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**ТҮНДҮК МАКЕДОНИЯДАГЫ СТРУГА ХАЛВЕТИ ЛОЖАСЫ:
МУЗЫКА, ТИЛ ЖАНА ИДЕНТТҮҮЛҮК ӨҮТҮНӨН ДИНИЙ ПРАКТИКАЛАРЫНА ТАЛДОО**

**ЛОЖА СТРУГА ХАЛВЕТИ В СЕВЕРНОЙ МАКЕДОНИИ: АНАЛИЗ ЕЁ РЕЛИГИОЗНЫХ ПРАКТИК
С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ МУЗЫКИ, ЯЗЫКА И ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ**

**THE STRUGA HALVETİ LODGE IN NORTH MACEDONİA: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS RELİGİOUS PRACTİCES
İN TERMS OF MUSIC, LANGUAGE, AND IDENTİTY**

Abstract. The Balkans became a significant center of Turkish culture beginning in the 13th century with the settlement of Oghuz Turks migrating from Anatolia. The language, culture, religion, and music carried into the region by the Turks continue to be represented today. North Macedonia is one of the Balkan homelands where both Sunni and Bektashi interpretations of Turkish-Islamic tradition are present, and the relationship of these traditions with music remains a valuable source for musicological inquiry. The Halveti order, an Islamic Sufi order that emerged in Baku in the 14th century, spread across Anatolia and the Balkans. It later gained a following not only among the Turkish population but also among Muslim Albanians and Torbeš communities in cities such as Ohrid, Kičevo, and Struga. This study focuses specifically on the religious practices observed at the Struga Halveti Lodge, one of the active Halveti institutions in North Macedonia.

Religious music, which occupies a vast corpus within the broader framework of Turkish music, is categorized under separate headings based on its performance contexts in mosques and Sufi lodges. The musical structures accompanying the religious practices at the still-active Struga Halveti Lodge are examined and interpreted in relation to language, identity, ethnicity, and cultural interaction. The study further explores concepts such as the migration of music, claims of multiple identities, and performative ownership. It offers a comparative sociological analysis of Halvetism and Bektashism—seen here as differing interpretations of Turkish-Islamic traditions—particularly within the context of Macedonia, using categories such as urban and rural religious expression.

The findings and observations presented in this article are primarily based on data collected during fieldwork conducted in 2022.

Keywords: Turkishness in the Balkans, Halveti Order, Music, Bektashism, Religious Music

Аннотация. Бул макалада Түндүк Македониядагы Струга Халвети ложасынын диний практикалары музыка, тил жана иденттүүлүк өңүтүнөн изилденет. 13-кылымда Анадолудан келген огуз түрктөрү менен Түндүк Македония маанилүү түрк маданиятынын борборуна айланган. Халвети ордени, 14-кылымда Бакуда пайда болгон Ислам суфий тармагы, Анадолу жана Балкан өлкөлөрүнө, анын ичинде Түндүк Македониядагы мусулман албандар менен Торбеш жамааттарына тараган. Изилдөө Струга Халвети ложасында диний ырым-жырымдарды коштогон музыкалык түзүлүштөрдү тил, иденттүүлүк, этникалык жана маданий өз ара байланышта карайт. Ошондой эле музыканын миграциясы, бир нече иденттүүлүктүн талаптары жана аткаруучулук менчик сыяктуу түшүнүктөр изилденет. Макалада халветизм менен бекташизмдин салыштырмалуу социологиялык анализи сунушталып, Македониянын контекстинде шаардык жана айылдык диний билдируүлөр каралат. Бул макаладагы жыйынтыктар 2022-жылы жүргүзүлгөн талаа иштеринин материалдарына негизделген.

