

# Song Creators in Eastern Turkey



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Traditional Music



of the World 6

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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC

## Traditional Music of the World 6



### Song Creators in Eastern Turkey

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*Edited by the International Institute for Traditional Music (IITM), Berlin; in cooperation with the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM • UNESCO C).*

*General Editor: Max Peter Baumann; Assistant Editor: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto*

*Total playing time: 69:01*

*Commentary: Ursula Reinhard, Recordings: Ursula Reinhard and Volker Reinhard*

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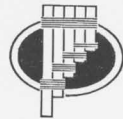
In remote cities of Eastern Turkey, poet singers continue to perform ancient traditions, accompanied by the long necked lute. Here four renowned poet musicians sing of love, of distance, of adventures, and of landscapes in a style that combines deep religiosity with tender poetic imagery. Recorded in Eastern Turkey and extensively annotated in an enclosed 60 page booklet.

**Smithsonian  
Folkways**

Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings  
Center for Folklife Programs &  
Cultural Studies

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Smithsonian Institution  
Washington DC 20560

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*No special thematic limits have been set for this compact disc series. Each issue centers on those forms of traditional music that have been the subject of musicological research and is accompanied by an extensive scholarly commentary of an ethnomusicologist who deals with the particular subject matter from the point of view of her or his primary experience in the field. Each issue contains a description of the music of a certain region, of a particular type of ensemble, of an individual musician or of a musical genre. The content of a disc refers to rural, urban or popular aspects of the music concerned including both oral and written traditions. Taking any one traditional musical culture as a whole, a compact disc may present autochthonous, acculturated and transformed genres, folk music as well as art music. The musical examples and the information given in the booklet aim at providing a deeper insight into both general as well as particular aspects of musical cultures, explaining, for example, the imbedding of musical traditions in a certain sociocultural context, the role of these traditions in a changing (musical) world and their function as a mean of musical self-expression.*

## SONG CREATORS IN EASTERN TURKEY

Commentary by Ursula Reinhard

Recordings by Ursula Reinhard and Volker Reinhard

The terms “*âşık*” or “*ozan*” can be translated as “Liedermacher” (song creators), poet singers, bards, or folk singers. In the past, everyone in Turkey, whether a city person or a farmer in Anatolia, knew a few of them, but they did not differentiate between the songs of the famous older *âşık* that had been transmitted from past times and the poems of living folk artists. This was because they could identify with the poetic ideas as well as with all the music of the past centuries, and enjoy them. However, this situation has changed somewhat in the last few years. Almost unnoticed, the higher social groups have disassociated themselves from this tradition. As late as 1983, one could still perceive admiration and respect for folk singers on the part of rich businessmen, intellectuals, politicians and youth. During my last research trip to Turkey in 1990, however, we heard such comments as: “I really can’t get into these singers and their art,” or “They are not realistic

enough about life and have no idea of modern progress. Of what use are their songs to us?" "The *âşık* music is only good for the text. Scholars should concern themselves more with art music," etc. From these statements, a shifting of interest towards the West can be perceived between the lines and a deep dissatisfaction with the present situation. Therefore it is inevitable that the *âşık*, who after all want to be singers of the folk, begin to modify their repertoire. In 1983 in the easternmost province of Kars they were singing predominantly songs that made observations on life or that were almost religious in nature, as well as songs that were socially critical, but now epic songs are in the majority. In this way, the public can be entertained and the musicians can still exercise criticism, which is hidden in the names of specific heroes, and thus have a didactic effect according to their own convictions.

Particularly popular are the epic poems of Köroğlu. Köroğlu is the Turkish-Oriental Robin Hood who takes from the rich, gives to the poor and cruelly punishes unfair acts. Köroğlu was a poet singer. Many Turks maintain that every young Turk has the desire to be like this hero by opposing dictatorial authority and its repression. The idea has emerged that such arguments could be responsible for the great interest in this epic poem, especially in recent times.

Along with changes in the content of the repertoire of the *âşık*, changes have also naturally taken place in the music and its performance practice, particularly under the influence of television. This change has even appeared in poor areas. But also the growing possibilities to travel greater distances and to learn about other things play a role in this process of change.

Already in the ninth to tenth centuries - that is, in the pre-Islamic period - poet singers traveled (or better, moved around) among the Turkish peoples in Central Asia. They were known as "*ozan*" and played the part of shamans. With their help, the epic and religious songs of the time were spread. The folk poets sang, as today, their own songs and played the lute - at that time known as *kopuz*, today *bağlama* or *saz*. They provided entertainment for their tribal leaders and princes with praise songs, spread the fame of their masters and described the brilliant events of the court. In doing this, they improvised songs at each performance, much as they still do.

This tradition was maintained after the migration of the Turkish people to Anatolia (Asia Minor) and after Islamization. After this migration, the tribal organizations divided into two groups. The ruling class joined the Sunni belief system while the other, made up of nomadized Turkmen, oriented themselves to the Shiah. This latter system considers the son-in-law of Mohammed, Ali, and his descendants, the twelve Imam's, as the highest religious authority after Allah. The Alevi, who live in Anatolia, belong to this religious movement, as do the Bektâşi and the Shiites, who live in the provinces of Kars and Erzurum. Most of the folk singers felt - and still feel - themselves strongly tied to these religious communities, strongly influenced by Sufi thought. In the fifteenth century, because of their love songs directed toward God, Ali and their religious leader, the singers received the name of "*âşık*" (lover, love song singer). In addition to religious songs, they also continued to sing love songs, epics, and critical songs, and performed still in



singer competitions. Because of their socially critical songs, the *âşık* have been, and still are, an object of fear for many governments. At the same time, they are also prepared, especially in the area of Erzurum and Kars (in the most northeastern part of Turkey, near the border to the former Soviet Union and Iran), to support nationalism. The *âşık* are capable of inflaming feelings with their songs that make young men willing to sacrifice themselves for the fatherland. This has always been so.

The poet singers from Kars and Erzurum heard on this recording regard as their first duty the continued transmission of the old tradition, in addition to the creation of new compositions in the same spirit. The latter process means that they compose their own epic stories and lyric songs and improvise competition songs. "That is our tradition and it is valuable," says Âşık Şeref. "It is important for our future generations. We live for that." On the other hand, Âşık Çobanoğlu explains, somewhat sadly, "We are no longer real *âşık*. We no longer have the ability to create songs that reach the level of those of the old *âşık*."

These thoughts unjustly continue to spread, also coming to occupy the minds of *âşık* living in Germany. In order to balance this perceived lack in compositional ability, more virtuosity is demanded on the long-necked *saz*, the instrument of the poet singers of Turkey, as well as more ornamentation and flexibility in song. Village singers are lightly denigrated, although they can be very impressive due to traditionality of their songs.

Because of the above-mentioned ideas, the poet singers in Kars and Erzurum have little or no understanding for their colleagues

abroad and their problems. Almost all maintain: "Their songs are only one-day flies, since their texts do not have universal validity like our traditional songs. What do we have to do with the troubles of folk singers temporarily living there? Their songs will not last through time."

This attitude can be understood if one considers the extremely difficult living conditions in the poor, desolate areas of Erzurum and Kars, which lie 2,000 to 3,000 meters above sea level, or higher. The landscape is made up of gray-brownish, bare mountains from which wolves and bears come in the winter into the snowed-in villages. In spite of this, the *âşık* travel even at these times with buses, or when these can no longer be driven, with sleds into the villages in order to entertain their fellow countrymen in their isolation and to divert them from the misery brought by the cruel cold during these months.

There are professional and semi-professional *âşık* whose lives proceed in different ways depending on their varying opportunities to earn money. Some are famous, well-paid musicians who lead busy, exciting lives as "roving singers." Other less well-known *âşık* are not able to live so well. They travel to their performances with simple transport, such as overfilled buses. Not seldom, the folk singers walk by foot to far-off villages.

The semi-professional *âşık* practice widely varying professions. They are farmers, factory workers, handworkers, lower-level officials, businessmen and teachers, among many other occupations. Few *âşık* belong to a higher social class.

Their training begins already in their childhood if the father, a relative or friend is a folk singer. Later, such young men become apprenticed to a poet singer. These singers require no money for their lessons. Sometimes a pupil travels around with his teacher as a part of his training until he has become an independent folk singer.

In Kars and Erzurum there are training centers for *âşık*. These are not conservatories but rather modest tea houses with simple wooden stools and tables everywhere. Long-necked lutes and pictures of Atatürk and of famous *âşık* (both dead and presently active) hang on the walls.

All evening long men of all ages come from the city and the surrounding area in order to enjoy the songs of the *âşık*. Only tea is served, which is sipped in tiny sips out of small glasses.

In the "Âşık Cafe" in Erzurum, as well as in Kars at "Çobanoğlu's Casino," a lively atmosphere prevails in the evenings. The audience identifies itself with the songs and listens with passionate enthusiasm. Between songs are heard many loud bravos or calls of "You should live" (*yaşa*). When a guest particularly likes an expressive passage, he will call, "I thank you" (*sağolun*, literally, "stay healthy").

In general, however, life in Kars seems poor, even bleak and dreary. Doubts, skepticism and dissatisfaction with their present lives are conspicuous. This atmosphere is also discernable during the day in Âşık Cafe. The young singers sit around in the simple, large room, occasionally drinking tea or playing the well-known backgammon game, *tavla*. They are waiting for guests to come who

will engage one of them for a party. An atmosphere of waiting and of resignation is pervasive. In the evenings the *âşık* perform and feel better for a short time because the listeners receive them with good feelings and applause. If pleased by the musician's songs, the audience puts money inside the string loops that are mounted on the lutes. The worries about the coming day recede in the background.

In these music cafes, first the apprentices (*çırak*) sing and play. After them come the master singers (*usta âşıkları*). During their performances, they go through the rows of guests, walking in confident long steps and with much charisma among their audience. At the end of the evening improvised singer competitions (*atışma*) are fought out, in which two or three *âşık* attempt to outdo each other until one of them gives up and is thereby defeated.

