see, musical synthesis has been a key feature of Turkish music since the establishment of the Republic in 1923. Consequently, we will start by briefly outlining the development of four historical, influential currents in Turkish popular music: Ottoman music, folk music, Arabesk, and European popular music, before turning to the evaluation of late 20th century popular music in Turkey. These larger musical currents have and continue to impact popular music in Turkey, and in many ways the various forms of popular music found today are extensions of these four larger overarching categories. One should bear in mind that any tidy taxonomy of musical genres is, while useful for analysis, suspect from the start, and as we shall see, musicians can and do draw freely from a wide range of musical styles and motifs. Nevertheless, before examining the ways in which popular musicians actively affiliate themselves with different musical traditions, it is best to establish some sort of baseline for analysis; first, by establishing what is meant exactly by a "spontaneous synthesis" before moving on to outline some theoretical tools useful for understanding the process.

One of the greatest factors for musical change in Turkey was the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the new Turkish republic after the First World War. Kemal Atatürk and his compatriots set into motion a process of modernization and secularization that would eventually touch all aspects of Turkish life. Music was no exception to this. While the state-sponsored, modernizing process drew heavily upon European polyphonic art music, there was a strong

emphasis on preserving core “Turkish” features of music. This is not uncommon in instances of musical modernization around the world, and as Nettl has pointed out, musical modernization does not necessarily mean only the adaptation of Euro-American technology and culture, but can simultaneously include an insistence on the maintenance of core cultural features (Nettl 1983, 348). The new Turkish State chose to emulate the West, which “was considered the domain of modernity and was therefore taken as a model, its putative value measured against an ‘East’ which was considered as standing for backwardness itself” (Tekelioğlu 1996, 195). This proactive musical restructuring by the state would have dramatic effect and at times brought about changes that were not in line with the official vision of Turkish music.

One of the main architects of the new Turkish music was the writer, social theorist, and Turkish nationalist Ziya Gökalp (Gökalp 1923). Gökalp, along with others, encouraged the development of a new Turkish music based not in the Byzantine and Arabic traditions of the Ottoman Empire, but instead in “. . . synthesis of traditional folk music with principles borrowed from European art musical systems” (Markoff 1990/1991, 130). It was the writings of Gökalp that dissected Turkish music into categories of eastern and western, modern and old, Ottoman and Turkish (O’Connell 2000, 123), and his *Principles of Turkism*, published in 1923, “. . . in a way constitutes a manual for sketching out how . . . the fusion of the Origin (Turkish culture) with the West was to be executed” (Tekelioğlu 1996, 201). Active attempts by the state to control the establishment of a new national Turkish music would ultimately be undermined, if not wholly subverted, by “spontaneous syntheses,” such as Arabesk, coming from the people (Tekelioğlu 1996, 197, 203).

Orhan Tekelioğlu, in his groundbreaking article, “The Rise of Spontaneous Synthesis: The Historical Background of Turkish Popular Music,” outlined the complex history of musical fusion in Turkey (Tekelioğlu 1996, 197, 203). In the early days of the new Turkish republic, Kemal Atatürk and his advisors, influenced by the work of Ziya Gökalp, conceived and instituted a program for the “modernization” of Turkish music in which Turkish folk music was aggressively recast in the form of European art music. This “West-East” approach to musical synthesis was ultimately unsuccessful but, according to Tekelioğlu, helped produce a contrary synthesis “pioneered by the ‘handcrafted’ undertakings of certain musicians and perhaps best termed the spontaneous or East-West synthesis” (Tekelioğlu 1996, 197). This subtle inversion of terms is important for Tekelioğlu because it represents a conceptual shift from a model based on Western music incorporating Turkish styles to one based on Turkish styles incorporating Western music. Tekelioğlu foregrounds this spontaneous synthesis against the background of a state-sponsored synthesis of musical styles, one which he ultimately deems unsuccessful. Focusing on the slow domestication of

foreign instruments and the fusion of systems of *makam* with European musical modes, we will evaluate the process by which the spontaneous synthesis in Turkish popular music has arisen. We will start by briefly sketching the historical progression of musical synthesis before moving on to examine popular music in the 1990s. And in order to establish tools for our analysis of Turkish popular music, we must first briefly examine Said's distinction between "filiation" and "affiliation."

Edward Said, in his work *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, analyzes and contrasts social networks and literary relationships in terms of gestures of *filiation* and *affiliation* (Said 1983). According to Said, "the filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and 'life,' whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society" (Said 1983, 20). For Said, filiative relationships are based on both biological and intellectual genealogies. They presuppose a steady chain of influence and progression and, until the modern age, were the predominate system by which social connections were understood. Affiliation, on the other hand, is a break from the genealogical—the creation of new networks of influence and interchange. As Said notes, in the move from a relationship based on filiation toward one based on affiliation: "What I am describing is the transition from a failed idea or possibility of filiation to a kind of compensatory order that, whether it is a party, an institution, a culture, or a set of beliefs, or even a world-vision, provides men and women with a new form of relationship, which I have been calling affiliation but which is also a new system" (Said 1983, 19). In this new "compensatory order," the artist is freed from the necessary filiative pressures of influence and actively and consciously affiliates himself or herself with a new system. The process of filiation is predicated upon what Fredric Jameson has described as the "dominant spatialization of postmodern discourse" (Jameson 1991). This spatialization is a move from reliance upon the past predecessors for inspiration and influence, toward an evaluation of one's work in relationship to contemporary peers. This spatialization of postmodern discourse does not necessarily negate filiative relationships, but instead opens new avenues for influence and cross-cultural intertextuality. Through affiliation, an artist frees himself or herself of filiative restrictions and actively constructs new channels of influence and intertextuality.