Негизги сөздөр: Балкандагы түрктүк, Халвети тартиби, музыка, бекташизм, диний музыка

Аннотация. Балканы стали важным центром турецкой культуры, начиная с XIII века, с поселением турок-огузов, переселившихся из Анатолии. Язык, культура, религия и музыка, принесенные турками в регион, сохраняются и сегодня. Северная Македония – одна из балканских родин, где представлены как суннитская, так и бекташская интерпретации турецко-исламской традиции, и связь этих традиций с музыкой остаётся ценным источником для музыковедческих исследований. Орден Халвети, исламский суфийский орден, возникший в Баку в XIV веке, распространился по всей Анатолии и Балканам. Позднее он приобрёл последователей не только среди турецкого населения, но и среди албанцев-мусульман и общин торбешей в таких городах, как Охрид, Кичево и Струга. Данное исследование посвящено религиозным практикам, соблюдаемым в ложе Халвети в Струге, одном из действующих институтов Халвети в Северной Македонии. Религиозная музыка, занимающая обширное пространство в более широком контексте турецкой музыки, классифицируется по отдельным рубрикам в зависимости от контекста её исполнения в мечетях и суфийских ложах. Музыкальные структуры, сопровождающие религиозные практики в всё ещё действующей ложе «Халвети» в Струге, рассматриваются и интерпретируются в контексте языка, идентичности, этнической принадлежности и культурного взаимодействия. В исследовании также рассматриваются такие концепции, как миграция музыки, претензии на множественную идентичность и исполнительское право собственности. В нём представлен сравнительный социологический анализ халветизма и бекташизма, рассматриваемых здесь как различные интерпретации турецко-исламских традиций, особенно в контексте Македонии, с использованием таких категорий, как городское и сельское религиозное самовыражение.

Выводы и наблюдения, представленные в данной статье, основаны преимущественно на данных, собранных в ходе полевых исследований, проведённых в 2022 году.

Ключевые слова: турецкость на Балканах, орден халвети, музыка, бекташизм, религиозная музыка

Introduction

The history of the Turks in the Balkans can be examined under two distinct categories. The first encompasses the groups such as the Huns, Bulgars, and Cumans who arrived in the region from north of the Black Sea starting from the 4th century (Togan, 2018, p. 213). These groups, who spread across the Danube basin and the Carpathians (Rasonji, 1971, p. 89), established notable administrative and cultural presences. However, both the Bulgars and Cumans gradually lost their languages and Turkish identities shortly after converting to different religions. As this study does not aim to identify or analyze the intangible cultural heritage elements of these early Turkic groups, this brief reference will suffice. The second group, and the one most relevant to the focus of this study, consists of the Oghuz Turks who migrated from Anatolia to the Balkans beginning in the 13th century. This Oghuz-Turkmen movement between the Balkans and Turkey continues to this day. These population movements have also facilitated a flow of cultural transmission. Since culture is a human act, it exists with human presence and moves with people. The Turkish culture in the

Balkans, therefore, is a component of the identity brought by these Turks. Among these cultural elements, music stands out as one of the most distinct.

Following the Battle of Manzikert, which opened the gates of Anatolia to the Oghuz Turks, the region witnessed the emergence of numerous religious and Sufi communities as well as charismatic leaders. Especially by the mid-13th century, the increasing mobility, the Babai Revolt and its suppression, the westward dispersion of its remnants, and the establishment of lodges by figures such as Haji Bektash Veli, followed by the activities of warrior dervishes like Sarı Saltuk in the Balkans, framed the settlement of Turks in the region within a religious context. In this regard, Sarı Saltuk is considered a pioneering figure. "Sarı Saltuk is a character from the second half of the 13th century whose name is associated with the entry of popular Islam into the Balkans and the Turkish settlement that formed its social base. His real life is deeply interwoven with legends and hagiographies" (Ocak, 2021, p. 7). Among these religious structures, the Bektashi Order has been the most influential both in Anatolia and the Balkans and continues to exist

today. One of the orders that spread from Anatolia to the Balkans is the Halveti Order.

