

ANATOLIAN POP MUSIC: 'RURBAN' IMAGES OF A PERIOD

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1.

Introduction

Anatolian pop seems like a 'local' Turkish phenomenon but has recently joined the ranks of globalizing tendencies of pop music, inspiring musicians and listeners throughout the world. Like any other form of music, it needs to be seen in a wider perspective that encompasses discourses of national identity (or even nationalism), globalization, politics, and social change. And never is pop music, like any type of music, truly 'local' as it always links various traditions: from times present and past, places near and afar, and from a variety of musical styles. Using music from the hinterlands of Turkey and subsequently becoming a mainstream form of Turkish popular music, Anatolian pop is only one of many such musical scenes that have emerged in one particular locality and historical setting but carry within them, at least partly and by adaptation, the sounds, the longings and the looks of other geographical and temporal settings. Music is always a mixture and a blending of diverse contents. Anatolian pop, for that matter, has been defined recently in the context of Turkish music (Gedik 2018), in a political context (Ramm 2020) and in a polycultural, transnational context (Lund 2026/2020), which in their combination bring together European, Mediterranean, Arabic, Balkan, and other post-Ottoman 'musicscapes' (following up on Appadurai 1996).

For this article, we would like to set out a perspective for the analysis of Anatolian pop that seeks to combine the temporal, spatial, and cultural references of this form of musical expression with an approach from the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim 1936; Bohnsack 2011). We will focus on pictorial documents that have been used to package and promote this genre of music in a particular period, mainly the 1970s. As we will show, this decade has been crucial for the development of Turkish pop music, and of Turkey, in more ways than one. What had started from the mid-1960s onward as "a time of unprecedented radicalization, artistic experimentation, internationalism, and youthful disaffection" (Sharpe 2018: 168) in Turkey and elsewhere, rubbed off on subsequent decades and still lingers on in collective memory: partly suppressed, especially after the 1980 military coup. In this way, we seek to write a "micro-history" based on materials that reflect particular spatio-temporally grounded practices (see Freist 2015).

The perspective taken by the authors refers not only to the music as such, but centrally to three sets of imagery and their inherent imaginations which are inextricably linked with Anatolian pop: a) a rural imagery; b) an urban imagery; and c) a mixed rural-urban imagery that we would like to call 'rurban.' All these imaginations are documented by way of record sleeves and in music magazines and thereby accompany the music that they package, adorn, and promote. Our objective is to analyze the habitus that is inherent, or incorporated, in these pop musical images and, in a larger context, suffused Turkish society at the time.

2. Documents of a Period: Methodological Considerations

Outside of live performances, popular music is handed down and distributed in the form of documents: records (shellac, vinyl, and compact discs), tape cassettes, data files, sheet music, or in the form of filmic recordings. All of these are packaged and promoted, in one way or another, and more often than not carry images as well: on record sleeves, promotional posters and billboards, in adverts, and by way of pictures in popular magazines. People like to listen to music, but at the same time like to look at the musicians and imagine their performances. Therefore, what is handed down as pop musical records is not just records in the conventional meaning of the word, i.e., discs that contain two or more tracks and present them in a more or less coherent and meaningful way as a marketable commodity (single or album) with a distinct title, but equally a 'record' in the sense of preserving information for posterity.

A pop record usually has a sleeve artwork that is inextricably linked with the disc or cassette. It is meant to capture the essence of the work to be marketed and consumed (see Elster 2021: 80–81; Machin 2010: 32–76). As material bundles that contain both sonic, visual, and textual content, i.e., music, pictures, and accompanying metatexts such as liner notes or lyrics, pop records can be seen as complex works of art, even if they might have been created for the purpose of generating profit by selling a multitude of copies. Pop music and its adorning imagery is not free art—it is a commercial endeavor and therefore at times underestimated. And yet, like any piece of art, pop records and their accompanying images seem to capture the mood of their contemporaneity and allow for a reimagining of possible courses of history, or contingencies. They are of the day and for the day, but at the same time, their contents being fixed for posterity, records and their sleeves transport messages to the future in which they can eventually be dug up as records of the past. The question posed by Mark Greif, "How should it really ever be possible for pop music to incarnate a particular historical situation?" (Greif 2016: 100), remains valid and will infuse this article throughout. In what ways do records, and especially their pictorial cover artworks and other related pictures, convey what was happening in a particular period in a particular place?