Having outlined the ideas of spontaneous synthesis, filiation, and affiliation, we will now briefly examine the historical roots of Turkish popular music (Ottoman music, folk music, Arabesk, and European popular music), paying particular attention to the cascading processes of filiation and affiliation in their development throughout the 20th century. Following this we will examine the state of Turkish popular music in the 1990s, paying particular attention to the ways in which artists simultaneously synthesize Turkish and non-Turkish musical styles.

Ottoman art music, known today as *Sanat Müziği* or *Alaturka*, has a long and fruitful history, one which was drastically impacted by the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923. Ottoman court music is itself an amalgam of musical influences, drawing upon Arabic, Armenian, Persian, Greek, and Sephardic traditions. While earlier attempts had been made to synthesize western and eastern art forms in the Ottoman period, the transformation of Turkish Art Music became more marked in the Republic period (Signell 1976; Wright 1988; Feldman 1996).

During the Ottoman era one of the main sources of training and performance of *Sanat Müziği* was the Mevlevi Sufis. The Mevlevi are a mystical Sufi order based upon the writings of Celalettin Rumi, also known as Mevlana or Rumi. The Mevlevi practiced a trance tradition, called *sema*, in which the initiate would achieve a state of oneness with the divine through whirling. Music was, and is, a key component of the Mevlevi tradition, and many of the initiates in the order were accomplished musicians and composers. After the establishment of the Republic in 1923, strict lines were drawn between the Mosque and State, and in the time between 1924 and 1925, the Mevlevi Sufi lodges (*Tekke*) were closed and the performance of Mevlevi *sema* was officially banned. Although the closing of the dervish lodges was motivated by the political drive to root out the strongholds of religious authority, a side effect was the crippling of a musical practice which was one of the main branches of Ottoman art music. Without the meeting space for education and performance, many artists were forced to either leave the country or seek other modes of expression. With the closing of these lodges, it is possible to say that this tradition almost disappeared.

Within the same time period, the *gazino* (nightclub) became widespread. *Gazinos*, according to Münir Beken, are family-oriented musical dinner clubs, originating in 19th century Istanbul, which reached their peak in the 1960s and 1970s, but still have cultural significance today. *Gazinos* present a mixture of European performance setting (*Alafranga*) and Turkish art (*Alaturka*) and popular (Arabesk) music, all affected by the ebb and flow of local society (Beken 2003). Musicians in *gazinos* modified older art forms for popular consumption and in doing so established *gazinos* as a haven for musical traditions not supported by the new Turkish government. One of the ways in which musicians maintained the older musical forms in the new sociopolitical setting was by utilizing those *makams* close to western music scales, a strategy that we will see is still common today. In spite of a rich Ottoman *makam* culture, the new generation of composers tended to use a limited number of *makams* such as *kürdi*, *nihavend*, *hicaz*, *rast*, *uşşak*, and *hüzzam*. Without the support of the Ottoman court, many classical musicians were forced to modify their performance to meet the demands of public consumption. The incorporation of European art music was, in a way, a musical affiliation of necessity.

Gazinos were not the only area in which performers of older styles managed to recontextualize their music. Many musicians known as *Hafız* (the men who learned the Kor'an by heart and whose origins date back to *tekke* culture) had to perform popular music in order to earn money. One of the most important of these *Hafız* was Sadettin. He was one of the main architects of *Serbest icra* or "free performance," a new popular musical style based on older Ottoman forms. Sadettin and others dispensed with many of the stylistic restrictions of previous Ottoman music, allowing the artist a more free interpretation of the piece. Beginning in the 1950s, "free performance" of Ottoman/Turkish music began to gain popularity. This "free performance" style is more a modernization rather than a synthesis, being not a fusion of music but instead a modification of a domestic performance style for burgeoning contemporary tastes. Within its development lie clues to the process by which older rarified art styles are adapted for collective consumption, negotiating markers of high art and the demands of listeners unversed in the finer nuances of a style. One example of this can be seen in the rise of the song form (*Şarkı*), which was one among many forms such as *Peşrev*, *Gazal*, and *Semai*, in Ottoman Art music, yet became the cornerstone for this new free performance style.

By shifting the emphasis from instrumental brilliance to lyrical content, many artists broadened their potential audience to include those unschooled in the subtleties of Ottoman *Makam*. Melodies became simpler, losing much of the ornamentation and stylistic improvisation of previous forms. The singer replaced the instrumentalist as the center of attention, and personal musical interpretation of a piece was privileged over following collective norms of performance. Singers such as Müzeyyen Senar and Zeki Müren, both trained in the older tradition of Ottoman art performance, became immensely popular in this period performing the newly modified style. Zeki Müren in particular became hugely popular performing this new *Serbest icra* style and, in addition to releasing recordings, also appeared in many films such as *Son Beste* "Last Composition" (1955) and *Bahçivan* "Gardner" (1963).

After the 1960s, the music derived from Ottoman music began to be referred to as *Sanat Müziği* (art music), and musical modifications were made such as adding harmony and passages of counterpoint. This newer version of art music was multi-instrumental rather than polyphonic and many instruments not historically associated with one another were often combined in this new setting. Over the last 2 decades Turkish art music has been increasingly incorporated into, and has itself increasingly incorporated, various styles and genres from both within Turkey and abroad. While innovation has taken place in regard to instrumentation, basic repertoire and performance practices have stayed relatively stable.