The *âşık* learn the above-mentioned competitive improvisation, the song forms, the tuning and the *saz* playing from their masters, predominantly through watching, listening and imitation. There is no song training in the Western sense. Ornaments and melisma are intensively practiced. In addition to committing to memory the songs and epics, the apprentice must get a feeling for how a melody should be created so that a certain poem can be set to it. For example, melodies that "are sung with loud voices and set in a high register" (*yüksek sesle*) are only good for very passionate songs, according to Âşık Şeref. Other melodies are sung "with a middle-range, restrained voice" (*orta sesle*) and are mostly the kind that makes observations about life; those sung "with a burning voice"

(*yanık sesle*) must have sad, even desperate texts. The usual criteria are intuitively understood.

The *âşık* in Kars and Erzurum never sing or play with scores. In the opinion of the master singers, the music remains in this way alive, which is indeed shown in its long tradition.

The formation of character and of one's behavior towards others belongs as well to the training of poet singers. The close relationship of these artists to Sufism has given precedence to the requirement that they be friendly and gracious and treat women with respect and purity. In the course of achieving such conduct in life, the pupils are taught by the master singer with a balance of strictness and kindness. The relationship between master and apprentice is a thoroughly patriarchal one. One treats the teacher with great respect and admiration for his art. In turn the teacher arranges the earning opportunities of his pupils in a fatherly manner.

In addition to the professional training described here, there is another, fairy tale-like way to become a folk singer. This method was already tradition in the ancient times of Central Asia among the Turko-Mongolian peoples (Emsheimer 1991). These singers were "called and inspired." This has also happened many times in contemporary Turkey. A dignified religious leader appears in the dream of a young poetically and musically gifted man. This leader who gives the young man an intoxicating drink (*bade* or *aşk badesi* "love drink"). Then the young man sees his beloved in a rose garden or another fantasy-like landscape, with whom he drinks the love potion. He will always belong to this girl. When he awakes, some-

times after one or two days, he is able to create poems as well as melodies and to play the lute and to sing. He also has command over religious-philosophical knowledge. Even if he had already been an apprentice to an *âşık* master, the young man considers this an enlightening experience, over which he feels no astonishment or resistance, for it comes out of a transcendental world.

Song poems of the *âşık* follow the principle of syllable-counting. According to this principle, each line of a particular form must correspond to a certain number of syllables. There are lines of 7, 8, 11 and 15 syllables, which are also subdivided within each line (concerning the poetic forms, see Reinhard & Pinto 1989:176-187).

Over the course of centuries, poetic models have developed together with poetic forms, models which only consist of a general basic idea in the head of the poet musician before they are realized. Almost every song presents at its beginning a traditional image that eludes to the upcoming topic or event to be described in the song. The public understands immediately, for example, when the first line goes: "I am like the nightingale and I complain about the rose," that love will be the main topic of the upcoming song, or longing and loneliness when the following is sung: "Below, at the fountain, I stand with my hands pressed on my breast."

All song poems have a central idea that is connected to a particular mood, around which certain concepts and symbols are ordered. When, for instance, the topics of lovers and love are highlighted, necessary attributes include beauty in general, being black-eyed and having half-moon-formed eyebrows. Other prominent symbols used for the theme of love consist of pomegranates or

oranges as symbols for breasts, cypresses for beautiful physiques, a rose and a nightingale as a metaphor for two lovers, and others. Such metaphors point to the real concerns of the poet.

In Kars one finds also in this connection the "dagger," the "arrow," or "the torture of love." The beloved is sometimes compared with an executioner, or she chops up the body of her victim. Such traditional symbols and expressions are newly ordered and arranged in each song, so that it is possible, using different forms and rhymes, to form new texts from the wealth of aural tradition, just as a fashion designer creates new variations from one unique dress design.

Âşık have always inserted their names in the last strophe of their songs, usually in the first or fourth lines. From this, the creator of the song can be known also in later times. Whether the melody will always be preserved as originally sung, however, is doubtful.

The creation of a melody is carried out in a similar fashion to that of a poem. There lies in the consciousness of each individual âşık certain melodic models that follow traditional notions. The âşık call these "*makam*" (pl. *makamlar*). These "folk singer *makamlar*" have, however, nothing to do with the *makamlar* of art music. They are like melodic ideas which, as Âşık Şeref says, "can be controlled and expanded by each individual âşık according to his ability, style and popularity." The âşık *makamlar* contain many conventional musical building blocks which, like metaphors in poetry, are constantly rearranged and mixed up in different ways so that each melody, every *makam*, strikes the listener differently in each vocal presentation. This is also the reason for the great vitality of the âşık art. It

is not unusual for the creator of a song to sing his own work a few days later in a different version. Often, after a certain time, he no longer recalls the song and, when reminded of its skeletal melody and asked to play it again, he will often perform an astonishingly different version, though it remains recognizable as his *makam* (cf. no. 3). This is due partly to the atmosphere that pervades the song, but also to certain beginning motives, cadences, or interjecting motives before the actual beginning of the song, as well as oscillating motives within the song. For the sake of the melody, in order to "steer" it and to give it the necessary sense of movement, words such as *aman*, *vah* ("ah, alas"), etc, are added. Sequences play a role at the end of strophes. Stepwise movements in seconds are typical for the music of the âşık. Indeed, these criteria are generally characteristic of Turkish folk music (Reinhard 1984, vol. II). The songs of the âşık are additionally recognizable in connection with the song types in which they are worked out (Reinhard & Pinto 1989:124-54).

The folk singers are particularly skillful at setting the rhythm. They have available to them both metrically strict and asymmetrical rhythms, as well as free rhythms; in Kars and Erzurum they also use alternating rhythms, meaning that within one song both metrically strict and free elements appear. One song can also change meters several times, on top of which it is not unusual for the song to be sung in a different meter as that of the underlying *saz* accompaniment. Sometimes the *saz* accompaniment itself uses two-against-three rhythms (cf. no. 5). Through this, the songs obtain on many levels a floating sound character. In addition, in

northeastern Turkey, where the *âşık* say the Azerbaijani influence is strong, triplets are often played very quickly and with strong strokes of the plectrum. These must be regarded with their larger connections to the lines of text, such as from  $\frac{6}{8}$ , from  $\frac{9}{8}$ ,  $\frac{12}{8}$  ( $= 4 \times \frac{3}{8}$ ), etc. (Reinhard & Pinto 1989:104). Such triplets, also in compound form, can also be frequently found in the folk music of Turkish peoples of Central Asia, the area from which, after all, the Anatolian Turks originally come. Also, meters of 8 and varying 10, sub-divided into  $\frac{3+3+2}{8}$  and  $\frac{3+2+5}{8}$ , are not unusual (Reinhard & Pinto 1989:108).

There have been attempts made in Turkish folk music to adjust to the demands of modern times. Above all, one finds a recent transformation in the singing style of folk music. The *âşık* of Kars and Erzurum, however, still sing in a completely traditional style.

A unique singing technique has been developed there: *dudak değmez* ("the lips do not touch each other"). The singer puts a pin perpendicularly between his lips, thus preventing them from touching while he sings. The needle is of course not allowed to fall from his mouth. It visibly indents the upper and lower lips of the singer so that it looks as though the singer were in pain. His face, however, shows no expression of pain (fig. 1). This technique can only be successful if the letters *v*, *m*, *p*, *f*, *b*, or *ö* do not occur in the text. Songs of any text content can be sung using this technique, which is particularly used in competitions. *Âşık Şeref* explained: "This is done in order to make concentration during improvisation and playing even more difficult. Furthermore, it shows an artistic

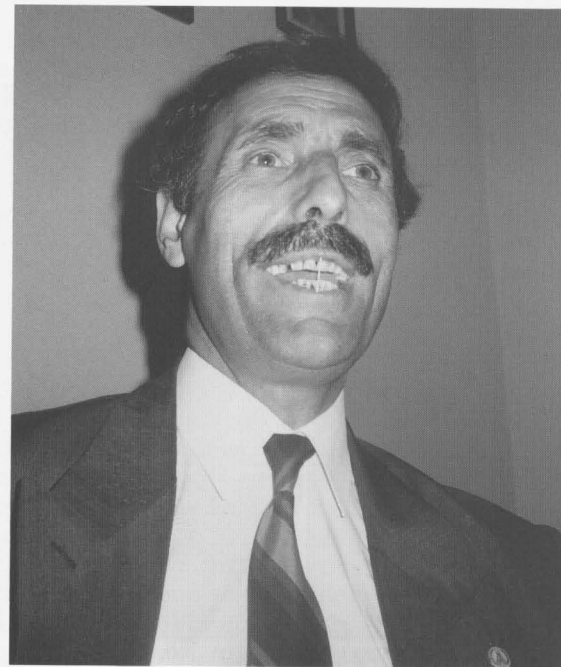


Fig. 1: Traditional singing style of the *âşık* from Kars and Erzurum



virtuosity." He added that this technique has been mastered by only a few singers.

*Saz* playing in the areas of Kars and Erzurum is so full-toned and opulent in its tonal color that the *âşık* there still have no intention of changing their music through, for example, the use of electronic or European instruments or to "update" their artistic interpretation through the use of bigger ensembles. They sing and play alone, or in twos or threes. When playing in groups, they play together on their instruments but sing alone, switching between each other after one or more strophes. Preludes, interludes and postludes are played together on the two or three *saz*.

#### *Âşık Şeref Taşlıova*

Âşık Taşlıova was born in 1938 in the village of Gülyüzü in the district of Çıldır, province of Kars. His family belongs to the clan of Karakalpak nomads that had moved from the Caucasus to Anatolian with the Seldshukish ruler Alp Arslan (1029-1072). After attending school and being trained as a teacher, he became an apprentice of Âşık Kasım, the son of Âşık Şenlik (1850-1913) in Kars, who is famous to this day. He was ready at twenty-six years of age to perform his own music programs in concerts and on the radio. The invitations to the large international festivals in Istanbul and the annual competitions of *âşık* in Konya were important for his artistic career. At these festivals he won many gold, silver and bronze medals. In 1983 he was chosen "Artist of the Year" and in 1990 he was recognized as a *devlet sanatkarı* (national artist).