From the wider perspective of the sociology of knowledge, pop records may indeed be read as documents or texts of their own process of formation at a specific historic or social juncture. Following up on the general approach of Ralf Bohnsack's (2011) documentary method, which is modelled after Karl Mannheim's (1936) concept of the sociology of knowledge and art historian Erwin Panofsky's (1955) iconographical-iconological method of interpretation, it can be posited that human-made artifacts reflect the cultural moods, practices, and orders of power that had been suffusing a society at a given moment in time: ideas, ideologies, discourses, topics, design and gadgetry trends, depicted or described behaviors, fears, hopes, and utopias, or the conspicuous lack of such mentions and referencing. We find such figments

in literature, in art, in fashion, but also in music, one could surmise—a cultural phenomenon usually not regarded as overtly political in the strictest sense of the word, but easily identifiable, from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, as an embodiment of political statements. Such documents are the results of socially more or less conscious acts of constructing what is to be: “When the imagination finds no satisfaction in existing reality, it seeks refuge in wishfully constructed places and periods” (Mannheim 1936: 236).

The sociology of knowledge attempts to address and encompass the whole of ideological production in the cultural sphere together with its historical interactions and cross-pollinations, as it were, in order to derive meaning from, and to interpret, change processes in society (see Kettler/Meja 1999: 300). It is these “situationally transcendent ideas” (Mannheim 1936: 237) that this article seeks to analyze, well aware of the fact “that in certain historical periods wish-fulfilment takes place through projection into time while, in others, it proceeds through projection into space” (ibid.).

As the aim of this article is to point out and scrutinize documents of a period, i.e., works of pop music and their accompanying images, and how they envision the future of a society, it will be important to remind ourselves of the fact that their elements of meaning—musical properties, lyrics, storylines, pictures, sleeve artwork, etc.—are not necessarily out in the open (although they seem to be). Rather, they are woven into the documents, and we therefore need to understand them as more or less covert manifestations of “underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion [...] condensed into one work” (Panofsky 1955: 30). Panofsky calls these elements that contain such a particular essence, referencing Ernst Cassirer, “symbolical” values, that is, “as a symptom of something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms” and “which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express” (ibid.: 31). It is in that “something else” that a new or redefined worldview appears. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, therefore, it is the researcher’s task to “determine when and where the world presented itself in such, and only in such a light to the subject that made the assertion, and the analysis may frequently be carried to the point where the more inclusive question may be answered, *why* the world presented itself in precisely such a manner” (Mannheim 1936: 296).

Taking up this cue, this article will analyze pop music records and their sleeve artworks as documents of the essence of the worldview of the document’s producers in the first place. A record is where the latter’s social milieu, and the ideas and constraints of the epoch in which production took place, condense into one artifact. Pop music records, as it were, seem to capture the formative context in which they were created though it is at times difficult to pin down what exactly has been captured, or how. Often this only becomes clear in retrospect by way of a reconstruction:

when revisiting these records years or even decades after their release. The order that then reveals itself in hindsight is compatible with the concept of habitus that Pierre Bourdieu elaborated in partial recourse to, *inter alia*, Mannheim and Panofsky. Habitus is to be understood as the structural and framework conditions of particular actors, and their actions, in society (Bourdieu 1989: 169–174; Bohnsack 2011: 30–33). Society inscribes itself in the habitus, and also by way of this habitus, with all its mostly unconscious and often unquestioned patterns of behavior and evaluation: habitus is a form of embodied social dispositions (Bourdieu/Wacquant 2013: 160; Bourdieu 1989: 467) which appears as both the producer and product “of a *modus operandi* that is based on atheoretical knowledge [...] of *incorporated*—so to speak: *automated*—practical action” (Bohnsack 2018: 207, original emphasis). This *modus operandi* needs to be excavated, extricated, and explicated, akin to the work of an archaeologist, but by employing reconstructive methods of the social sciences instead.