This study constitutes one of the outcomes of a series of field research projects we have been conducting since 2022, focusing on Turkish music traditions in the Balkans. Supported by the Scientific Research Projects Unit of Bursa Uludağ University, this project involved comprehensive fieldwork. Concentrating on the role of music in the daily practices of the Turkish population that has lived in North Macedonia for centuries, the study explored a variety of musical contexts. It examined amateur and functional music-making in rural settings, as well as more professional and performance-focused musical practices in urban centers. Another focus was the performance of Turkish religious music in mosques and lodges that date back to the Ottoman period. The study employed methods such as literature review, snowball sampling interviews, participant observation, ethnographic mapping, and descriptive analysis. Interviews with members and representatives of Bektashi and Halveti lodges provided valuable insights into the current representation of Turkish religious music in North Macedonia. In this study, observation was the primary methodological tool for both data collection and interpretation. "Observation is the systematic and planned examination of phenomena, events, objects, or relationships involving individuals or groups through sensory perception in order to gather information or data" (Erol, 2024, p. 116). In addition to existing studies and netnographic data on the music of the region or population under study, direct participation in musical performances enabled the researcher to form new questions and interpretations based on personal knowledge and insight. These observational findings are discussed throughout the text and especially in the final section of the study.

The Halveti Order originated in Azerbaijan and the Bektashi Order in Anatolia, yet both reached the Balkans through migrations from Anatolia. Not only is Turkish the liturgical language of these orders, but the music accompanying their rituals is also categorized as Turkish music. However, one of the central questions of this study concerns what kinds of cultural outputs have emerged from the Turkish social life that developed through interaction with diverse ethnic groups, languages, and cultures in

the Balkans. Religious musical practices such as lullabies, children's songs, bridal and wedding songs, military songs, and laments—all of which we categorize as "private domain" music—are generally inward-facing and closed to external influence. Cultural barriers such as language and religion are among the primary factors that construct this enclosed and inward-facing structure. Language differences are one of the major obstacles preventing communication between different groups residing in the same town or village outside of obligatory and professional domains. Although such barriers may temporarily dissolve in contexts such as trade, government service, or military duties, these instances of interaction do not represent the general societal dynamic. Religion is another significant barrier because religious practices are inward-oriented and largely closed to external observation. Therefore, the musical structures embedded in religious practices tend to crystallize within small, insular circles. In communities where both language and religion serve as barriers, interactions typically remain superficial and limited.

The Halveti Order

The Halvetiyya was established in the 14th century and, through its various branches, became widespread across a broad geographical area. "The Halvetiyya order was founded and developed in Azerbaijan and from there spread to Anatolia, and subsequently to the Balkans, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Sudan, Abyssinia, and South Asia" (Uludağ, 1997, Vol. 16, p. 394). Among the pioneering religious structures that spread to the Balkans via Turkish migrations, the Bektashi Order stands out. Numerous Bektashi lodges were founded in countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia. North Macedonia, in particular, remains one of the prominent regions where Bektashism continues to exist actively. Compared to Bektashism, the Halveti Order spread and gained acceptance in this region at a later time. "During this period, alongside the highly active Halveti and Celveti orders, other Sufi orders also began to expand throughout the Balkans. In his *Seyahatname*, Evliya Çelebi states that by the mid-17th century, these orders had established an active presence in nearly all urban centers of the Balkans" (Aydinçe, 2015, p. 79).

Over time, the order split into various sub-branches. In the Balkans, charismatic lead-

ers who migrated helped establish sub-orders such as Sinaniyya, Karabashiyya, and Hayatiyya. "In Macedonia, the most widespread branch of the Halvetiyya is the Hayatiyya, a sub-branch of the Ramazaniyya branch of Ahmediyya. The Hayatiyya Lodge founded by Mehmet Hayati Efendi in Ohrid serves as the central lodge (*asitané*) of this order. The lodges in Struga, Kičevo, Çulli Baba, Sheikh Selim, and the Upper Neighborhood of Štip are all affiliated with the Ohrid lodge" (Türk, 2015, p. 440).

Turkish Religious Music

Music holds a central role in the practices of many religious orders that include or are represented by Turks. "In the Halvetiyya order, each *murid* (disciple) recites daily personal *zîkr* (remembrance), prayers, and *vird* (devotional formulas), which vary according to the days of the week. Special importance is given to the recitation of Yahyâ al-Shirvânî's *Virdü's-Settâr*. In addition, collective *zîkr* performed aloud (*ceh-rî*) in lodges on specific days of the week is referred to by names such as *darb-ı esmâ*, *devran*, and *hadra*. Hymns (*ilahis*) are recited during the *devran*. Disciples form a circle sitting down, then continue the *zîkr* while standing, and eventually begin rotating movements. Music is emphasized during the *zîkr*, with instruments such as the *ney*, *kudüm*, and *def* being used" (Uludağ, 1997, Vol. 16, p. 394).