Fig. 2: Âşık Şeref Taşlıova

He works tirelessly to keep alive and to disseminate the musical and poetic tradition of the Turkish poet singers. In this process he visits villages in order to gather songs that he does not know. Âşık Şeref has command over the diverse music and poetry of his province, from the past to the present, and can himself create moving songs. In addition, he is the only *âşık* we have met who has a theoretical knowledge of the music in Kars and in northeastern Turkey and he is willing to pass on his knowledge. We are grateful to him for much information about the *makamlar* of the *âşık* (Reinhard & Pinto 1989:84) and for much more. To the question (that sometimes leads to arguments among scholars) as to whether the text or the music is more important to the *âşık*, Âşık Şeref replies without hesitation:

The text and the music are equally important. One emphasizes the other. The song must interpret the poem and the form of the poem and its rhyme should support the meaning. In this way harmony is created so that the song touches the innermost part of a man and will be understood. Additionally, the prelude and postlude of the *saz* are there to put the listener in the mood wished for by the *âşık*, depending upon the content of the text. The playing of the *saz* is therefore especially important when the listener is called upon to understand songs of the past world, that is in the interpretation of works of the old *âşık*. When I want to make my own song, I work on a melody together with the *saz* and create simultaneously an appropriate text for it. So during the *saz* playing, I set the text to the melody.

Âşık Şeref is, like many others, of the opinion that music and poetry should come from the heart. "But one should also reflect upon it. When creating a song, the intellect cannot remain turned off." Most *âşık*, however, claim the opposite - that the intellect is not necessary in this process.

### *Âşık Murat Çobanoğlu*

Âşık Murat Çobanoğlu is well known not only in Turkey but also internationally. He often performs together with Âşık Şeref on tours abroad. Together, these folk singers make up a popular and successful team.

Âşık Çobanoğlu was born in 1941 in Kars. His father, Âşık Gülistan (1900-1972), was a well-known *âşık* in the province of Kars who trained his son personally. In spite of this, relates Âşık Çobanoğlu, he was first called to become an *âşık* by his *pir* ("a religious leader") in a dream. He played *saz* like a master already at the age of twelve and sang to its accompaniment many songs from the famous teacher of his father, Âşık Şenlik (1850-1913). Because Âşık Çobanoğlu is convinced that the tradition of the *âşık* must not be allowed to die, he established the Âşık Cafe around 1970, where *âşık* apprentices are trained and where they can perform in the evenings. Outside of Erzurum, such musician cafes are not to be found in Anatolia, but do exist in nearby Azerbaijan. Âşık Çobanoğlu has about ten apprentices, and his son is one of them. In the course of training, the master singer emphasizes the value of the *saz* playing. "The voice matures on its own," he says. "But what

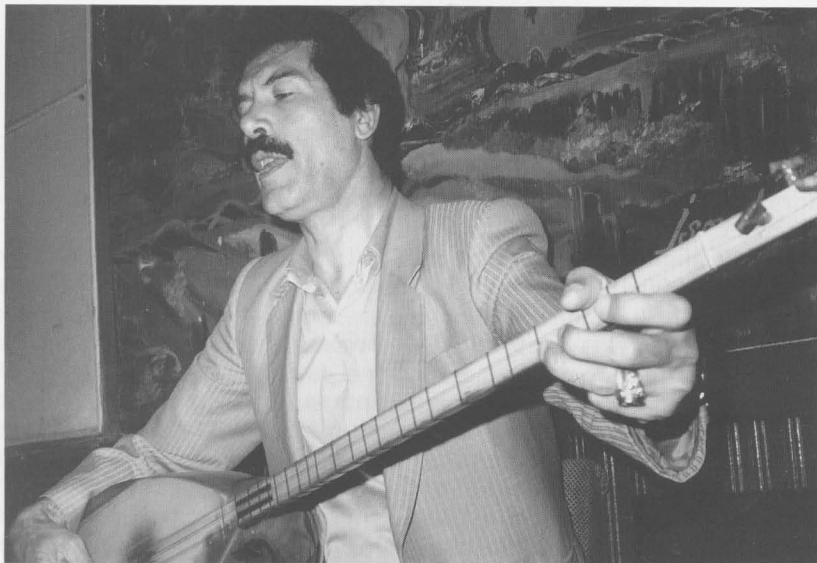


Fig. 3: Âşık Murat Çobanoğlu

is of prime importance is that the music comes from the heart. It may never be directed by the intellect, for music is the food of the soul."

Çobanoğlu sings a large number of his own songs and he often changes from one performance to the next the entire text or parts of it. He creates many love songs, but he also wants to transmit to his listeners philosophical songs that tend towards the religious, and with these, he relays his own world view.

The poet singer has recorded many cassettes and has won two golden albums. In 1990 he was awarded the title of National Artist.

### *Âşık Mevlut Şafak Ihsani*

"Âşık Mevlut Şafak Ihsani is the best *âşık* that there is." This is the opinion in the Âşık Cafe in Erzurum among his pupils, as well as at TRT Radio Erzurum, where all of his songs have been recorded. Even a television movie has been made about him in his village of Bardız, "which is abundant in lakes, green meadows and flowers" (Âşık Mevlut).

Mevlut Ihsani was born in 1928 at Erzurum in the village of Çernik in the district of Şenkaya. He attended school until the age of nine. Then he found one day a piece of iron that aroused his curiosity. When he picked it up, a bomb from the fighting after the First World War exploded. The explosion robbed him off his sight and three fingers. "In the village we had no doctor," he relates, "and the usual village medicines didn't help." For many years he suffered under deep depression until he began, at the age of twelve, to play

saz. He was brought along to village weddings, where he played and sang. In Turkey it is a widespread custom for blind people to become singers.

At seventeen years of age, Mevlut Ihsani began to create his own *makamlar* and poems. He said, "This was also the time when I often vividly dreamed that my eyes would open once again. And although I saw nothing, I felt a deep love grow in me for music, for poetry and for people, a love that I have never lost. And I knew that I must become an *âşık*." *Âşık* Mevlut Ihsani also reports that his *pir* (religious leader) transmitted to him in a dream his style of singing in a strongly guttural and deep voice.

For many years *Âşık* Mevlut had to earn his living in a cement factory. Now he lives in Erzurum as an independent artist and sings often in the *Âşık* Cafe.

Stories from *Âşık* Mevlut's life, profusely ornamented, are related in his book *Eski Halı* ("old carpet") and in it, he added a song after describing each experience (cf. Ihsani 1989). All folk singers do so when they want to form their lives into an adventurous epic, after the example of the great poet singers such as Dede Korkut (thirteenth century), Koroğlu, Kerem, Karacaoğlu (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries), Emrah (eighteenth century), and others. They interweave many thoughts concerning their world views and religion. As *Âşık* Mevlut explained: "This is because the *âşık* are the words and eyes of the folk. And their love comes from Allah, who created the universe, the earth and nature, which are full of his love." These rapturous Sufistic ideas are frequently presented by



Fig 4: *Âşık* Mevlut Şafak Ihsani

Mevlut in a completely realistic way. He sings, for example, in a philosophical song:

The world is a soccer field,  
The game ends, the wish, the goal never.

This connection between mystical ideas and contemporary reality constitutes the charm of the unpretentious and yet impressive songs of Âşık Mevlut Ihsani. For this reason, they are typical of Turkish folk poetry as a whole.

### *Âşık Rahim Sağlam*

Rahim Sağlam is one of the master *âşık* whom Mevlut Ihsani has trained. This young folk singer, who gives the impression of bursting with vitality, was born in 1961 and comes from the village of Gezköy, 10 km from Erzurum. Like almost all *âşık*, he decided early - in his case, at the age of fourteen - to become a poet singer. He was an apprentice for four years with the famous Âşık Reyhani from Erzurum, who now lives in Bursa. Rahim's next master was Mevlut Ihsani, who is much honored by his pupils.

Like his teacher Mevlut, Âşık Rahim especially likes to sing songs from the Koroğlu epic. Due to his large and heroic-sounding voice and his long breaths, he gives impressive expression to those songs that begin with very long tones, sung high and loud.

He is a very busy singer who sings every evening in the Âşık Cafe and has many engagements at marriages, feasts and official celebrations.

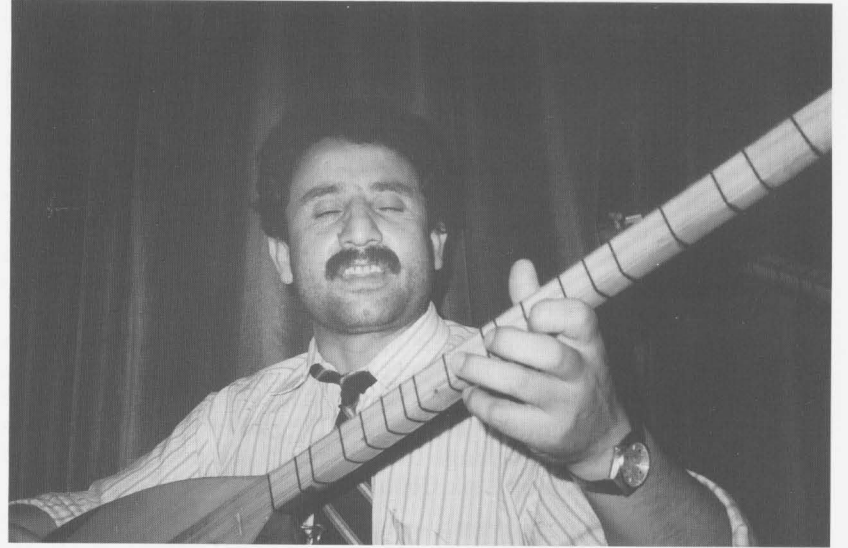


Fig. 5: Âşık Rahim Sağlam



1. "Bolu bey" 3:22  
Murat Çobanoğlu

The song "Bolu bey" belongs to the Köroğlu epic from the sixteenth century (also related to this epic: nos. 5, 8, 13, 16, 17, and 20). Epics among the Turkish peoples have a long history; one can trace them in the Altai region and in Siberia back to early historical times. In those times, people believed that they could favorably influence the "masters of nature," the spirits of hunting, through narratives and music (Emsheimer 1991:151). The Köroğlu epic is actually not so old, and yet a number of shamanistic ideas can be discovered within it. The epic is quite widespread and exists in many versions throughout the Orient and in Central Asia up to China. It consists of individual episodes whose central figure is the hero Köroğlu.