The implicit, atheoretical knowledge of a specific socio-cultural context that guided the document’s producers in their stages of producing, mostly without being aware of it, needs to be identified in the actions that are observable in the document. How exactly have things been arranged, for example, and what motivated this particular choice of arrangement? These actions are no discrete, singular, or individual happenstances, but rather steeped or embedded, as exemplars of an apparent social normalcy of ‘know-how,’ in practices based on a wider, socially agreed, and implicit knowledge that results in a typified, routinised and socially ‘comprehensible’ bundle of activities (Reckwitz 2003: 289). This is where the afore-mentioned habitus, or framework of orientation, is encapsulated. Being grounded in the sociology of knowledge allows researchers to capture and analyze the documents’ habitus and their meanings in and for society in particular historical contexts, and thereby to explicate culture’s implicit frames of orientation, for example by identifying supratemporal narrative patterns that might be contained in pop records and their sleeve artwork.

The sample for our documentary analysis consists of a number of Turkish records and their sleeves, released in the 1970s, from the authors’ personal collections and further substantiated through systematic online research on *discogs.com*, a record collectors’ forum, social networking site, and marketplace (see *discogs.com* 2021), plus articles and their photographic illustrations culled from a rather complete 1970s sample of Turkish weekly pop-culture magazine *Hey*, which existed between 1970 and 1994 and was essential for the formation of Turkish popular culture, Anatolian pop, and the musicscape linked to it (Oğuz 2013; Baysal 2018), and other archival materials available. In order to investigate the visual and discursive links between Anatolian pop music and other cultural artifacts, this sample is adorned by references to Turkish movie posters pertaining to the subgenre of the aptly named *kostüme avantür* [costumed adventure] films of the period.

Extensively collected in the book *5555 Afişle Türk Sineması* (İnanoğlu 2004), we'll use these as an historical starting point for our analysis. Findings presented in this article will by necessity be exploratory and at times sketchy; they are, however, meant to be the starting point for a larger analysis of Turkish pop culture and its political, social, and cultural implications that the authors are preparing.

3. Costumed Adventure in a 'Turkey in Turmoil'

A suitable point of departure for reconstructing Anatolian pop's embedment in Turkish culture is an analysis of its visual appearance: the way the musicians looked, how they staged themselves stylistically, and the costumes they wore—all of them striking features of this scene even in hindsight. In order to understand why the pop artists looked the way they did in the 1970s, it will be necessary first to look at the visual role models Turkish popular culture provided, most notably the country's film industry. Arguably, Anatolian pop music was a costumed adventure of sorts, and its visuals had their roots in vernacular movies, many of them now regarded as classics—quite like many of the musical acts this article focuses on. Popular cultural images of a particular period can indeed carry similar characteristics or borrow some features from one another. It may even transform some constituent elements of one cultural form into another, only then to recombine them in a seemingly new popular cultural genre or field as more or less unconsciously referenced resources of cultural knowledge. Thus, it is possible to pinpoint the traces of visual pastiche of Turkish *kostüme avantür* movies of the 1960s in the fashion preferences of Anatolian pop performers of the 1970s, which in turn relates a story about Turkish society undergoing phases of dramatic change at a key period of its recent history.

The transition from the 1960s to the 1970s has been complicated at so many interrelated levels: changing social dynamics, increasingly polarizing and radicalizing political scenes, youth movements, pressing economic growth issues, as well as unplanned urbanization leading to an increase in peripheral areas around big cities, many of them informal *gecekondu* [put up overnight] settlements, among other social developments. The reflection of this "Turkey in Turmoil" (Pekesen 2020) period has led to often conflicted but equally interwoven phenomena to be seen in popular cultural production particularly. Coincidentally, the release of the very first *kostüme avantür* movie can be traced back to 1965, a pivotal year in the development of Turkish popular culture. The movie in question is *Horasanın Üç Atlısı* [The Three Horsemen of Horasan] starring Cüneyt Arkın, literally the 'poster boy' of the genre (fig. 1), and takes over the key visual codes of the Turkish heroic comic book characters of the period (see Cantek 2012).

It was followed by the influential movie *Karaoğlan: Altay'dan Gelen Yiğit* [Karaoğlan: The Valiant from Altai], released the same year featuring lead actor Kartal Tibet, who was also known as an action film hero during this period (fig 2).

According to Özön (1990), *kostüme avantür* films, as a subgenre of historical movies, can be distinguished by their costume-focused adventurist characteristics that enable wishful reimaginings of glorified moments of Turkish history. To this day, this sentiment, as incorporated practical action (see Bohnsack 2018: 207), seems to be a modus operandi of the local film industry inclined to re-enact past events of national heroism, supremacy, and glory.