After the foundation of the Republic, as a result of the new state's cultural policies, folk music collection studies were started. In 1945, the works that were collected began to be broadcast on what was to become Turkish State Radio and Television (TRT).¹ These broadcasts were of new musical forms based on folk traditions and this music was deemed appropriate for the newly emerging republic. Myriad attempts were made to create new musical forms for a new Turkish identity. For example, after several years of prohibition, in the 1930s a choir was established to perform older classical art forms and folk songs. This new ensemble format drew heavily upon European choral traditions, introducing methods of performance such as harmonic counterpoint and western instruments unheard of in the music of the Ottoman period.

Media reproduction of rural folk music was greatly impacted by the introduction of this new, large choral format, particularly at the newly formed TRT, whose members collected and reformulated folk pieces for performance by large choirs and orchestras. This new Europeanized format had a major impact on musical life in the young Republic. One of the effects was a shift from an emphasis on older, rural folk styles of performance to this newer approach, a shift that left the folk poets and musicians behind and gave greater importance to their imitators. As many people were not enthused by the music being performed on TRT, this choral performance style later became one of the most important contextual factors for the development of Arabesk music.

As migrants moved from Anatolia to Istanbul, they became exposed to radio broadcasts coming out of the Levantine, particularly from Cairo. An unintentional consequence of this state-sponsored affiliation with European art music was a counter-affiliation by different Turkish performing artists with music being created in the Arab world, a counter-affiliation that would lead to what Tekelioğlu has dubbed a spontaneous synthesis.

Much has already been written about the musical behemoth that is Arabesk, one of the most important musical genres in Turkey (Stokes 1989, 1992a, 1992b). Arabesk music is the product of Turkey's strong drive toward modernization and traces its roots back to the 1960s. This early period of expansion is marked by urbanization, industrialization, the development of mass communication and transportation infrastructure, and a liveliness of sociopolitical movements, all contributing factors to the development of Arabesk. While the word Arabesk denotes "belonging to Arabs," the genre itself is firmly rooted in Turkish musical traditions, as Irene Markoff has noted: "the compound image, of Arabesk . . . does exhibit a distinctly Turkish character as illustrated by the use of traditional instruments such as the folk lute (*bağlama*), the vocal quality used by singers, the modes used that are drawn from local folk and art music traditions, and most important, the lyrics of the songs that speak to a Turkish present with

great immediacy” (Markoff 1994, 232). While Arabesk possesses many features of Arabic music, Arabesk performers have ultimately developed their own distinct style. Arabesk has been referred to as an east-west synthesis that appeared “spontaneously,” its spontaneity here in contrast to state-driven fusions of Turkish music with European music. To say that this synthesis was spontaneous does not necessarily mean that it was unintentional; rather it was the product of an active affiliation with a musical style, which, while not having historical roots in Turkey, had an aesthetic resonance with performers and audiences.

Myriad domestic and international factors had an effect on the development of the new Arabesk style in the 1960s and 1970s including the following: a general disinterest in the new modernized performance style of Turkish Folk Music, the need for older Ottoman art musicians to adapt to a lack of patronage, imported Arab expressive forms through film and radio, mass immigration from villages to cities and the difficulties involved, and a developing Turkish cinema, itself an east-west synthesis that produced musical Turkish films during the 1960s and 1970s. Arabesk developed despite widespread government censorship of its broadcast on radio and television. A key factor relevant to the current study is the importation and integration into Arabesk of western instruments and music technologies such as amplification and distortion. This new palette of electroacoustic sounds was very appealing to many rising Arabesk performers such as Orhan Gencebay, Müslüm Gürses, and Ferdi Tayfur. A consequence of this integration of instruments and technologies was that the central musical role of the traditional acoustic *bağlama* was usurped by the “*elektrobağlama*,” an instrument born from the synthesis of electric guitar technologies and the *bağlama* (Stokes 1992c). As we shall see later, the creation and integration of new musical instruments can often demarcate a boundary between musical forms while at the same time acting as a marker of affiliation.

Many of the inhabitants of a metropolis such as İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir are immigrant villagers who continue their traditionalist lifestyle, maintaining rural evaluative systems while integrating themselves within the larger urban culture. The devotion of these immigrants to a rural musical folk aesthetic created a demand for music that referenced this style, a demand first fulfilled by Arabesk, and as we shall see later, still met by contemporary popular music. Arabesk music will always exist as long as there is a demand in the Turkish music market for music that represents this rural-urban fusion. Yet, as time passed, the border between folk and popular music progressively blurred, with musicians on both sides of the line drawing upon an ever-widening field of musical possibilities. As we shall see, this is the reason why today it has become increasingly difficult to draw definite borders between popular music and folk music.

The roots of western-influenced “Turkish pop” can be drawn back to the late-19th- and early-20th-century popular song genre known as *Kanto*. According

to Besiroglu, “The Turkish term *Kanto* comes from the Italian ‘cantare’ which means singing in the Italian language and was taken from an itinerant theater that came to Istanbul in 1870. Beginning from this date, the term *Kanto* was used in order to distinguish traditional songs from the songs that are composed for singing while dancing on the stage” (Besiroglu 2002, 72). When we look back at how Turkish instruments were used in the past and what affected the development of popular music, we notice that *Kanto* is the first example of a western-influenced popular music in Turkey. One of the key features of *Kanto* was the integration of Turkish musical instruments into a European musical setting; for example, the *ud*, the *kanun*, the *çalpara*, and the *cümbüş* were all used in *Kanto* music. These domestic instruments were used to perform foreign Charlestons, fox-trots, and rumbas (Kahyaoğlu 2002, 73).