The *âşık* in Kars perform such epics at marriages, circumcision celebrations, burial feasts, in poet singer concerts (*fasıl*) or in performances in coffee houses. Songs are inserted within the dramatically recited prose text as high points of the plot. The following episode, which belongs to the song "Bolu bey," is narrated in the following version by Âşık Çobanoğlu:

Köroğlu lived in the sixteenth century. His father was an animal doctor and was called Yusuf Deli ("the crazy one, the heroic one"). He served the master of the region of Bolu, Bolu bey. One day Bolu bey wanted to present the sultan with a horse, as a present. Yusuf Deli chose a very beautiful but young faul and solemnly declared that it would one day become an incomparable horse. Bolu bey found it

unpardonable that his animal doctor should have chosen such a small horse for the sultan. He boiled with rage and stabbed out the eyes of Yusuf Deli, while his son was forced to stand by and watch. This son called himself from then on "the son of the Blind One" (Köroğlu).

Köroğlu raised the horse and after three years it had become in fact incomparable and unique in its beauty. Then Köroğlu jumped onto the horse and rode out of Bolu to the Çamlıbel Mountain. There he gathered together young heroes and called them the soldiers (*keleşleri*) of the brave, courageous Köroğlu. Finally he had 7,777 or 9,999 followers. Among them was Ayvaz, the son of a butcher from Istanbul, who soon became Köroğlu's closest friend. They became so inseparable that they were always to be seen side by side. Köroğlu allowed Ayvaz to make coffee for him, for he was skilled at this. But no one was able to ride on the horse as well as Köroğlu could ride Kırat ("grey horse"). It was as if the horse had wings like a bird. Köroğlu loved Ayvaz and the horse as nothing else in the world. One day he sent Ayvaz to Bolu bey with the following threatening letter, in which he also expresses concern for the outcome of the fighting and his own fate:

*Benden selam olsun Bolu beyine  
Çıkıp şu dağlara yaslanmalıdır  
Kılıç sedasından kalkan sesinden  
Dağlar seda verip seslenmelidir*

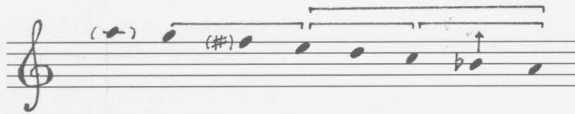
Give Bolu bey many greetings from me,  
he should move to that mountain, hide  
himself.  
With the sound of the swords and the shields,  
the mountains resounded with their noise.

Düşman geldi tabur tabur düzüldü  
Alnımıza kara yazı yazıldı  
Silah icad oldu mertlik bozuldu  
Eğri kılıç kında paslanmalıdır

Köroğlu düşer mi hele şanından  
Çoğunu ayırdı er meydanından  
Kılıç sedasından kırat kanından  
Çevrem verip şalvar ıslanmalıdır

The enemy, he came, and he prepared himself  
for battle,  
on our foreheads was written the writing of a  
black fate.  
The muskets had been invented, heroism  
thereby spoiled,  
The curved sword, its blade became pink from  
blood.  
Will Köroğlu lose his honor?  
He forced many to flee from the battlefield,  
with the sound of the swords, from the blood  
of the grey horse,  
The garment, the pants became soaked.

Concerning the music of the epics, Âşık Şeref has expressed himself as follows: "Every singer performs the Köroğlu songs musically in a different way, with small changes, according to his own taste. Köroğlu has its own music. The Köroğlu *makamlar* are based on different melodic models (*ses*) and different rhythms, for example continuously heavy rhythms (*düz ağır ritimli*), continuously fast (*düz hızlı ritimli*), and soft (*yumuşak ritimli*) rhythms. The latter were used for love songs." There is also a distinct Köroğlu scale:



Music Example 1: Köroğlu scale

This scale has its own rules. B flat is raised 2 *comma* (one *comma* equals 20 to 24 Cents), which makes it sound slightly sharp to Western ears. It is typical that the intervals between the dominant tones are minor and major thirds. This has nothing to do with Western influence; this tradition has already existed a long time.

Very loud, expressive vocal entries (*yüksek sesle*) on a high tone, often beginning on the seventh, appear in the hero *makamlar* (*koçaklama*), especially in the Köroğlu epic. The melody then proceeds in downward steps, which in certain songs occurs in stages, down to the bottom of a larger tonal range. The beginning of the song, accented several times with "hey hey" sounds like the call of a victorious hero from a high mountain to the enemy coming across the plain. Such interjections were also interspersed throughout the main text "in order to perfect and beautify the song," as Âşık Şeref explains.

2. "Dertli bülbül" 2:08  
("The sorrowful nightingale")  
Murat Çobanoğlu

This *makam*, with an eight-syllable text concerning love, has eight lines instead of four in each of its three strophes. This can be explained by the insertions made after each line of poetry of the actual main text. The insertions consist of words extraneous to the text, such as exclamations like *zalim* (cruel), *canım* (my soul, my life, my love), *vay* (oh, woe), etc.

3. "Ben bir şeyda bülbül gibi" 3:11  
("I am love-sick like the nightingale")  
Şeref Taşhova

Âşık Şeref sang this song in modified form in 1971 at a singing competition and won a prize with his performance. At that time, the text was composed to praise his home region, which he arranged for the jury. When I requested in 1990 that he sing it again, he thought about it a while and then transformed it into a love song. In doing this, he was carrying on in the spirit of the tradition of the *âşık*, according to which it was common to set different texts to a single melody, as long as they contain the same mood.

4. "Kerem güzellemesi" 2:40  
("Kerem's praise song")  
Şeref Taşhova

Güzel senin gözlerini  
Gören de bayram eylerim  
Tatlı tatlı sözlerini  
Soranda bayram eylerim  
Derdinde oldum divana  
Baş alıp gidem ne yana  
Siyah saçını gerdana  
Örende bayram eylerim

Al giyiniş allananda  
Yar karşımda sallananda  
Şeref sazım tellenende  
Vuranda bayram eylerim

Oh, Beauty, when I see your eyes,  
then I celebrate.  
When I ask for your sweet words,  
then I celebrate.  
I became mad from worry about you,  
I do not know, oh, where I should go.  
When I braid the black hair lying across your  
breast,  
then I celebrate.  
When you wear red,  
when you walk swaying past me,  
when I, Şeref, play the lute,  
then I celebrate.

Şeref called the *makam* of this song "Kerem güzellemesi" (Kerem's praise song) after the love epic of Kerem and Aslı, which came in its first version from Azerbaijan to Anatolia and dates from the seventeenth century. The contents are as follows:

Kerem and Aslı love each other, but belong to different religions and therefore are not allowed to marry. Kerem follows his Aslı over mountains and through valleys. He endures many adventures but finally dies in the fire of love. Aslı spreads her hair over his ashes and also dies by fire.

According to Şeref, the *makam* must be sung "with a middle voice" (*orta sesle*). The type of song is called Azerbaijani (*azeri*), a genre whose themes mostly deal with love. It can be divided into two categories, songs that are metrically free or metrically regular. This particular song, in which the singing alternates with *saz* playing, is generally metrically regular. Different regular meters (such as meters in groupings of a "swinging" six or of  $\frac{3}{8} + \frac{2}{8} = \frac{5}{8}$ ) are combined with beats of rest, when necessary, to make  $\frac{12}{8}$  for each line of text. The song, which contains a few metrically free sections, has in its entirety a range of a fifth. The first line alone has a range of a fourth, while the other lines cover only a third. At the end, the singer adds on a descending flourish of a third in a lower register. In doing so, the conclusion of the song does not consist of a half-step, as is so frequent in the *azeri* type of song. This is only used at the ending of the first strophes; at the end of the song, the expected half-step fails to appear. The *saz* as well does not close with a half-step but rather with a fourth, going lower than the third in the vocal part. This song, then, does not end on the ground

pitch, thereby producing a questioning impression, as if the singer were imploring for the fulfillment of love.

The melodic form, in relation to the poem, appears as follows:

First strophe: melody line	A__B	A__B	and appended B'
rhyme of text line	a__b	a__b	b
Second strophe:	C__B	B__B	B'
	c__c	c__b	b
Third strophe:	C'_B	B__B	B'
	d__d	d__b	b

# 5. "Kiziroğlu" 3:36 Murat Çobanoğlu

The song "Kiziroğlu" belongs to a story of the Köroğlu epic. A version from eastern Turkey is presented here:

Köroğlu moved one day to Arabia, in order to rob and plunder there. Then came a man with the name of Keloğlu to him and requested: "O Köroğlu, take me on as your follower. I am a poor orphan." Köroğlu helped every poor man, and so he gave him work as his horse groom. But Keloğlu wanted to kill Köroğlu, because Köroğlu had destroyed his tribe. So he asked the soldiers, who would be an enemy of Köroğlu. They answered "Kiziroğlu, because he wants to have his horse Kırat." So Keloğlu rode to Kiziroğlu in Kars on this horse and said to him, "If

you kill Köroğlu, then you can have his horse here." With this, the two men rode to Çamlıbel Mountain, where Köroğlu had pitched his tent. There they wanted to attack him in the night.