In the now classic Yeşilçam [Green Pine] era of the Turkish movie industry, a total of 63 of such costumed adventure movies have been produced between 1965 and 1982 (Özgüç 1998). One of the common features of these movies is that they are always set in rural outdoor areas (see İri 2001). Since the bulk of these movies were shot in the 1960s and 1970s, it is possible to interpret this period's focus on rurality as a reflection of the contemporary popular cultural climate. The cinematic imagery instigated in the mid-1960s would later be reflected in the visual styles of Turkish popular music, although this needs to be seen in a wider, global context as well. Similar types of rural as well as flamboyant dressing were popular across the world after the mid-1960s, at the height of psychedelia and the hippie movement, but in Turkey this flaring up of colors and garment arguably reflected a country similarly flaring up politically and socially.

What is palpable in Turkey at the time is a tension between leftist and rightist political factions and their desire to reclaim their ties with the population living in rural areas and small cities. This was accompanied by a will to reclaim nationalism either in its Kemalist, socialist, or Turanist forms—dividing forces in Turkish politics indeed. According to Hava and Yıldırım (2016), the reasons behind returning to what is believed to be 'the Turkish values' in this period are manifold. In the 1960s, the large waves of migration from rural areas to industrialized towns and cities mostly in the west of the country intensified



Fig. 1: Movie poster *Horasanın Üç Atlısı*, dir. Tunç Başaran, Turkey: Artist Film, 1965, color (source: İnanoğlu 2004: 247).



Fig. 2: Movie poster *Karaoğlan: Altay'dan Gelen Yiğit*, dir. Suat Yalaz, Turkey: Olcay Prodüksiyon, 1965, color (source: İnanoğlu 2004: 252).

competition for jobs among people, which led to unemployment and poverty. The political, economic, and social contexts of this period also had determining effects on cultural and intellectual production. Those who were employed started to seek their social rights and formed labor unions and corresponding political parties. The youth, university students in particular, demanded a more liberal and democratic environment free from any repression, and they protested against imperialism and what they felt was a too strong American influence. In much of Turkish society, the impoverished living conditions in many rural areas and the manifold problems resulting from this situation were attributed to 'the West,' especially the loss of jobs due to the industrialization of agriculture as part of the Marshall Plan policy; therefore, adhering to Turkish values and traditions was regarded as most essential, and a recourse to nationalism was thought to be the solution (ibid.: 24).

Such distinct political and ideological stances, as well as attempts to fuse them in a kind of melting pot, were most prominently reflected in the output of Turkish popular culture including the movie and music industries of the 1960s and 1970s. Their images accompanied the decisive shift in pop-musical traditions as artifacts of the political, economic, and cultural dynamics of this era of social transformation. Illustrative of this incorporated social practice is the fact that, as a unique genre of the Yeşilçam cinema, *kostüme avantür* movies emerged in the second half of the 1960s and largely lasted until the end of 1970s (Karadoğan 2001: 69). The socio-political context of that decade with all its nationalist discourses gaining ground enabled this filmic genre to become popular. The storylines of these movies relying on national-historical narratives, myths, and motifs were met by an increased public interest while populist discourse and filmic imagery were overlapping in the daily lives of the people as part of the then hegemonic culture. The physical locations of these films were dungeons, castles, palaces, city walls, and rural areas in general, i.e., 'historically' constructed and 'historical' provincial sites.

Against this background, the imagery and iconography of the *kostüme avantür* movies highlight the genre's drastic difference from earlier 'historical' Turkish film productions. The history that is visually represented in these movies is not consistent, this being most obvious in the objects, costumes, and props that reference time periods. In a similar vein, a mix of historically well recorded events and characters, but from different eras, as well as from different geographies and regions, and even from different communities and nations, form part of the storylines of these films. This kind of irrationality, i.e., elements that don't really match, is one of the essential and constituting elements of *kostüme avantür* (Karadoğan 2001: 82). Its main characters and plots can indeed be traced back to comic books of the 1950s, especially in the depiction of male heroes, such as Karaoğlan, Battal Gazi, Tarkan, Köroğlu, Malkoçoğlu, and other characters that are household names in Turkey—cartoon characters that derive from Turkic mythological figures and stories.