In Turkey, lodges are generally integrated with urban musical culture and are predominantly found in cities considered cultural centers such as Istanbul, Bursa, and Konya. All Turkish communities in North Macedonia are Muslim, and the majority are Sunni today. Notable centers of the Halveti tradition include the Rifa'i lodge in Skopje and Halveti lodges in Ohrid, Kičevo, and Struga. Additionally, although Bektashism can today only be observed in limited contexts, it continues to leave significant marks and maintain a degree of symbolic representation among the Balkan Turks. Particularly, Sarı Saltuk—a legendary figure and a Bektashi *baba*—along with other Turkmen *babas* who arrived in the Balkans following the Babai Revolt in the 13th century, have left a deep spiritual imprint on the religious worldview of Balkan Turks, especially those in Macedonia.

The use of music in Islamic rituals is significant enough to define religious music as an independent field of study. Given that music is a

cultural phenomenon, the religious, social, ceremonial, functional, and artistic aspects of music must also be evaluated within the musical system of the respective culture. When considering Muslim cultures such as Arab, Persian, and Indian, it becomes evident that their religious musical practices reflect their own national musical textures. The Turks, the majority of whom are Muslim, have likewise developed a sound organization that can be studied under the framework of Turkish music within their religious practices. This musical corpus has over time formed a substantial sub-discipline and continues to be the subject of numerous musicological studies. Turkish religious music encompasses distinct repertoires within both art and folk music traditions. Although terms like *ilahi* and *Sufi music* conceptually evoke art music for many in Turkish society, in practice, terms such as religious music, Sufi music, mystical music, and *ilahi* include all musical expressions that deal with religious themes. The musical practices in Bektashi lodges—both in Turkey and the Balkans—are textually derived from *âşık* (minstrel) poetry. Melodically, they are heavily influenced by folk music motifs, although being embedded in an urban and organized setting occasionally reflects on the performance and repertoire. The Dikmen Baba Lodge in Kanatlar Village, which remains active today, is one of the most vibrant sites for observing Bektashi music and rituals in the Balkans.

When considered as a subgenre of Turkish art music, religious music—or *religious musiki*, as it is traditionally termed—is generally categorized into two branches: mosque music and lodge music. "Mosque music consists of vocal performances that emerge during and around prayer times, often involving improvised (non-composed) melodic expressions. Forms of mosque music include the *ezan* (call to prayer), prayers and recitations before the *iqama*, the recitation during congregational prayer, and post-prayer litanies and supplications recited by the *muez-zin*. Additional forms associated with mosque music, though performed at various times and places, include *temcid*, *salat*, *munajat*, *takbir*, *salat-ı ümmiye*, *mawlid*, *mi'rajiyye*, *Muhammad-iyye*, *tevşih*, *naat*, and Ramadan hymns" (Özcan, 1992, pp. 2–3, 10–11).

For centuries, prayers have been performed with music in mosques. Through repetition, vari-

ation among *muezzins* and *imams*, and the prosodic influence of the recited text, a vast mosque music repertoire has developed over time. One function of this practice is to increase the auditory appeal and emotional impact of the text, preventing it from sounding monotonous or tedious. In this context, the functionality of music lies in its effect on the listener, its capacity to facilitate memorization of standardized texts, and its broader didactic value. While religious music has acquired an artistic dimension over time, it continues to retain its functional aspects today. Even when examined solely within the framework of Turkish music, it is evident that numerous subgenres have emerged, forming a vast and multifaceted musical corpus that can be analyzed within both folk and classical traditions. "These performances may resemble vocal artistry. Performing the mosque repertoire in aesthetically pleasing and culturally meaningful *makams* (modes) with a beautiful and resonant voice has been considered valuable—even essential—for the communication of Islamic teachings. Stories of people converting to Islam solely after being moved by the *ezan* are frequently retold in Turkish society" (Özdemir, 2021, p. 68).