Köroğlu had, however, seen them both coming out of the forest and he became suspicious. Instead of falling asleep, he waited until the two men drew close to his tent. Köroğlu saw how they hid themselves behind his tent and lurked in waiting for him to lie down to sleep. Awakening his wife, he said to her loudly that he had available to him thirty-two kinds of tricks and intrigues. "Get up and make coffee," and he added, "Oh, Nigâr, if only Kiziroğlu stood before me and had found my horse, which I have so painfully missed for several days. He would certainly give it back to me." The wife said, astonished, "What has become of your masculinity and fame? Who should find the horse, if not you?" Köroğlu said, "Oh, no, no, my love, Kiziroğlu would bring it to me, even if it were sunk in the deep sea or had disappeared in the clouds." Nigâr called, "Hey, Köroğlu! Have you become crazy, or are you dreaming? Kiziroğlu is your enemy because of the horse. If he were really to find it, you think he would give it back to you?" Köroğlu: "Yes, that's how heros are. They fight with each other, but they never disgrace each other and whoever does that is Allah's enemy. Give me my *saz*; I will sing a song about Kiziroğlu." Kiziroğlu had heard everything from the bushes and was anxious to hear what kind of song Köroğlu would make about him.

Now we will see what Köroğlu related about his enemy Kiziroğlu as he sang:

Bir efendi geldi geçti peh peh peh peh  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey hey hey hey  
Hişmü inan geldi geçti  
Ağam kim paşam kim nigâr kim gözüm kim  
kanım kim canım kim kim kim  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey  
Bir beyin oğlu zor beyin oğlu

Vay ben ona eş olaydım peh peh peh peh  
Anadan on beş olaydım hey hey hey  
Keşke ona kardeş olaydım  
Ağam kim paşam kim nigâr kim gözüm kim  
kanım kim canım kim kim kim  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey  
Bir beyin oğlu zor beyin oğlu

Bir atı var ala paca peh peh peh peh  
Mecel vermez kırat kaçay hey hey hey  
Az kaldı utanmam geçey  
Ağam kim paşam kim nigâr kim gözüm kim  
kanım kim canım kim kim kim  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey  
Bir beyin oğlu zor beyin oğlu

Hay efendi huya tepir peh peh peh peh  
Huy edende huya tepir hey hey hey  
Köroğluyu suya tepir  
Ağam kim paşam kim nigâr kim gözüm kim  
kanım kim canım kim kim kim  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey  
Bir beyin oğlu zor beyin oğlu

A hero came, rode past, he he he,  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey, he he he,  
Swiftly, impetuously he blazed the way.  
Who is he, my Ağa, my Pasha, my  
handsomest, light of my eye,  
my heart's blood, my life, who, who, who?  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey, son of a lord, a hero's  
son.

Oh might I be his companion, he he he,  
If only I were fifteen years old, he he he,  
I could be his brother!  
Who is he, my Ağa, my Pasha, my  
handsomest, light of my eye,  
my heart's blood, my life, who, who, who?  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey, son of a lord, a hero's  
son.

His horse piebald and spotted, he he he,  
He holds tight the reins of his dapple grey, he  
he he,  
I almost said something but I was ashamed.  
Who is he, my Ağa, my Pasha, my  
handsomest, light of my eye,  
my heart's blood, my life, who, who, who?  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey, son of a lord, a hero's  
son.

This is his way, this lord, he he he,  
From the outset a victorious horseman, he he  
he,  
He is so strong, that he can push Köroğlu  
himself into the water.  
Who is he, my Ağa, my Pasha, my  
handsomest, light of my eye,  
my heart's blood, my life, who, who, who?  
Kiziroğlu Mustafa bey, son of a lord, a hero's  
son.

When Köroğlu finished, Kiziroğlu thought, "Should I kill such a man just because of a horse?" And he became so furious with Keloğlan, who had encouraged him to do this, that he cut off his head. Then he entered Köroğlu's tent, whereupon Köroğlu spread out his arms and kissed Kiziroğlu's eyes. Kiziroğlu said, "I wanted to kill a hero like you. Instead, you should have killed me. I hereby give you back your horse. You should be my master from now on and I your servant. I want to serve you until my death." From then on the two heroes became like brothers, living together on top of the Çamlıbel Mountain.

6. "Felek saki tanırım" 3:17  
("I know the seriousness of fate")  
Murat Çobanoğlu

At the beginning of the performance of an *âşık* in Kars, a *divan makam* must be played which displays serious content, mostly in a contemplative, philosophical manner. For this reason, such songs are also called *deyiş* from *demek* ("to say"). With these songs, the *âşık* want to influence the listeners in terms of their own *weltanschauung*. As in the previous song, fear of death is also the main topic, as well as the inevitability of fate. Men should therefore lead dignified lives, in order not to come to God as unworthy. Çobanoğlu uses the mosque and the wine house as symbols for a worthy and unworthy life, respectively, and he ends with the Islamic-fatalistic realization that one can achieve nothing—the procurement of a garden house or a castle, for example—if fate does not will it (Reinhard & Pinto 1989:51).



The *divan makam* consists of a poem of three strophes with fifteen-syllable lines. The rhyme is, as usual, a *koşma* [a b a b] in the first strophe, and [c c c b] and [d d d b] in the two other strophes. The chant-like vocal style and the small range of the song as a whole (a fourth) and of the individual lines (thirds and fourths), as well as the longer held oscillations in seconds show influence from Azerbaijani neighbors, who originally descended from Turkish peoples.

7. "Gurbet Türküsü" 3:03  
("Songs of the foreign land")  
Şeref Taşhova

It is common for *âşık* in Turkey to make songs for their countrymen living abroad, in order to show them that they understand the need and longing for home. With these songs, the Turkish *âşık* want to give such people a bit of comfort. Such songs of longing for home contain the metaphors of *gurbet türküsü* ("songs of the foreign land").

Şeref explains: "The songs must be sung with a 'burning voice' (*yanık sesli*), 'pressed,' 'sad' (*ezik*) and with 'middle' volume (*orta*). The *makam* belonging to this is called *uzun makam* ("long makam") (Reinhard & Pinto 1989:133). One characteristic of the *uzun makam* is that it is sung in free meter. However, in contrast to *uzun hava* ("long melody") for folk song, the pitch range of the *uzun makam* is not large and there are no richly ornamented melodies, the opposite is the case. This is related to the fact that the text is so important in

the *uzun makam*, which concerns longing and complaint, that it must not be covered up with too much ornamentation and tonal movement. The present song is therefore sung almost syllabically and it is only in the third strophe, when the *âşık* mentions his own name, that the melody is a bit more ornamented.

*Sıladan uzaktan kalan insanın  
Gözünden yaşını bol eder gurbet  
Baş yastığa gelir bağırsa canın  
Sanki Azraile el eder gurbet  
Zalimsin*

Ah, you so far from home,  
the foreign land fills your eyes with tears.  
They fall on your pillow and your body cries,  
as if the foreign land had called Azrail (the  
angel of death).  
Cruel you are, foreign land.

*Kimse bakmaz gariplerin yüzüne  
Kulak veren olmaz onun sözüne  
Yığıt aslan olsa özü özüne  
Karşıda keddiği fil eder gurbet  
Yalanmı zalimsin*

No one looks at the stranger,  
no one listens to him, to his words.  
Even if the young one were inside a lion,  
the foreign land makes a cat out of an  
elephant.  
Is it a lie? Cruel you are, foreign land!

*Şeref der derdini vatanına yaz  
Gahi sıcak çektin gahi de ayaz  
Sinem kağıt dilim mektup kalem saz  
Üstüne göz yaşım pul eder gurbet  
Zalimsin*

Şeref, he says: Write about your worries to  
those in your Fatherland,  
about heat, cold (write), that you so often  
bear.  
My breast is the writing paper,  
and the saz a writing feather, the language is  
the letter,  
the tears in the eyes are the stamps on it.  
Cruel you are, foreign land.

8. "İstanbuldan çıktı bir ulu kervan" 4:14  
("A big caravan left Istanbul")  
Şeref Taşlıova

The following short story from Âşık Şeref belongs to the contemporary heroic songs of the Köroğlu epic:

As Köroğlu came from Istanbul, he met on the side of the road a merchant who was enjoying himself there with his entourage. Köroğlu said to his wife Nigâr, who was adorned with gold threads: "I will show them what a strong hero I am, so that they will pay tribute to me from the start." Nigâr answered: "You think if you just clap your hands, no brave adversary will turn up? Not only you, but others are also heroes, and what will happen then? "No," said Köroğlu, "I will relate a song to you about what I think of that."

*Istanbuldan çıktı bir ulu kervan  
Ha babam kervan  
Geldi göç Yemene konu bezirgân  
Kondu bezirgan  
Dedim keleşlerim pacını gönder  
El ele vurarak güldü bezirgân*

*Enine giymişti sormalı kürkü  
He koçum kürkü  
Başına örtmüştür çığalı бүркү  
Çığalı бүркү  
Köroğlu söyledi üç kıta türkü  
Gitti on tümeni saydı bezirgân*

A great caravan left Istanbul,  
oh Father, a caravan.  
A merchant came, he traveled to Yemen,  
oh, a merchant.  
I said, give all your belongings to my soldiers,  
then the merchant clapped his hands, laughed  
mockingly.

He wore a beautiful fur, ornamented with  
silver,  
oh a fur of ram.  
His head covered with a cape full of feathers.  
And Köroğlu, he sang three strophes,  
then he went. Oh, the merchant counted ten  
divisions of soldiers.

*Kıratım meydan yerinde  
Kaçar zorlayı zorlayı  
Bir kötü azgın kavgada  
Kaçar zorlayı zorlayı*

*Kırata yakışır bunlar  
Giyer demir donlar  
Her taraftan gülgez kanlar  
Akar şorlayı şorlayı*

*Köroğlu der alkanlarım  
Yere serdim çok canları  
Eğri kılıç düşmanları  
Keser parlayı parlayı*

The horse on the plaza at his place,  
he will only fly when there's no other choice.  
In battle, he is raving, wild,  
he will only fly when there's no other choice.

They draw close to the horse,  
it wears armaments of iron.  
From all sides, the blood ran so rose-red,  
splashing, splashing it runs.