In this unique film genre, the main character is always a male warrior who works and fights alone, who is a skilled horse rider, who either saves women or is god's gift to women with a well-built body, always smart, morally intact, dedicated to a cause and who can thus not settle in. But at the same time, the hero is not autonomous, he just follows the orders of either the sultan or another figure of authority. That said, he is a proud man, he respects authority but keeps being bull-headed nevertheless.

Obviously, the cultural scene at the time needed a taken-for-granted common hero to reconstruct the hegemonic discourses prevalent in Turkey at the time. Needless to say, that absurd historical hero, a mixture of different characters and as such an unquestionable representative form, never existed. It may be posited here that such cartoonish characters were created to fill a gap in popular culture and imagination as the political and ideological currents were in favor of them. They were needed in order to repair the broken male ego of the period, especially in terms of the damaged post-Ottoman national identity and Turkey's diminishing role in international politics.

This is also evident in the way female characters were inserted into the narrative—indeed, more attached to the story than really included. There is an enormous difference between how 'good' and 'bad' Turkish and foreign women are represented in these movies, both via the narrative constructs and the visual imagery as well. The importance of such visual representations of these characters is that it seems to be resonating well with the popular imagery of Turkish musicians of that period, particularly the ones whose musical style was aligned with Anatolian rock, pop, or later with arabesque rock, who wore clothes looking similar to the ones used in costumed adventure movies released just a few years earlier. Therefore, one can argue that what was explicitly and implicitly staged in Turkey at the time can be called the *performative rural image*, a place of fanciful imagination and reimagination. It was to become a key element of *Anadolu pop* and its visual representation and was made possible by the fact that the vast majority of key musical performers lived in the large cities and had no rural backgrounds.

4. Analyses of Anatolian Pop Images

4.1. Anatolian Pop and the Concept of 'Rurbanity'

In order to further analyze the *performative rural image* outlined above, we would like to shed some more light on the question how Anatolian pop is connected to rurality and urbanity. As mentioned earlier, Turkey underwent tremendous social transformations from the 1950s onward and throughout the ensuing decades, not least in terms of population patterns. If we look at the statistics of that period, there was a changing balance between the density of rural and urban populations. This ratio increased dramatically between 1965 and 1970 (İşik 2005: 60). However, a larger percentage of the population was still living in the rural areas of eastern Anatolia then. Thus, most Turks at the time were a far cry away from the hotspots of cosmopolitanism and globalization, and culturally speaking, Turkey largely seemed preoccupied with cozier, glorified versions of itself.

Despite this general proneness to navel-gazing, it was still not a widespread practice for urban Turkish musicians to sing in their native language in the early 1960s, the decade so important for the development of the Turkish popular music scene. Using a foreign vernacular was *de rigueur* for urban-minded pop musicians; singing Turkish lyrics seemed like an almost exotic practice to them. According to Dilmener (2003), this negligence of the native language in much of urban pop music, and thus a form of linguistic distancing from much of the Turkish population, was counteracted by three distinct styles of musical production that were geared towards the more rural-minded parts of the population.

Firstly, it was Fecri Ebcioğlu's *aranjman* [arrangement] production style, which basically consisted of re-writing Turkish lyrics for popular songs originally in English and in French. The second style was a tradition of re-arranging selected songs from Turkish folk music and adapting them to polyphonic musical textures without disrupting the songs' melodic and rhythmic structures, which meant performing these pieces with Western instruments. Started by singer Alpay and arranger Doruk Onatkut in the early 1960s, this style became a common practice and was eventually called *Anadolu pop* [Anatolian pop] (Dilmener 2003: 43). The third style focused on composing original music with Turkish lyrics. In the process, the tunes' production features gradually started to westernize.