Starting from *Kanto* in the late Ottoman period, other nonhistorically Turkish popular song and instrumental forms such as operettas, tango, and jazz were assimilated into the larger urban popular culture of the country, particularly in Istanbul. Tango, which was born in Argentina, came to Istanbul by way of Europe. The tango fit well into the popular music aesthetics of the time in Turkey and as a result many Turkish composers and musicians became quite successful performing it. It reached its peak of popularity in the 1960s with the ample support of TRT. Jazz also became quite popular starting in the 1930s, with musicians such as Leon Avigdor bringing the music by way of Europe. While tango has declined in popularity, jazz to this day is still performed in many venues in Istanbul.

In the middle part of the 20th century, the popular foreign musics that had the greatest effect on Turkish performance came predominantly from the Mediterranean. From the 1940s to the second half of the 1960s, urban audiences and musicians were drawn to French, Italian, and Spanish popular music, usually through the mediums of radio and records. Parallel to this Mediterranean influence, in the 1950s there was also a burgeoning interest in American popular music. In the mid-to late 1950s, the films such as *Blackboard Jungle* and those starring Elvis Presley initiated a wave of imitators in Istanbul. In Turkey a pop explosion was started by Elvis Presley imitator Erol Büyükburç. Although Büyükburç generally sings in Turkish lyrics, his composition in English, “Little Lucy,” became a hit on European radio in 1960 (Kahyaoğlu 2002, 93). In this period, groups were formed to perform Mediterranean and American popular music. In particular, the naval war college orchestra² provided a lot of support for the development of western popular music, both through performance of western popular forms and through the education of musicians in the forms; musicians who, after finishing their military service, would go out and perform this music in the private sector. Turkish popular musicians from this period, drawing upon film, radio, and recordings, affiliated themselves with both Mediterranean and Euro-American popular music.

From the early 1960s until the mid-1970s, many Turkish popular music pieces, in the form of rock and roll, cha cha, and chanson, were based wholly upon previous compositions, the only modification being the addition of Turkish lyrics. This early Turkish popular musical style is often referred to as *aranjman* (arrangements) (Dilmener, 2003). At this time, artists chose to write Turkish lyrics for popular songs released in the West rather than write new music. They would then rerecord these pieces and release them into the market. Fecri Ebcioglu was an early pioneer of this style and wrote Turkish lyrics to the song “C’est Ecrit dans Le Ciel” (Written in the Sky), re-titling it “Bak Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş” (Look Once Upon a Time). It was very popular with urban Turks during this period and ironically enough had some success in France. Additionally, at the beginning of the 1960s and especially in the 1970s the singer Ajda Pekkan was very popular in Turkey. A tall blond embodiment of an imagined European ideal, Pekkan started out as a singer of *aranjman* pieces, but over the decades shifted her repertoire to one made up almost totally of original pieces. Although she is not as popular as before, Pekkan continues to make albums and her most recent CD was released in 2006.

In addition to Ottoman and western musical influences, Turkish folk music has also greatly contributed to the formation of contemporary popular music. One of the earliest fusions of popular instrumentations with Turkish folk music was “Burçak Tarlası” (The Vetch Field) released in 1961 by the singer Tülay German (Kahyaoğlu 2002, 94). In the 1960s, popular musical groups ranging from trios to septets started to become widespread. Turkey, like many other countries of the world, saw widespread youth unrest during this period and much of the popular music of that time became charged with political content (Fink, Gassert, and Junker 1998). Many of the musicians involved eschewed the derivative and politically naive lyrics of *aranjman* pieces and, choosing instead to write wholly original calls to sociopolitical action, used this new music as a vehicle for political protest. These new popular artists felt free to draw liberally from both Euro-America and Turkish musical sources and did so.

This pop-folk fusion, dubbed Anadolu Rock (Anatolian Rock), drew less from popular forms of the Mediterranean and more from Euro-American popular music, particularly rock and roll. This was a kind of east-west synthesis, but rather than being a mixture of European art music with Turkish music, it was a mixture of Euro-American popular forms, particularly rock and roll with Turkish music, played on a mixture of western (electric guitar, bass, trap set, moog) and Turkish (*bağlama*, *dümbelek*, *davul*) instruments. Erkin Koray, Cem Karaca, Barış Manço, and Moğollar, Apaşlar, and Kardaşlar were some of the performers and groups who made their mark during the late 1960s and well into the 1970s. The term Anadolu Rock was first used by the group Moğollar, an influential instrumental group that backed singers such as Selda Bağacan and Cem

Karaca. The electric guitar, evident in early popular musical genres in Turkey, in the hands of musicians such as Erkin Koray, took a more central role in Anadolu Rock. Anadolu Rock reached its height of popularity in the mid-1970s and was eventually eclipsed in popularity by Arabesk, but many popular musicians continue to reference, if not perform, this music today. Anatolian rock, as a genre, lies at the crossroads between the popularization of folk music and the Europeanization of Turkish music.

While the artists performing Anadolu Rock dabbled in political protest, at the same time, the artists involved in what would eventually be termed *Özgün Müzik*, or “original music,” wrote even more overtly political lyrics. The performers of this genre drew less from European sources than their peers who performed Anadolu Rock, and more from Anatolian folk traditions, but artists still felt free to freely adapt and modify traditional styles, for example, combining instruments that would traditionally have been separate. Some of the most well-known performers of *Özgün Müzik* include Ahmet Kaya, Zülfü Livaneli, and the ensemble Grup Yorum. Many of these artists had a strong leftist agenda and, as a consequence, their lives were greatly impacted by the coup of 1980; while some continued to perform, many were silenced. After the coup, many Islamic musicians began performing in a folk fusion-style of *Özgün Müzik* but because of the difference in lyrical content the genre was renamed *Ezgi* (Melody).