And Köroğlu, he says: My red blood,  
I have felled many men to the ground.  
These enemies as well will be butchered  
by the flashing, glinting crooked sword.

The heroic song belongs to the *müstezat* form, which is only used in the East. This form contains two very different parts. The first has two eleven-syllable strophes, each with four lines, between which a five-syllable in-between-call is almost always inserted. This repeats certain words from the lines before. The second part contains three eight-syllable strophes. Each part has its own melody and its own meter, so that one has the impression of hearing two songs. In a long, full-sounding introduction of the *saz* appears part of the vocal melody in alternating, changing meters. After the first section of the song, a long, swelling interlude follows in another rhythm, namely an oscillating meter of six, as a transition to the second section, which lends a totally different character to that section. It seems as though the restrained, slow gallop of Köroğlu's horse is being represented by this. At the same time, the first values of  $\frac{3}{8}$  are emphasized and a bit drawn out, as shown here:



*Musical Example 2: Rhythmical pattern, "the gallop of Köroğlu's horse"*

The transformation of the eleven-syllable text of the first two strophes to eight syllables in the second section is also expressed musically. A lower register is used for singing. In this song, the rules of the Köroğlu mode and performance with the *ên* entry on the top note and the following descending melody are followed (cf. no. 1).

9. "*Sevdasına müştak vurdu sedyeye*" 2:23  
("Longing threw love on the bier")  
Şeref Taşhova

This *âşık makam* is named after its type of singing and is a *hoş dımak*, which means "sweet tone." According to Âşık Şeref, it should be sung "with a soft, pleasant voice," but also "with burning, painful expression," and should sound "sweet." This effect is produced by

keeping the teeth a small interval apart while singing. The mouth and lips can thereby be only partly opened. As a result of this technique, the impression is made that the singer is chanting. This is done to emphasize the importance of the text.

The song text is from the famous Âşık Şenlik (1850-1913) of Kars. It is a desperate love-lament song with strong statements such as that love is forcing the singer poet to the death bier, that his worry is like a sharp, fine dagger and that even the legendary Doctor Lokman cannot help him. Regiments of sadness satiate themselves with the blood of the lover. The beloved holds him fast, as if she were his executioner, but she does not kill him, nor does she let him go. Grief and pain cry up to the heavens. And even animals like the rhinoceros or elephant could not carry such a burden of grief.

10. "*Aylar Yıllar*" 3:51  
("Months, years")  
Murat Çobanoğlu

The first line of this song is often used at the beginning of songs varying in text and musical content (see Reinhard & Pinto 1989:106,265). This passionate-painful love song is full of lament. The singer expresses the seriously meant, furious wish that the mother-in-law and the grandmother of the girl he loves (who is married to another) would die, because they are preventing the coming together of the lovers through their motherly attention and strictness. The song creator is Âşık Kerem, who is the main figure in the epos "*Aşlı ve Kerem*" (cf. p. 29).

Aylar yıllar hasretini çekerim  
Bak dönmüş hey babalar belemi  
Bak a balam belemi balam  
Güzellerde sarhoş gezmek ar değil  
Açılmıştır ince kemer belemi  
Bak a balam belemi balam vay  
Yörü yörü yörü başın al balam  
Niye ben öldümmü seni el ala  
Ay balam seni el ala

Yüce dağ başını kar aldı gitti  
Baykuş meskenimi har aldı gitti  
Bak a balam de gitti  
Her kimki yar sevdi yar aldı gitti  
Bizimki kara geldi böylemi  
Bak a balam böylemi balam  
Yörü yörü yörü ay melek sada  
Niye ben öldümmü seni yad ala  
Ay a balam belemi

Ben Keremim paç almadım dünyada  
Arttı derdim gamım oldu ziyade  
Seven sevdiğini aldı dünyada  
Koçalmışım turap oldum belemi  
Bak a balam belemi vay  
Yörü yörü yörü ay nenen ölsün  
Ben sana kıyamam kaynanan ölsün  
Ay balam de ölsün

Months, years, I suffer with longing for you.  
Father I have found myself again, I have  
found rest, isn't it so?  
See, ah beauty, isn't it so?  
In the presence of beauties it is not a disgrace  
to go around like drunk,  
the narrow belt was opened, isn't that so?  
See, ah Beauty, isn't it so?  
Go, just go, your head red (veiled), my beauty.  
Am I already dead, because a stranger takes  
you.  
See, ah beauty, a stranger takes you.  
Above on the top of the mountain snow, much  
snow.  
The owl destroyed my home, flew away,  
see, ah Beauty, so much destroyed,  
Every man loved his sweetheart and took her,  
I however have a black fate, isn't that so?  
See, ah Beauty, isn't that so?  
Go, ah go! You with the face like an angel,  
Am I already death, because a stranger takes  
you,  
See, ah Beauty, isn't that so?  
I am Kerem, I could not get anything in the  
world.  
My sorrow and pain have increased so much.  
One who loves has obtained his love in the  
world  
but I've become old, I have gone back to earth,  
isn't that so?  
See, ah Beauty, isn't that so?  
Go, just go, your grandmother should die,  
I cannot hurt you, your mother-in-law should  
die,  
ah Beauty, should die.

11. "Derbele ben giderim" 2:59  
("It is said: I must go now")  
Şeref Taşlıova

"The *karacı makam* comes from Karachi and is very old," says the *âşık* in Kars. "It came thousands of years ago from Asia, Pakistan, the Caucasus, from Azerbaijan." Even if these statements are not provable, it is certainly true that the *makam* belongs to the love epic of Tahir and Zühre. Here is a short summary of that story:

One day a sultan and his visier were sitting on the bank of a river. A dervish came and gave each of them an apple. He spoke to the visier: "Your son will be called Tahir," and to the sultan: "Your daughter will be called Zühre. Let them marry each other. If this does not occur, much trouble will descend upon your heads." In the following nights the wife of the sultan and that of the visier ate the apples their husbands had brought with them and after nine months, the wife of the sultan bore Zühre and the wife of the visier Tahir. As the children grew up, they fell in love with each other. The ruler, however, did not want to give his daughter to the son of the visier. He had Tahir hidden in a crate and had this thrown in the river. Tahir was saved, but he was then discovered and thrown into prison. In spite of this, the lovers were able to send messages to one another. After many unfortunate experiences, Tahir was executed. Zühre died from grief at his grave. To the present day, one red and one white rose grow there each year. Between them, however, grows a black bush.

The present song, in *karacı makam* (the author is Âşık Şenlik), refers to one of the letters, which the lovers send to one another

while Tahir was in prison. There are plenty of inserted words which strengthen the complaining content of the text.

*Derbele*

*Ben giderim seni kime tavşirem  
Ağlıya ağlıya kal inen bele  
Aylar yıllar emanetin benideydi  
Saklayabilmezim al inen bene  
Dağlar meralı kaldım aralı  
Bahtı karalı*

*Emanet emanet o nazlı yara  
Altına al giysin üstüne kara  
Alime mollaya ulamalara  
Açtır falcılara fal inen bele  
Dağlar meralı öldüm aralı  
Bahtı karalı*

*Nazlı yardan uzak kaldı aralar  
Göz oldu sinem üste yaralar  
Döv dizine ört başına karalar  
Tahir diye diye kal inen bele  
Dağlar meralı öldüm aralı  
Kaldım yaralı*

12. "Derbeder" 3:56  
("The grieving stranger")  
Şeref Taşlıova

The *makam* "Derbeder" about the "grieving stranger," or "vagabond," is by İrfani, who lived in the eighteenth century in

It is said:

I must go now, to whom should I entrust you,  
cry, cry, and remain here.  
I have belonged to you for months, for years,  
I cannot hide it, so flows my blood.  
I remain in the mountains, with the deer,  
black is my fate.

You charming love, I put myself in your  
hands,  
wear black above, but underneath red.  
Ah, you learned men, Molla, Ulama,  
so tell me the future, you prophets.  
I remain in the mountains, with the deer, and  
will die there, black is my fate.

How far is the charming loved one,  
in my breast the wounds, as big as eyes,  
hit yourself on the knee (from pain), cover  
your head with black,  
and think then about Tahir, but remain here.  
I remain in the mountains, with the deer, and  
will die there, I am so wounded.

Kars-Çıldır. It belongs to the type of poetry called *yedekli koşma*. Within it, each strophe has four eleven-syllable lines in *koşma*-rhyme, [a a a a] in the first, [b b b a] and [c c c a] in the second and third strophes. Between these strophes stands a refrain strophe of seven syllables and the rhyme of [a a b a], which originally belong to the dance song form of *mani*. The first of the refrain lines can, as here, also have fewer syllables. The special form developed in eastern Turkey from the *koşma* and the *mani* is called also *cinaslı mani* ("pun-mani"). Such a pun appears for example in the second main strophe. In one place "göze" means "basin" and in another "to throw a glance at someone, to desire." This poetic example involves unlucky love as its contents and is associated with the song type *uzun hava* (cf. no. 7). It is always sung in free meter, like the *uzun makam* (cf. no. 3). The singer begins with a loud voice on one of the top notes. Then he carries the melody in long, descending sequences with many more or less expressive melismas and ornaments to the concluding tone at the bottom. The melodic phrases are expanded widely and ornamented with trills, sobbing and slurring.

*El çek tabib el çek dertli sinemden  
Sen benim derdime çare bilmezsin  
Sen nasıl tabibsin yoktur ilacın  
Yaram içindedir sarabilmezsin  
Düştü gel  
Atlandı gel düştü gel  
İyi günümün iyi dostu  
Kötü günüm düştü gel.*

Ah Doctor, take your hand from my grieving  
breast,  
you know of no medicine for my grief.  
What kind of doctor are you, you do not even  
have medicine,  
the wound is inside me, you cannot bind it.  
Now it is over, so come,  
it's gone, it is over, so come,  
on good days there are good friends,  
the bad days are over, come.