The 1964 song "Burçak Tarlası" [Tare Field] by female singer Tülay German created the basic formula for Anadolu Pop and marked the beginning of this musical expression as a movement (ibid.: 44). The tune pop-Westernized a *türkü* (see Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009: 59; Baysal 2018: 207). *Türkü* are mostly traditional rural Anatolian folk songs. They had been collected systematically since the early days of the Turkish Republic to compile a repertoire of national folk music, which the new Turkish nation was in need of to promote its new

self-image—a process that was in fact part of its nation-building after the demise of the Ottoman Empire (see Sels 2021: 1–3, 238–239; Turan/Işıktas 2016). Cultural music-politics and national identity politics were going hand in hand here (see Lund 2013; Birson 2016; Bates 2019: 151–152.), in fact to such a degree that Sels calls Turkish folk music itself “a political construction” (Sels 2021: 54, 221–33, see also Değirmenci 2006). As ever, one needs to be cautious about claims to ‘authenticity’ or ‘tradition’ whenever earlier musical forms are invoked as there is hardly any material or sonic evidence of what ‘traditional’ music sounded like in the historical past, as Machin (2010: 16–18) points out (see also Ramm 2020).

Before long, the tendency towards an electrification of *türkü* and of rural *aşık* [touring minstrel] folk songs intensified. In 1965, an immensely popular—and politically backed—music contest took place that included concert tours as well as record releases. The contest was named *Altın Mikrofon* [Golden Microphone] and was initiated and organized by the influential Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* (see Lund 2026/2013).¹ One requirement for *Altın Mikrofon* was to rearrange a traditional Turkish tune which was supposed to be performed in a Western style incorporating electric or electrified instruments. The significance of this contest should not be underestimated. It led to forms of musical expression which were no longer just copying the Beatles or Buddy Holly in language, composition, or instrumentation. This contest opened the gates for the further development of a specific Turkish hybrid, Anatolian pop, with a fundament in Turkish language, Turkish compositions, and Turkish instruments, combined with electrified rural Turkish instruments, most notably the *saz* [a long-necked lute], and modern urban electric instruments, and generally a Western-styled, modern pop-rock approach. In 1972, Cahit Berkay (of the Anatolian rock group *Moğollar*) presented a definition of Anatolian pop well in sync with the developments following the *Altın Mikrofon* contest and still useful today: “*Anadolu Pop* is a style that combines Turkish folkloric themes, instruments and poems with the electronic capabilities and the systems of pop music” (as quoted in Baysal 2018: 216).

Depending on perspective, one can perceive Anatolian pop either as a Westernization of Anatolian music by pop-rock means, or as an Easternization/Turkification of Western pop by Anatolian music, or as a hybrid incorporating elements from both Eastern and Western music, to form something in-between (see Lund/Lund/Tülü 2026/2019: 84). Anatolian pop can thus be identified as a musical style which, according to Baysal, was an experimental way of more or less “harmonizing various fields—including national ideology, local culture, international counterculture, and the modern world” (Baysal 2018: 216). These three perspectives—Westernization, Easternization, and ‘in-between-ness’—were, depending on the point of view, acutely present in the visualization

1 The contest had a predecessor in the famous newspaper-based *Türkiye Güzeli* [Miss Turkey] contest starting in 1929 and the craze it produced in Turkey (see Shissler 2004). Such beauty contests are just as common as participation in international beauty contests for so-called developing countries to show themselves as progressive and liberal to a global audience. The same impulse may have also driven the development of *Altın Mikrofon*, to promote a new progressive and liberal side of Turkish music.

of Anatolian pop and paved the way for a specific 'rurbanism' which, in that particular period, could be observed on record sleeves and in *Hey* magazine photos quite often. Rural settings, textiles and outfits were juxtaposed to, and mixed with, urban settings and outfits to produce specific 'rurban' Anatolian pop outfits. The electrified saz often appears as a symbol of that rurbanism.

The development of a specific rurbanism as outlined above may be seen as an answer to the ongoing internal migration in Turkey, especially since the 1950s, when, thanks to Marshall Plan funds, the industrialization of agriculture forced large parts of the rural population to seek their fortune in the big cities of Turkey. Alongside this considerable rural exodus—indeed whole villages moved to cities in form of chain migration (see Erman 2020: 185)—Anatolian music followed suit and subsequently got 'citified' by urban musicians now starting to play it.² This resulted in Anatolian music becoming urban and electric (and more fashionable). At the same time, young urban musicians went, often for the first time and mainly as part of their mandatory military service, to the countryside. Here, future Anatolian pop stars like Cem Karaca and Erkin Koray got in touch with rural Anatolian music, which changed their attitude and interest toward that music in a fundamentally positive way (see Spicer 2017: 59, 158–159; Baysal 2018: 216–217). Rural and urban forms thus got interwoven in a complex, even contradictory way. The outcome is, very simply put, a rurbanism with the following key elements that reflected societal change in Turkey during the 1960s and 70s:

- rural-to-urban migration
- urban nationalism focusing on the rural
- student movements and early (individual) attempts at female empowerment.