Another branch of Turkish religious music is lodge music. "Lodge music refers to the rhythmic and often instrumentally accompanied musical elements performed during the *zikr* rituals of vocal Sufi orders (*cehrî tarîkats*). Its forms include the *Mevlevî ayin*, *mersiye*, *kaside*, *ism-i celâl*, *durak*, *şugul*, *savt*, and *nefes*. The forms *naat* and *ilahi* are common to both mosque and lodge music, indicating an overlap between the two traditions. However, whereas *ilahi* in the lodge setting may be accompanied by musical instruments, this is not permitted in mosque practice" (Özcan, 2001, pp. 384–385).

The Struga Halveti Lodge: Religious Practices, Language, and Music

As part of our field research on the musical traditions of Turks in North Macedonia, a significant portion of our work in the domain of religious music was dedicated to observing musical practices accompanying religious rituals at the Halveti Lodge in Struga. Our visit coincided with the 10th day of Muharram, known as Ashura Day, commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali at Karbala. The fact that our visit occurred both on a Friday and on Ashura provided us with a unique opportunity to observe significant religious practices.

"Hasan Baba founded his lodge in 1770 in Ustruga with the permission of Sheikh Osman Efendi, the *Asitane* Sheikh. After his death, Kadri Efendi, who was not a sheikh, continued the service as *Sheikhzade*. He was succeeded by Sheikh Arif Efendi, Sheikh Rifat Efendi, Vice Sheikh Mustafa Efendi, Vice Sheikh Kemal Efendi, and again Sheikh Arif Efendi. Today, the Hayati branch is continued at the Hasan Baba Lodge by Sheikh İlhan Efendi, the son of Sheikh Arif Efendi" (Aydinçe, 2015, p. 89). The lodge remains active to this day. The building, which also functions as a mosque where the daily prayers (*salat*) are performed, holds great significance for the Muslim community in the region. "The lodge we are in was built in the 1770s by Hasan ibn Feyzullah. He came here from Konya, Karaman, as a soldier. After settling here, he received spiritual guidance and became a disciple of Pir Mehmet Hayati at the Ohrid lodge. Since Pir Mehmet Hayati had already passed away, Hasan Baba received his *ijazah* (authorization) from his son-in-law, Sheikh Osman Efendi, and established this lodge in 1770. Our lodge has been active ever since, and the spiritual lineage has been preserved. After Hasan Baba came his son, and then his grandson, eventually reaching me. Before me, my father, Sheikh Alim Efendi, and his father, Sheikh Kemal Efendi, along with his uncle Mustafa Efendi, managed the Ohrid lodge" (Şeyh, Interview, 2022).

As is customary throughout the Islamic world, the daily prayers at the lodge are conducted in Arabic, including the recitation of verses and supplications. However, the dominant language used in the lodge outside of formal prayers is Turkish. "... Turkish has historically been the language of culture and civilization in the Balkans. Moreover, it has played a significant role in the religious culture of the region" (Sezikli, 2023, p. 329). Sheikh İlhan Efendi, the lodge's current spiritual leader, mentioned that he also knows Macedonian and Albanian and that prayers can be performed in these languages when needed. Although members of the congregation include speakers of these languages, Turkish remains the primary language used in rituals. The use of other languages is rare and reserved for exceptional circumstances. "In general, we can say that the language of our *zikr* is Turkish. However, during informal gatherings, while performing spontaneous devotional practices, we some-

times use the *def* (frame drum) and recite hymns in Albanian, Bosnian, or Arabic. This is because our congregation is diverse—there are Turks, Albanians, and Torbeši. It should be noted that our lodge is open to everyone. Some come because they love the lodge, and others come just to perform their prayers and leave without participating in the *zikr*” (Şeyh, Interview, 2022).