Yıkılsın feleğin taç ile tahtı  
Öyle bir ok vurdu hicranım aktı  
O yarda vermişti ikrarı aktı  
O ki ikrarında durabilmezsin  
Gözede  
Balık oynar gözede  
Sanada kurban canım  
Seni gören gözede.

İrfaniyim başa gelmez sözlerim  
Kalem alır kağıt üste izlerim  
Ne durursun ağlasana gözlerim  
Bir daha o yarı görebilmezsin  
Su da yandı  
Sel bastı su da yandı  
Üstüme su serptiler  
Tutuştı suda yandı

13. "Hey hey gök yüzünde telli turnam" 3:48  
("Hey, hey! You feathered crane in the sky")  
Rahim Sağlam

The following song from the Köroğlu epic presents a melancholy mood in the text. Köroğlu finds himself imprisoned by his enemy Bolu bey. He anxiously worries about whether his friends will stay with him and his beloved will wait for him.

Fate should fall with throne and crown,  
it shot an arrow at me, my pain of separation,  
ah, is flowing,  
from my beloved came the oath, came the  
promise,  
she could not keep her oath.  
In the pool,  
in the pool the fish plays,  
I want to sacrifice myself for you,  
ah, whoever sees you, desires you.

I am İrfani, my words do not come to me,  
I take pen in hand, leave traces on the paper,  
What are you doing there, cry, my eyes,  
you will not see the beloved again.  
The water burns,  
over the banks flows the stream,  
It foams over me,  
it boils up, the water burns.

Melodically, the song begins as all *koçaklama* songs loud and expressively, on the seventh. Then the singer slides the tones down the scale by a fourth. In the second line, an oscillation occurs between half-steps in the higher register. It is as if the melody is helping "fix" the ornamentation in the high register, until it ends with a flourish of a third. The third line moves in a recitative-like manner between a few pitches, and the fourth line slides in a longer sequence in the interval of a seventh, which is set only to the words *leyli, leyli*. "*Leyli*" means literally translated "sweetheart in the night" and is related to the proper name Leyla. This section shows the characteristics of the *leyli*-type of Köroğlu song, in that the pitches g-e-c are emphasized in intervals of a third as in Köroğlu *makam* (cf. pp. 27). The *leyli* type is always used when the heroic declarations are associated with contents of love and desire, or if such sentiments stand in the foreground.

Hey hey gök yüzünde telli turnam  
Ah bizim beyler yerinde mi  
Türlü türlü cenge giden  
Demircioğlu yerinde mi  
Leyli leyli leyli leyli.

Hey hey sohbet ile saz eyleyen  
Her türlü avaz eyleyen  
Meclislerde naz eyleyen  
Halaybazı yerinde mi  
Leyli leyli leyli leyli.

Hey, hey! You feathered crane in the sky,  
are our great beys (masters) already present?  
He who fights in different wars, Demircioğlu,  
is he present?  
Leyli, my darling in the night.

Hey hey! He who plays the lute for  
entertainment,  
he who sings all kinds of songs,  
he who is so full of charm in society,  
he who leads our dance halay, is he present?  
Leyli, my darling in the night.

Yalan koç Koroğlum yalan  
Ülkelerde saldım talan  
Her gecede hatırım alan  
Telli Nigâr yerinde mi  
Leyli leyli leyli leyli.

Ah it is a lie, great Koroğlu, ah a lie!  
You have sent (the men), divided into  
different lands,  
and she, on whom my heart thinks every  
night,  
Nigâr, adorned with golden ribbons, is she  
present?  
Leyli, my darling in the night.

14. "Gurbet elde" 2:37  
("In this foreign land")  
Rahim Sağlam

Several *âşık* from various provinces have stated, independently from one another, that the *makam* of this song originated from their own locality (*yerli*). A series of recordings of this special *makam* proves, however, that this particular version is used throughout Turkey as a song of lamentation, though always with different text. Such songs always concern distress, sadness over being in a foreign land, or death. For example, Âşık Iskender, born in Sivas, sings a song of lamentation which he had composed himself upon the death of Kurt Reinhard using this *makam* (cf. the LP *Musik aus der Türkei*, Museum Collection Berlin, D/6; pp. 11, 31).

Âşık Rahim composed this song for Turkish workers living abroad. The melody of the *makam* only has a range of a fourth, in which two minor thirds overlap: (ḅ c̣ d flat e flat).

Several oscillations occur within these thirds. The lower tone of the fourth is used only at the end. The song proceeds in a metrically free way:

Gurbet elde bir dert girer içime  
Bir çocuk sesini duyduğum zaman  
Gurbet elde bir dert girer içime  
Çileli günleri saydığım zaman  
Bir tek yavrum asla çıkmaz aklımdan  
Bir çocuk sesini duyduğum zaman

Yastadır dostlar bu gönlüm yasta  
Gözlerim kapıda kulağım seste  
Gurbet ellerinde olurum hasta  
Vatansız günleri saydığım zaman

Âşıklar sözünü aralı söyler  
Düşünür daima sıralı söyler  
Derler Rahim Sağlam yaralı söyler  
Saz ile bağrımı dövdüğüm zaman

15. "Güzeller aradım" 2:45  
("Beautiful girls I seek")  
Rahim Sağlam

A new, somewhat defiant tone is set in this song by Rahim: others have had enough of suffering from the eternal search for their beloved and the grief caused by this, but not Rahim - he is willing to continuing suffering. Here a somewhat feisty and at the same time

Troubles move through my heart in this  
foreign land,  
when I hear a child's voice.  
Troubles move through my heart in this  
foreign land,  
when I count my many days full of worry.  
Ah, I cannot stop thinking about my own  
child,  
when I hear a child's voice.  
Full of sadness, friends, full of sadness is my  
heart.  
My eyes look to the door, my ears strain to  
hear.  
In this foreign land I become sick,  
when I count all the days far from the  
Fatherland.  
One after the other, the Âşık sing their  
strophes,  
they think and sing, one strophe after the  
other,  
saying, the Rahim Sağlam sings as though  
wounded,  
when I play so on my lute, it is as if I hit it on  
my breast (out of pain).

positive attitude toward the Islamic problematic between man and woman can be identified, in contrast to all other love songs, whose declarations are merely complaining and passive.

16. "*Hay hay şu karşıkı karlı dağlar*" 5:19  
("Hey hey! Are all mountains overthere full of snow")  
Mevlut Şafak Ihsani

Âşık Ihsani Mevlut has a unique, very strained, throaty, even hoarse singing style, which, as he tells it, was given to him one day by his religious master in a dream. This is reminiscent of the ancient Turkish people in the Altai region of Middle Asia and in Mongolia (Emsheimer 1991:151), when the epic singers also were shaman. In addition, they were considered to have been called to their professions and enlightened by spiritual forces. They used raw voices, so that the spirits that ruled nature would act in their favor due to their performance of epic songs and narratives. Such "ritual" intonation is still used today in epic songs of Central Asia. In Turkey, Mevlut Ihsani is to date the only singer we have met with such a singing style. However, Âşık Şeref has told us that such performances are sometimes held in villages near Erzurum.

Whether the tradition from Central Asia was indeed preserved in a few remote mountain areas since the migration of Turkish peoples to Anatolia, or whether an independent development has taken place, is impossible to determine at this point.

As to why he sings in this way, Âşık Mevlut replies: "In this way I want to express my own criticism and underline the content of the poetry." It is interesting that it is particularly epic songs that he performs in a style that is still used today in the original homelands of the Turks in Middle Asia and Mongolia. There, overtones are also sometimes produced through a certain placement of the tongue in connection with a very strained vocalization. These overtones form then a melody over the normal singing. A kind of polyphony is thus created, performed by a single singer. Mevlut also sings overtones, especially in epic songs, in this case in a Koroğlu song. When asked about this, he said, "That's just how it is" (*rast gelir*). There is no conscious musical intention behind his performance and he cannot form a melody from the overtones, which seem diffuse and cluster-like. But perhaps it is indeed possible that this type of singing together with strained vocalizing makes one think of the remnants of a Central Asian tradition.

*Hay hay şu karşıkı karlı dağlar*  
*Bize mekan oldu mu*  
*Nazlı yardan ayrılmamız*  
*Söyleyin dert oldu mu*  
*Leley leley leley leley*  
*Söyleyin dert oldu mu.*

Hey, hey! Are all mountains over there full of  
snow,  
our place of living, our homeland?  
Ah, the separation from the charming beloved  
one,  
tell me, doesn't it trouble you?  
Ah alas, ah alas  
tell me, doesn't it trouble you?

Dövüşelim döne döne  
Kılıçlar belensin kana  
Ben aşıkım Nigâr hana  
Başkasına yar oldu  
Leley leley leley leley  
Başkasına yar oldu.

Köroğluyum mesken kalan dağlar  
Yardan dıyrı kalan ağlar  
Bizi zikr eylesin çağlar  
Söyle yiğitler doğdu mu  
Leley leley leley leley  
Söyle yara dert oldu mu.

Çıkmışım saray köşküne  
Ayvaz mey doldur mey doldur  
Döne Sultanın aşkına  
Ayvaz mey doldur mey doldur  
Canan mey doldur mey doldur.

Malında kol bağı mercan  
Sana kurban olsun bu can  
Elinde fir firi fincan  
Ayvaz mey doldur mey doldur  
Canan mey doldur mey doldur

Köroğluyum bu yaraya  
Düşmanlar girdi araya  
Değme fakir fukaraya  
Ayvaz mey doldur mey doldur  
Canan mey doldur mey doldur

We want to fight, to struggle against each  
other,  
the sabres should become dyed in blood.  
My beloved is named Nigâr hanım,  
Ah she would be the dearest of another.

I am Köroğlu, I live on the mountain.  
One who is separated from his beloved who  
cries.  
You waterfalls should remember us.  
tell me, are the (true) heroes already born?  
Ah alas, ah alas  
Tell me, do you have pain because of your  
beloved?

I went to the small garden house.  
Ayvaz pour wine, ah, pour the wine.  
Out of love for Döne Sultan,  
Ayvaz pour wine, ah, pour the wine.  
My dear friend, ah pour the wine.