Western-influenced pop music reached its peak in the golden years of the 1970s. During these years the borders between Arabesk and pop music were quite clear, both in terms of musical forms, political content, instrumentation, and audience. Generally, lower-class, new urban immigrants preferred Arabesk, while more affluent long-term urbanites tended to gravitate toward the European and European-derived popular forms. This clear distinction would progressively blur in the period leading to the popular music of today.

The military coup of September 12, 1980, brought about drastic changes in all levels of Turkish society and music was not excluded from its effects. The military, disapproving of the increasing leftist tendency of both the government and the people in general, chose to clamp down on all those with socialist leanings. While the coup had a direct effect on the more overtly political musicians, such as Cem Karaca and those who performed *Özgün Müzik*, the coup unintentionally demarcated a break between an earlier genre-specific paradigm in the production of popular music to one in which artists were less bound by restrictions of style and category. After the coup, there was a general process of normalization in Turkish popular music, as many individuals felt less inclined to deviate from the status quo lest they draw unwanted attention from the Turkish state. This apoliticalization continues to have an effect on the lyrical topics and general media representation of many of today’s performing artists in Turkey.

Since the 1980s, Arabesk, once a musical pariah, has become fully integrated into the popular musical landscape of the country, so much so that today artists such as Orhan Gencebay and İbrahim Tatlıses, titans of Arabesk, can be seen regularly performing on television. Arabesk has become so accepted that İbrahim Tatlıses, a member of the Genç party, ran for parliament in the summer elections of 2007. Borders between older subgenres of popular musical styles have been increasingly eroded by recording artists who feel more and more free to draw upon the ever-ripening domestic popular music traditions, while at the same time still actively seeking influences from abroad. While the musical palate has in many ways expanded, the political and ideological stance of many popular musicians such as Tarkan, Mirkelam, Mustafa Sandal, and Rafet el Roman has contracted, narrowing to “bourgeois fantasies of new cars, summer holidays and foreign travel” (Stokes 2005). Song lyrics have become much less aggressive, with love and sexuality replacing older topics of social and political criticism. These changes reflect a continuous renegotiation of Turkish identity, both in relationship to domestic issues and in relation to international developments.

The 1990s, marked in particular by the opening of radio and television airways to private companies, saw a rise in a general cosmopolitanism among Turkish musicians and consumers. Cross-musical interaction, through the internal and external channels of urban connectedness, extends beyond the borders of the local to create what Turino has termed cosmopolitan culture: objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are globally diffused yet are found only in specific local settings, that is, the city (Turino 2000). Cosmopolitan culture does not negate the local, nor is it a counter to it, because while it might have a historical place of origin, its global ubiquity frees it from any exclusive claims to ownership, allowing it to be integrated into multiple contexts. These objects, ideas, and cultural positions, in being integrated into local contexts, are colored by particular histories and circumstances. Turkey, and in particular Istanbul, is not immune to the influencing tides of cosmopolitanism. New local and international print, radio, and television outlets expose many urban Turks to a wide range of popular music and other artistic media, and this cosmopolitanism fuels acts of affiliation such as the performance of Heavy Metal (and all its substyles), Hip-Hop, and Jazz.

After the 1980 coup, cross-pollination between the different popular musical genres in Turkey became so prevalent that by the 1990s, the early distinctions between foreign and domestic genres almost disappeared. These currents of influence are still apparent, but now must be seen within particular pieces rather than in genre. While formerly artists performed within a particular genre boundary, today artists freely move between various styles. Arabesk, already loved by much of the general population, achieved widespread exposure on television and radio.

Before continuing, it is best to distinguish between two analytical terms for examining Turkish popular music. *Üstyapı* or superstructure refers to the main melody, *makam*, and lyrics of a piece, while *Altyapı* or substructure refers to the orchestration, counterpoint, form, and rhythms used in a piece. A given song, maintaining the same superstructure, can and is re-created again and again according to the choices made regarding the substructure. In previous musical genres, divisions between Turkish and non-Turkish sub- and superstructures could be clearly distinguished. For example, *Kanto* songs consisted of the substructure of Turkish instrumentation, with a superstructure of European popular song; Anadolu Rock mixed the substructure of rock and roll and folk music while utilizing a superstructure drawn from Turkish folk music. By the 1990s, the earlier separate sub- and superstructures had mixed so much that a musical amalgam of “west-Arabesk-Turkish” had emerged. Genres were no longer clearly “foreign” or “domestic” because decades of performing foreign musical styles had effectively integrated them into an amalgamated Turkish popular style. In other words, the act of affiliation had been so constant that, with time, the gesture shifted its meaning and now often can be read as an act of filiation.

Fueled by a new Turkish cosmopolitanism, the various amalgams of styles have manifested almost every possible permutation of a “west-Turkish-Arabesk” continuum. This has led to the abolishment of borderlines between instruments like the *ud*, the violin, the *kanun*, the *dümbelek*, the drum set, and the guitar. While in the past distinctions might have been made between “pop” and “Arabesk” songs, today they too have come mingled to the point of an almost complete synthesis. While some folk and art musicians sometimes still use standard, older substructures such as traditional song form, heterophony, and traditional instruments, most popular music recordings utilize Europeanized substructural elements such as polyphony and foreign instrumentation. This distinction is far from clear-cut and sometimes folk and art music use Europeanized substructure. The only clear marker of stylistic distinction lies in the superstructural elements, particularly song and *makam*, and a wide range of substructural elements are used in a wide range of music. In other words, it is not unheard of to have folk and popular music pieces with the same instrumentation and substructural elements. Past markers of style such as instrumentation and polyphony no longer carry the same denotative weight as previously.