The images that were produced to accompany or advertise the pop music recordings resulting from this new cultural climate reflect this complexity of overlaps and contradictions: they are mixing the rural with the urban by tying the urban back to the rural as well as by urbanizing the rural. These social practices were of an implicit nature, were hardly ever consciously addressed in the 1960s and 70s, and thus seem to be based on incorporated social knowledge. They narrate complex stories of Turkey and its ongoing social, political, and cultural upheavals back then. The pictorial productions linked to the music that captured this period will be further scrutinized in the following paragraphs. They seek to outline first hints of a theory to be developed for understanding these images and their historic relevance.

2 However, strictly speaking, earlier forms of 'rurban' music had already developed after internal waves of migration in the 1930s. Anatolian rumba is a case in point: in many music restaurants in Istanbul, called '*gazino*,' Anatolian ballads were interpreted, female singers and dancers dressed in 'rural' dresses were singing and mixing Rumba with Konya's famous *kaşık* [spoon] folk dance" (Boratav 1981: 228–229; see also Lund 2026/2020).

Anatolian pop music images, used for record sleeves and in advertising and promotional activities, address the complex entanglement of the rural and the urban in diverse ways, sometimes in complete accordance with the music, sometimes complementing the music and adding new perspectives. In these images, three main tendencies can be observed vis-à-vis their visual appearance: Anatolian pop looks either a) rural, b) urban, or c) rurban. Based on a few examples taken from our sample of Turkish *Hey* magazine issues from the 1970s, record covers from that era, as well as a few other materials, we will analyze these three 'looks' in that order and will show that the rurban look is by far the broadest and most varied category.

a. Anatolian pop looks rural

Our example of a prototypical rural look of images linked to Anatolian pop is drawing on well-known acts Selda Bağcan, a female singer, and Moğollar, an all-male psychedelic rock band at times associated with Cem Karaca.



Fig. 3: Record sleeve (front) for Selda Bağcan, "Aldırma Gönül" (1978).



Fig. 4: Double page article about Selda Bağcan, *Hey* magazine (July 11, 1977: 30-31).

Purely rural Anatolian pop images are not the exception in our sample of *Hey* magazine issues and record covers. There are some examples of images of Selda Bağcan where the rural imagery corresponds well to the music, in the example shown here an Anatolian pop sound with a pronounced rural orientation (figs. 3 and 4). The song "Aldırma Gönül" is a prison song from the 1930s with lyrics by Sabahattin Ali and a strong political attitude of not giving in. In the *Hey* magazine issue of 1977 (July 11: 30-31), the photo on the left side shows Selda Bağcan dressed in an East Asian fighter costume (as was fashionable at the time worldwide) holding a Western acoustic guitar, while the other photos in the magazine issue as well as the record sleeve portray her as a farming person, most likely living in a village.

This rural positioning can also be read as an implicitly left-wing political statement and has indeed been understood as such. According to Daniel Spicer (2017: 38, 155–73), Selda Bağcan's interpretations of folk tunes were perceived as protest songs. The character of the strong woman so often on display in Bağcan's songs (and in her real life as well) can congenially be read in the context of popular movements of the period and as an individual early example of female empowerment. As Meral Akkent points out: "In the 1970s urban female performers discovered self-confident statements of rural women in traditional songs and interpreted these songs in their albums" (Akkent 2018). This rural stance, however, included conservative orientations (e.g., notions of anti-Western nationalism held by the left and the right) and progressive ones (e.g., women's and peasants' liberation and similar revolutionary ideas) that were overlapping in an ideological mish-mash of sorts. In hindsight, it is difficult to label some ideological leanings of that period clearly 'left-' or 'right-wing,' even though the self-descriptions of political factions in Turkey were clearly laid out back then. As Kenan Behzat Sharpe concurs:

"Selda and others began to move from a psychedelic-folk fusion to unambiguous folk revival. Urban activists from Istanbul and Ankara cut their long hair short, tore through the 'village novels' of socialist realist writers and attempted to organize the peasantry. With the *bağlama* in one hand and rifle in the other, they struggled for a completely independent Turkey. Nationalism, highly selective reinterpretation of the Turkish independence movement, and investment in the historical continuity of 'the people' shaped the content and form of revolutionary art in the period" (Sharpe 2018: 174).