Bracelets of coral were in the captured loot,  
I will sacrifice my life for you.  
In your hand the red, bright cup,  
Ayvaz pour wine, ah, pour the wine.  
My dear friend, ah pour the wine.

I am Köroğlu. Because of this wound  
the enemies attack us.  
Ah, don't do anything to the poor.  
Ayvaz pour wine, ah pour the wine.  
My dear friend, ah pour the wine.

17. "Lale sümbül mor menekşe" 3:18  
("Hyacinths, tulips, blue violets")  
Mevlut Şafak Ihsani

"Köroğlu carried off his beloved to such a place," said Mevlut,  
before he struck up the following landscape song. He had integrated  
the text into a "single-line type" of song, which is chosen by *âşık* for  
songs with especially engaged, passionate lyrical content because of  
its simplicity, which is reminiscent of children songs (cf. also no. 2).

Lale sümbül mor menekşe  
Biter bizim yaylalarda  
Yeşil başlı allı turna  
Öter bizim yaylalarda  
Yaylalarda yaylalarda  
Öter bizim yaylalarda.

Al örtüklü allı gelin  
Kemere koymuştur elin  
Kimler saracaklar belin  
Göçer bizim yaylalarda

Bir yanında Kars Kağızman  
Bir yanında Oltu Narman  
Yauru geyik nazlı ceylan  
Yatar bizim yaylalarda.

Mevlut Ihsan çeker kahrı  
Pek güzel Erzurum şehri  
Soğuk sulu Aras nehri  
Çoşar bizim yaylalarda.

Hyacinths, tulips, blue violets  
grow there on our high summer pasture.  
Cranes with red and green heads,  
flutes there on our high summer pasture,  
on our pasture, our high summer pasture,  
flutes there on our high summer pasture.

Bride, you with the red headscarf, with the  
red dress,  
with the hand on your belt,  
who tied it around your waist?  
Ah, she goes to our high summer pasture.

Kars and Kağızman on the one side,  
Oltu, Narman on the other,  
like a young deer, like a charming gazelle,  
she lies there on our high summer pasture.

Ah Mevlut Ihsani suffers with great pain.  
Erzurum is a beautiful city.  
The Aras River brings cold water,  
overruns there our high summer pasture.

18. "Bahar gelince süslenir" 3:25  
("When the spring comes")  
Rahim Sağlam

Possessing a strong love for their homeland is characteristic of *âşık*, and this homeland is described as green, fertile and full of flowers and water. Âşık Rahim composed such a praise song for his village Dere köyü in *güzelleme*- ("beautification") *makam*. To this he chose a well-known melody from the famous Âşık Mahsuni. Such borrowing is common and is normally not considered bad, since each *âşık* modifies melodies and makes their own songs from them.

19. "Bolu bey" 4:03  
Rahim Sağlam

The song "Bolu bey" has already been introduced by Âşık Çobanoğlu (no. 1). Here the same song is sung by Âşık Rahim in order to show the difference in the shaping of the one and the same song by two singers from Kars and Erzurum. Çobanoğlu identifies himself with the hero Koroğlu, while, as it were, presenting himself; Rahim, on the other hand, takes over more the role of narrator. In comparison to Çobanoğlu's version, he changes some of the text as well as some of the music. The *saz* prelude and interludes, which are performed mainly in a meter of five, are more austere than in no. 1. He does not set off the *saz*-playing from the vocal part, and for this reason his playing seems to flow. Rahim's version is young, extremely temperamental and lively.

20. "Dağlar yeşillenmiş" 4:05  
("The mountains have become green")  
Murat Çobanoğlu

This sound example belongs to the category of landscape or nature songs that exist in this form only in eastern Turkey. The friendly, bright description of summer is connected to sober contemplation over the falseness of the world and that one day everything will come to an end. Man should therefore strive to come through the gate of paradise, through which the martyrs ("the dead and the wounded") above all will come. The song shows, like almost all *âşık* songs, deep religiousness in terms of Sufism and belief in the Vanitas, and in fate that is connected with melancholy.

The song belongs to the oft-used "half-period type," because each of the four eleven-syllable lines - which only contain one, though always varied, melody period - is divided into two half periods by a caesura. This caesura is located between the sixth + fifth, or the fifth + sixth syllables. It looks like this:



At the same time, however, the contents of the two text lines are put together to form a single unit, so that a second song type that is often used becomes apparent. This type is called the *çift beyit* ("double line"), in which two corresponding lines of text belong together. The result can be illustrated as follows:

# First strophe:

Text lines:	first	second	third	fourth
Melody lines:	$\begin{array}{c} \text{A} \\ \text{a} + \text{a} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{A} \\ \text{b} + \text{b} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{A} \\ \text{a} + \text{a} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{A} \\ \text{b} + \text{b} \end{array}$
	in sequence		in sequence	
Rhyme:	a	b	a	b

The performance of Çobanoğlu seems particularly virtuosic because the melody is interspersed with additive groupings of meters of changing lengths during the prelude, interludes and postlude. However, within the song accompaniment, groupings of triple meters are always integrated into units of nine.

*Dağlar yeşillenmiş yayla zamanı  
Koyunlar meleşir kuzular gelir  
Yüklenmiştir bir güzelin kervanı  
Ayrılmış yarinden sızılar gelir*

*Yağmur yağar toprak nemsiz olurmu  
Ekilir buğdaylar denesiz olurmu  
Fani dünya insan gamsız olurmu  
Yiğidin başına yazılan gelir*

*Çobanoğlu var mı dünya tapusu  
Bir günde bozular ömrüm yapısı  
Çalışsana açık cennet kapısı  
Şehitlerden sonra gaziler gelir*

The mountains have become green, the time of summer meadows!  
The sheep bleat and the lambs come, the caravan of the beautiful girl is loaded, with separation from the loved one comes the pain.  
Does the earth remain dry when it rains? Is there no grain when the wheat is sowed? Will the false world ever let us live without grief?  
To the young hero will descend what is written in the book of fate.  
Is there, Çobanoğlu, a property register for the world?  
One day the house of my life will also fall apart, strive towards the open door of paradise, for after the dead warriors come the victors.

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Die Musikstücke auf dieser CD sind in den Jahren 1990 und 1992 von berühmten Dichtersängern *âşık* (wörtlich: Liebesliedersänger) aus Kars und Erzurum aufgenommen worden. Kars und Erzurum sind kleine Städte und Provinzen an, bzw. nahe der persischen, armenischen und aserbaidischen Grenze, in einer sehr kargen, bergigen und wilden, 1750-3000 Meter hohen Landschaft. Das musikalische und dichterische Repertoire der Dichtersänger dort ist anders als im übrigen Anatolien. Zwar begleiten sich die *âşık* hier wie dort selber auf der Langhalslaute *saz* bzw. *bağlama*, aber auch nur noch in diesem Gebiet tragen die Barden alte und auch neue Epen mit eingeflochtenen Liedern vor, die die Höhepunkte des Geschehens darstellen. Besonders beliebt ist das Köroğlu-Epos, aus dem Gesänge auf der CD vorgestellt werden. Dieses Epos wird in Kars und Erzurum in eigener Ausprägung und einem charakteristischen Singstil vorgetragen. Neben der üblichen heldischen Stimmgebung sind Gesänge mit tiefer, verstellter, heiserer Stimme bemerkenswert, weil dieser Stil auch in der Urheimat der Türken, in Mittelasien und ebenfalls in Sibirien gepflegt wird. Diese Singart ist bisher in keiner Veröffentlichung über die Türkei vorgestellt worden.

Neben epischen Liedern enthält die CD auch Liebes-, Sehnsuchts-, Klage- und weltanschauliche Lieder mit didaktischer Absicht und solche, die die Schönheit der Natur preisen. Die letzteren werden in der entsprechenden Form nur im Nordosten der Türkei von den Barden kreiert.

Die musikalische Gestaltung aller Lieder ist verschieden von der in anderen Provinzen, z.B. Sivas, Malatya, Tunceli und anderen Zentren türkischer Barden. Die *âşık* in Kars weisen darauf hin, daß ihre Kunst aserbaidische Einflüsse zeigt. Dazu gehören neben der Melodielinie komplizierte Rhythmen und eine Reihe von Liedtypen. Die Tradition steht bei den Barden in beiden Provinzen im Vordergrund.

Fast alle Aufnahmen wurden in den Wohnungen der Dichtersänger gemacht und in *Âşık-Cafés*, in denen jeden Abend Lieder, Epen und Sängerwettkämpfe vorgetragen werden.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the musicians Murat Çobanoğlu, Şeref Taşhova, from Kars and Mevlut Şafak Ihsani, Rahim Sağlam from Erzurum for their kind assistance and the patience with which they explained the song texts, answering to my many questions. Thanks are also due to Linda Fujie, who translated the commentary of the booklet and the difficult poems into English and to Hasan Kuzu, who helped with the translation from Turkish into German language. Many thanks too to all Turkish officials and friends, who supported our work in their country. Last but not least I wish to express my thanks to my collaborators during fieldwork: Volker Reinhard, who among other important things took charge of the recordings and to our young photographer Jan Reinhard.

Edited by the International Institute for Traditional Music (IITM), Berlin;  
in cooperation with the International Council for Traditional Music  
(ICTM • UNESCO C).

Produced by the IITM in collaboration with Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings

Commentary: Ursula Reinhard

Recordings: Ursula Reinhard and Volker Reinhard

Tape recorder: Sony TCD-D10 M

Microphones: Sennheiser MD 431

Years of recording: 1990 and 1992

Digital mixing and editing: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, IITM

Mastertape: Hartwig Nickola, Schalloran-Tonstudio, Berlin

Translation: Linda Fujie

Photos: Jan Reinhard

Cover design: Maike Koch, Joan Wolbier

Desktop editing and booklet layout: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, IITM

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The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are now available on high-quality audio cassettes, each packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

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Cover photo: Âşık Rahim Sağlam, 1992

Back cover: Meeting of âşık in the Âşık-Café  
in Kars, 1992