The only clear distinction between many of today’s artists lies in the superstructure of the piece being performed. Today similar substructural elements are used by a wide range of performers and musicians. Many of the substructural elements that would have been a denotative marker of genre in the mid-20th century, such as instrumentation or rhythm, no longer carry any particularly denotative meaning. For example, while in the past the use of a substructural element such as guitar or counterpoint might have been a marker of affiliation

with European style, today they are two of the many elements of a generalized Turkish popular music. Time and use have domesticated many of these once foreign musical features to the extent that their use can be seen not as a gesture of affiliation, but instead as a continuation of a filiative process. In other words, time has standardized innovation. The only clear marker of stylistic distinction between many recordings is the superstructure of a piece, which is often dictated by the target audience for a recording. Lacking the space and time to examine all of the super- and substructural elements of contemporary popular music, we have chosen to focus on one element of each category. Focusing on 51 albums and 100 songs recorded between 1995 and 2002, we will start by examining the substructural element of instrumentation before moving our attention to the superstructural element of *makam*.

The instrumentation of Turkish popular music in the late 1990s was predominantly European in origin. In the 51 albums examined, the percentage of Turkish to non-Turkish instruments used all together is roughly 29–71 percent. Of the albums examined, the highest percentage of Turkish instruments was found in *Yaşıyorum* (I Am Living) by the singer Soner Arica at 69 percent, followed by *Dudaklarımda Sevdan* (With Your Love on My Lips) by Zeynep at 58 percent, and *Düşden de Güzel* (Better than the Fantasy) by Elif at 54 percent. While the number of Turkish instruments used appears to be small, ironically enough, there was an explosion in the inclusion of Turkish musical instruments in recordings in the 1990s. Instrumentation in popular music before the 1980s was predominately European, and it was not until the melding of styles of the 1980s that domestic Turkish instruments began to be incorporated into popular music. Some artists included Turkish musical instruments in an attempt to broaden their fan base. One example is İlhan Şeşen, a pop-Arabesk singer who in the late 1970s and through the 1980s performed in a highly Europeanized style. In 2002, Şeşen changed his style and released the song “Neler Oluyor Bize?” (What’s Happening to Us?) in an Arabesk style and included Turkish instruments. Masha Alanson, another well-known singer from the 1980s, also shifted his style in the 1990s. He broadened the instrumentation on his album, using 22 percent Turkish instruments, and performed in an Arabesk style. In the past, instrumentation was one of the key denotative markers of style and by extension artistic affiliation. As history progressed and foreign instruments began to be fully digested into a larger Turkish popular music spectrum, many artists such as Şeşen and Alanson integrated traditional Turkish instruments into popular music.

Many of the artists examined included a wide range of non-Turkish and non-European instruments from Greek, Arab, Spanish, and Hindustani musical traditions. The inclusion of such a wide range of instruments gives many recordings a highly cosmopolitan feel, and it is not unheard of to hear Hindu-

stani *tabla* alongside Turkish *tulum*, or electric bass with *dümbelek*. This is not to say that all instruments lost all denotative meaning of cultural significance, creating a vague and undifferentiated field of sonic possibility. Rather, the use of non-Turkish instrumentation as a gesture of affiliation became less meaningful as their use became more widespread. What we see in popular music in the 1990s is a move by certain artists that had previously performed Europeanized styles to include traditional Turkish instruments in order to affiliate themselves with a Turkish identity. Often, traditional Turkish instruments are used as a sonic marker of Turkishness. While in the past foreign instruments were highlighted as an affiliative gesture against the background of Turkish instrumentation, in the late 1990s the role was reversed. Foreign instruments had been so well woven into the tapestry of Turkish popular music that their inclusion was no longer noteworthy. Instead, the foregrounding of Turkish instruments might be read as a gesture of inverse affiliation, or re-filiation, in which an artist asserts his or her local identity through the use of traditional Turkish instrumentation.

Some of the artists examined such as Teoman, Kıraç, Atena, Özlem Tekin, and Işın Karaca did not include Turkish musical instruments on their albums, but included superstructural elements derived from Turkish traditions. Kıraç, a singer and composer who works predominantly in a rock and roll format, incorporates Anatolian folk superstructural elements into his songs. Işın Karaca's singing manner is an Arabesk style, but the substructural elements of his music are predominantly European. Here we should mention that factors other than instrumentation should be taken into account while evaluating the process of spontaneous synthesis in Turkish popular music. While many popular artists include no Turkish instruments in their work, some still include musical elements such as *makam*, rhythms, and song forms drawn from Turkish folk and art traditions. While popular recording artists use a wide range of strategies to incorporate Turkish musical elements into their music, we shall limit our examination to the ways in which *kürdi makam* and Phrygian mode are used to denote Turkishness within a highly Europeanized musical system.

Turkish art and folk music are shaped according to *makam*. *Makam* systems, found throughout central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, are musical modes using microtones and having special rules of composition and improvisation. In other words, a *makam* is not simply a series of intervals; it also includes a set of prescribed rules. For a series to make the leap from basic mode to *makam*, it should include the *makam's* original halftones in their prescribed order, include small modal transitions, and follow special prescribed rules regarding the use of particular notes. *Makam* is one of the distinctive features of both folk and art music traditions in Turkey, and they are also often utilized in Turkish popular music in order to denote filiation with antecedent musical styles.