The term *cehrî zikr* refers to the loud and melodic recitation of sacred texts during remembrance rituals. These recitations are almost always performed with melodies, and rhythmic elements accompanying the melodies help regulate the communal participation and bodily movements within the *zikr* practice. The religious melodies we recorded ourselves or accessed via social media recordings posted by others remain largely within the stylistic norms of Turkish religious music. Elements such as modal structure (*makam*), melodic progression (*seyir*), rhythm (*usûl*), and prosody align closely with the traditional structures of Turkish religious music observed in Turkey. The melodies performed during the *ezan*, *salâ*, and *mawlid* ceremonies at the Halveti Lodge in Struga frequently employ *makams* such as *Uşşak*, *Hüseynî*, *Nihavend*, *Rast*, and *Hicaz*—mirroring examples from Turkish mosque and lodge repertoires. Considering that all religious leaders of the lodge, and most of its followers, have been ethnically Turkish since its founding—and that physical contact with Turkey has remained uninterrupted, particularly with modern communication technologies—this continuity is unsurprising. Although Albanians and Torbeši who have converted to Islam and attend the lodge may occasionally request hymns in their own languages, these instances have not fundamentally altered the linguistic and musical foundations of the rituals. Nevertheless, further research with a stronger focus on cultural interaction would provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Sheikh İlhan Efendi, who currently serves as the imam of the Struga Halveti Lodge, granted us full permission to record all religious practices and also shared firsthand information regarding the musical aspects of their rituals. His accounts are presented below in his own words:

“My name is İlhan Sheikh. I was born in 1966 in Ohrid. I completed my nine-year basic education in Turkish in Ohrid. I graduated from the Gazi Husrev-Beg Madrasa in Sarajevo and also earned

a degree from the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo. Between 1993 and 1997, I served as an imam in Ohrid. Since 1997, I have been serving as the imam of the Halveti Hayati Hasan Baba Lodge.”

About Zikr

“Our zikrs are performed melodically. During the recitation of the name of Allah, ilahis (hymns) are also sung. These ilahis are performed in Turkish but with our local dialect. We sing hymns based on the poems of Ashiq Yunus, Yunus Emre, and Niyazi Misri, again in our local accent. Overall, we can say that Turkish is the primary language of our zikr.”

About Zakirân – Ilahi

“I give the cues for when to begin. These signals are not specifically for the ilahi, but to ensure that the rhythm and zikr are synchronized. We usually preselect about five ilahis for each Friday within a given month. We sing them in order. Even if someone who knows the hymns doesn’t show up, we never lack someone who can recite them. If nobody knows them by heart, we find someone who reads and performs them from a text.”

About Mawlid

*“The mawlid is recited at our lodge, particularly during the month of Rabi’ al-awwal. However, we follow a specific sequence: it is first recited at the asitane in Ohrid on the 12th night, followed by other lodges. In our lodge, the mawlid is recited on the first Friday night following the 12th of Rabi’ al-awwal. We recite the birth, greeting (*merhaba*), and ascension (*mi’rac*) sections from Süleyman Çelebi’s well-known Mawlid. While the reciter begins with “Allah’s name...,” the congregation does not remain passive; they respond by repeatedly chanting ‘Allah, Allah’ during the recitation.” (Şeyh, Interview, 2022).*

Results and Discussion

The Turkish presence in the Balkans has maintained an uninterrupted cultural and demographic connection with Anatolia. Since the 13th and 14th centuries, when large-scale migrations began, this relationship has never been severed. Culture, language, religion, and specifically music—our focus in this study—are the fundamental elements of this continuity. With the arrival of Bektashi dervishes in the Balkans, this movement is considered not only a demographic shift but also a spiritual and religious one. In countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and Kosovo, Sunni struc-

tures that emerged relatively later paralleled the development of religious institutions in Ottoman Anatolia.