When we look at the properties of contemporary pop music scales, we see that to obtain a pop-Arabesk sound denoting Turkish filiation, *makams* such as *kürdi*, *hicaz*, and *buselik* are frequently used, with *kürdi* being the most common. After picking 100 popular music recordings released between 1994 and 2006 (most from 2000) for analysis we found that *kürdi* was used in 53 of the pieces. *Kürdi* was used in an overwhelming majority of the pieces examined, with *buselik* and *hicaz* used in 9, *nihavend* and *uşşak* in 4 each, and *hüzzam*, *Saba*, and *hüseyini* each only used once. The remaining pieces were made up of standard European scales. In Turkish music there are 13 basic *makams* and up to 500 compound *makams*, all of which might have been incorporated into Turkish popular music, but few of which were. What then are the features of *kürdi makam* that make it so desirable for performers of Turkish popular music?

Kürdi is one of the basic *makams* of Turkey, yet its tone series resembles the Phrygian mode. *Kürdi* tonal structure is that of a minor scale but this second degree is lowered by a semitone, as is Phrygian. The key difference between Phrygian mode and *kürdi makam* is that the latter also possesses special performative characteristics. In other words, Phrygian mode is the same tone sequence as *kürdi makam*, but it does not carry the same *makam* characteristics. While Phrygian mode can be harmonized in either major or minor, in Turkish popular music it is more often than not in major. The close resemblance between *kürdi makam* and Phrygian mode allows for performing artists to seamlessly include European and Turkish superstructural elements and, in fact, by using *kürdi makam*, a performer can simultaneously make gestures of filiation and affiliation.

Because of the striking similarities between *kürdi makam* and Phrygian mode, it is quite difficult to draw a strict line between the two. The *kürdi makam*/Phrygian mode duality appears in Turkish popular song as a sort of musical Janus, showing whichever face the listener expects to perceive. Performing a song in *kürdi makam*/Phrygian mode allows the artist to flutter between acts of filiation and affiliation, giving the effect of a simultaneous gesture toward the local and the foreign. The melodies performed in the *kürdi makam*/Phrygian mode duality have a Turkish sound, but the counterpoint is European; the superstructure elements denote Turkish music and the substructural elements denote European music. The *kürdi*/Phrygian duality is attractive not only to composers and performers, but also to Turkish listeners. This is because, for Turks, this mode has its own friendly and gloomy character, a musical feature very desirable for many listeners. Generally, it is introverted and melancholic, a musical characteristic that has been historically desirable for Turkish audiences. From the start of the 1980s, the Phrygian mode began to be frequently used in Turkish popular music. This mode's exotic structure, drawn from European traditions, and simultaneous close similarity to *kürdi makam* might be some of the reasons for its growing preference among popular recording artists.

Sezen Aksu, who first began performing a new style in the 1980s, is a very important singer in Turkish popular music. In addition to being a singer, she also writes many of her own songs and has the largest self-penned repertoire in Turkish pop music. Aksu is known for writing her own lyrics, a rare act among many artists in Turkish popular music, and after the death of her songwriting partner Onno Tunç on January 15, 1996, also began writing her own music. She is one of the main artists who has broken down the barriers between Turkish pop music and Arabesk, and after her appearance many other musicians followed her hybridized style. While most of the substructural elements of her music were European, Aksu often utilized Turkish *makams*, such as *kürdi*, in her superstructure. In each of her albums released before the untimely death of Onno Tunç, at least two (*Git/Go*, 1986) and at most six (*Gülümse/Smile*, 1999) songs were in *kürdi makam/Phrygian mode*. Sezen Aksu's albums *Firuze* (Turquoise, 1983) and *Sen Ağlama* (Don't Cry, 1984) are the most successful examples of Turkish musical *makams* fused with western forms. The scales and melodies of the songs on the albums were derived predominantly from Turkish music, while the form, instrumentation, and harmony were European. Many of the distinctions between super- and substructural elements made today by Turkish performers are rooted in the successful musical fusions contained in Sezen Aksu's early works.

In 2005, Sertap Erener, singing the song "Every Way That I Can," became the golden child of Turkish popular music by being the first Turkish artist to win the Eurovision song contest. Since Semiha Yankı first entered the competition in 1975 with the song "Seninle Bir Dakika" (One Minute with You), 22 groups or artists represented Turkey in the contest, all of which failed to win. Erener broke this decade-long losing streak and at the same time cemented her place in Turkish pop music history. While she is quite popular now, her earlier attempts at success were not always so fruitful. Erener had achieved some domestic fame in her singing career in the early 2000s, but shortly after her popularity began to drop. At that time she performed in a predominantly European style and it was under the direction of her label, Sony music, that a piece of music with "orientalist" character and extreme "oriental breezes" was made for her. "Every Way That I Can" was melodized and performed exactly in an oriental style, incorporating substructural elements denoting Turkishness, such as *dümbelek* and *zil*, and was set in the *kürdi makam/Phrygian mode*. Many of the changes made to her style were ultimately superficial, and this successful move away from European pop toward a more Turkish-derived format might be read as an act of self-orientalizing, a change based upon internalized foreign expectation of authentic Turkishness. This self-orientalizing allowed her the success in the Eurovision song contest that earlier artists such as MFÖ and Ajda Pekkan, who performed in straight European styles, could not achieve. By performing a song that utilized the *kürdi/Phrygian mode*, she was able to move from an international, standardized style of popular performance and affiliate herself

with other Turkish forms. This song, "Every Way That I Can," was aimed at the international markets, but it also did very well in the domestic market and was followed by another pop-Arabesk hit song with English lyrics, "Here I am." While Erener shifted her style to gesture toward the local, by continuing to release pieces in English she simultaneously ensured the possibility of some international success. Erener's inclusion of self-orientalizing elements into her music enacted a paradox of sorts, turning musical characteristics that might have once been seen as a continuation of a filiative continuity into an inward-looking act of affiliation.

Artists such as Erkin Koray, Moğollar, Cem Karaca, Barış Manço, and Kurtalan Ekspres are some of the earliest performers of rock music in Turkey, and their interpretations of rock created their own style and a different sound than western rock music. In recent years, rock groups such as Replikas, Duman, Manga, Teoman, Kargo, Athena, D-rect, Vega, and Mor ve Ötesi have continued in the footsteps of the earlier performers, and continue to integrate rock elements from abroad and create new rock formations within Turkey. For example, the group Athena performs a Turkified version of third wave *Ska*, a genre rooted in mid-1960s Jamaica, but then filtered first through Thatcher-era Britain, and then through mid-1990s American pop. While most of Athena's pieces are performed in a pop-ska style, the group occasionally includes Turkish elements such as gypsy clarinet, or reworks classic Turkish standards such as "Beyoğlu" in a pop-ska style. Additionally, the group Duman's sound is based primarily upon the "grunge" sound of early 1990s Seattle popularized by groups such as Nirvana, Alice in Chains, and Sound Garden. While Duman perform and record in a fairly straight-ahead rock style, they do include some musical elements derived from historically Turkish music. The superstructure of their songs "Seni Kendime Sakladım" (I Hide You for Myself) and "Olmadı Yar" (Don't Do It My Dear) are both in *kürdi makam*/Phrygian mode. Many of these new pop-rock groups other than Duman often include elements of Turkish folk music in their compositions, usually in the form of *makam* elements. Although these artists are quite popular, their audiences are predominantly teenagers, and it remains to be seen what future synthesis will come from this new generation of artists.

By now, we believe that it has become abundantly clear that Turkish popular music, with its myriad roots and various channels of development, is a complex amalgam of internal and external influences. Artists, in the past, have broken from geographically delineated lines of filiation to freely and actively affiliate themselves with international music, particularly that produced in Europe and the United States. Yet, as we have hinted previously, the simple distinction between filiative and affiliative gestures becomes problematic with the progression of time. As the performance of foreign instruments and styles shifts from spanning months and years to decades and generations, it becomes increasingly difficult to make a clear distinction between acts of filiation and affiliation. The

steady progression of time and consequent domestication of the exotic causes what was once a radical act of affiliation to become a comfortable continuation of the familiar. For example, when Cem Karaca and his contemporaries performed Anadolu Rock in the 1960s, they were enacting a gesture of affiliation in linking their performance to American and European styles. Yet contemporary performers of Anadolu Rock such as Kıracı are not so gesturing toward their peers outside of Turkey, but instead toward their predecessors such as Karaca, shifting from an act of affiliation toward an act of filiation.

The steady progression of time can also, because of the domestication of the foreign, lead to the seeming paradox of Turkish popular music artists actively turning from popular forms and affiliating themselves with older Turkish traditions. In other words, the dominant spatialization of Turkish popular music can shift to include the folding of time as well as space. Artists become free to seek influence not just from their peers in other countries, but can also look for inspiration from generations in the past. While this act of temporal affiliation might at first glance appear to be nothing but a simple filiative gesture, what makes it something more is the ability for contemporary musicians to actively choose their historical predecessors. Gestures of filiation are a continuation of streams of development, while the act of temporal affiliation need not flow in a necessary pattern of progression. Artists can wholly revive “dead” traditions or selectively choose those elements which they find the most appealing. What is important here is the act of choice.

As we have shown, the spontaneous synthesis carried out within Turkish popular music has progressed to the point that clear-cut distinctions between external and internal influences have become almost impossible. In the past, influences were apparent at the level of genre, but this is no longer always possible. The constituent elements have become so mixed that it is often necessary to move from the level of genre analysis to an examination of the different elements of sub- and superstructure within a piece. While the analysis of Turkish popular music along sub- and superstructural lines gives insight into the different combinations of foreign and domestic elements, in the case of the *kürdi makam*/Phrygian mode duality the synthesis has become so complete as to be indivisible. What Tekelioğlu had termed spontaneous synthesis, in light of contemporary popular music, might better be termed spontaneous combination. What is particularly intriguing about all of the combinations, integrations, and syntheses that we have discussed is that they are inexorably progressive, ultimately thwarting the attempts of scholars to standardize and quantify the process. The innovative synthesis of today will, in a matter of years, become the fodder for even further and more nuanced developments in Turkish popular music.

Since its founding, the Turkish republic and its myriad constituents have been actively attempting to work out a new identity. The lack of consciousness of the fine distinction between modernization and westernization might have blocked

the way of creativity in popular music, and many artists and consumers might have confused affiliative gestures with true acts of innovation. Additionally, overzealous acts of affiliation might lead to a schism between the artist's representation of life in Turkey and its lived reality. Overall, one might argue that there is a general lack of awareness in Turkey of the fact that the artistic dimension of national identity is as important as its social and economic dimensions. Music is often mistakenly perceived as a harmless pastime, one with little to no real-life consequences. The truth is that music is a complex cluster of connotative and denotative meanings and might be a powerful agent in the shift from localized to globalized society. It remains to be seen how Turkish popular musicians, and their millions of fans, will continue to negotiate and synthesize their sense of local identity in relationship to globalizing pressures.

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Notes

¹ While the TRT was not officially founded until 1946, early state radio stations were established in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir.

² The names such as Erkut Taçkın, Durul Gence, and Tamer Soyata, who received training in this orchestra, have become very important names in popular music for years.

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