This comparative framework has allowed us to evaluate information we also collected on Balkan Bektashism as part of the same fieldwork. While Bektashi lodges originally represented an urban religious tradition, over time—especially in the Balkans—they became associated with a more rural sociocultural environment. Examples of this include the Dikmen Baba Lodge in the village of Kanatlar (North Macedonia) and the *Cem Evi* in the village of Söğütçük in the Deliorman region of Bulgaria. The music performed during religious ceremonies in these rural Bektashi centers tends to align with the characteristics of Turkish folk music. Similarly, in contemporary Turkey, Alevi *Cem Evis* located in rural areas reflect this structure. Even though urban migration has led to the establishment of *Cem Evis* in metropolitan centers, their musical practices remain grounded in folk traditions.

In contrast, the Sufi orders and Sunni associations that formed after Bektashism in the Balkans—just as in Turkey—retain a distinctly urban character. Examples of this include the Rifa'i Lodge in Skopje, the Halveti *Asitane* in Ohrid, and the Struga Halveti Lodge, which is the specific focus of this study. These institutions exemplify urban religious structures not only through their locations and ritual practices but also through their musical frameworks. The Harabati Baba Bektashi Lodge in Tetovo (North Macedonia) still represents the pre-19th-century institutional form of Bektashism, both physically and spiritually. However, compared to the aforementioned rural Bektashi lodges, its presence today is more symbolic than functional. The relatively stable population structure in rural areas, contrasted with the constant demographic shifts of urban centers, contributes significantly to the sustainability of cultural traditions rooted in community-based transmission.

Another useful point of comparison between these two religious structures in Macedonia involves the musical instruments used in rituals. As observed from the accounts of Sheikh İlhan Efendi, the Halveti Lodge gives preference to instruments such as the *def* (frame drum) and *ney* (reed flute), despite a shortage of qualified performers. In contrast, the Bağlama (long-necked lute) was reported to be the main accom-

panying instrument at the Kanatlar Bektashi Lodge, although we did not directly observe a performance during our visit. This distinction in instrumental usage reflects a broader difference in musical texture that can be generalized as urban versus rural—a distinction that also applies to Alevi and Sunni structures in Turkey.

Another critical issue to be addressed is the matter of language. As previously noted, the dominant language of *zikr* in the lodge is Turkish. One of the strongest indicators of this continuity is the usage of hymns based on the poems of mystic poets such as Ashiq Yunus, Yunus Emre, and Niyazi Misri—figures who are foundational to Anatolian Turkish Sufism. The recitation of their works not only demonstrates linguistic continuity but also reflects a shared literary and spiritual sensibility. These shared aesthetic and musical values can be considered some of the strongest cultural links connecting communities of the same ethnic origin across geographically distinct regions. These poets serve as common textual sources for both Alevi and Sunni traditions in Turkey and the Balkans. Thus, even though musical and performative frameworks differ—classified as folk versus art music, or rural versus urban—the verbal content and literary canon remain largely consistent.

When discussing Turkish culture in the Balkans, terms such as “Turkification” are often employed; however, the precise meaning of such terms can sometimes be ambiguous. “The Turkification of both Anatolia and the Balkans refers primarily to the mass migration of Oghuz tribes as a result of military and sociopolitical developments. It should be used in this sense, rather than implying a large-scale ethnic transformation or assimilation. Claims of non-Turkic groups becoming ‘Turkic’ in a historically definitive manner are difficult to support based on available historical sources” (Özdemir, 2023, p. 129). Non-Turkish groups in the Balkans who adopted Islam did not generally take on a Turkish identity. For instance, Albanians retained their ethnic identity after conversion, while groups such as the Torbeşi became identified as a separate Muslim ethnic entity. A similar case is observed with the Pomaks in Bulgaria.

Although Arabic remains the liturgical language of essential Islamic rites such as the call to prayer (*ezan*), the prayer itself (*salat*), and other canonical elements, many other religious

practices—such as hymns (*ilahi*), spiritual songs (*nefes*), and *mawlid* ceremonies—are conducted in Turkish. This has undoubtedly brought non-Turkish Muslims closer to the Turkish language, at least in liturgical contexts. However, this proximity does not necessarily indicate

the existence of a comprehensive Turkification process in an ethnic or linguistic sense. In fact, Sheikh İlhan Efendi's own statement—that hymns are sometimes performed in the languages of the Albanian and Torbeşi congregants—underscores the limitations of such a claim.

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