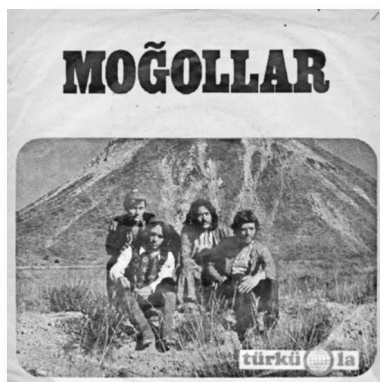


Fig. 5: Record sleeve (front) for Moğollar, "Çığrık" (1972).

Sometimes the rural imagery and the rural clothing of the musicians are in apparent opposition to the music, as in the case of Moğollar's 7-inch single "Çığrık" (fig. 5). The music leans heavily towards Western funk quite in synch with its time of production (1972). "Çığrık" is based on a traditional song, and if listening carefully, one can hear the Turkish timbal used percussively. The music has a strong urban feel to it, is Western oriented and pop by character, yet the sleeve image is ostentatiously rural, folk style, and shows a landscape of eastern Turkey. It is thus incorporating a rural Anatolian folk fundament

which is still audible in the recording, but rather hidden in the background. The sleeve image reverses these properties, putting the rural Anatolian folk fundament in the foreground. This almost seems like a cover-up operation—as if something were to be hidden—and thus like an anathema to the concept of authenticity. Given the somewhat shaky foundations of the latter, this careful staging might be a key element to understanding Anatolian pop's habitus.

b. Anatolian pop looks urban

The number of Anatolian pop images showing musicians in a completely urban setting is astonishingly small in our sample. One must search hard to find some at all.

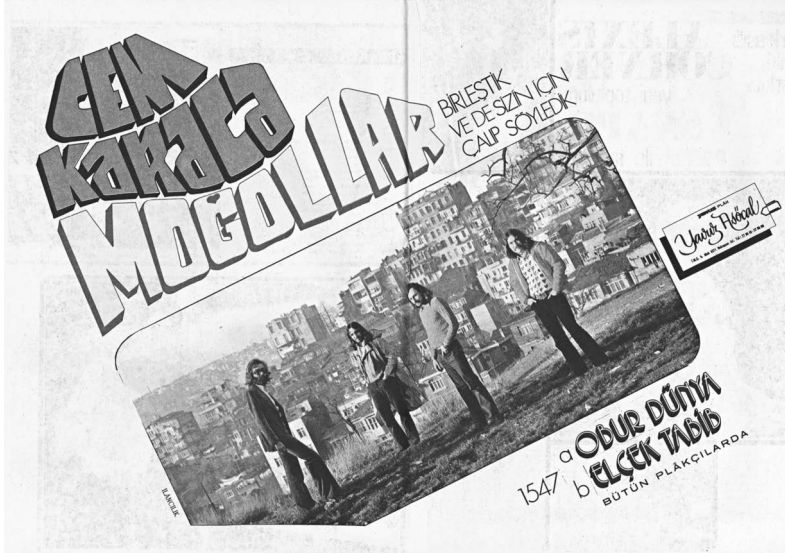


Fig. 6: Double page advertisement for Cem Karaca and Moğollar in *Hey* magazine (January 10, 1973: 22–23).

The ad for Cem Karaca and Moğollar's 7-inch single "Obur Dünya" (fig. 6) delivers one of the rare cases. The musicians stand in front of a highly urban scenery, in Western 1970s attire, thus promoting nothing but urban music. This seems to be well in line with Moğollar's general orientations as this band had "revealed their keen allegiance to the Western, paisley-clad hippie counterculture" (Spicer 2017: 43) right from the beginning of their career. However, images showing them in a pronouncedly urban setting are rare. In the example documented here, at least a few traces of rural origins remain audible in the recording, with the choice of rural instruments and lyrics belonging to the rural *aşık* [minstrel] culture.

Given the scarcity of such images in our sample, this state of a wide-reaching denial-by-imagery of the urbanization and other processes of modernization that Turkey underwent during the 1960s and 70s is remarkable. It may be pointing at an unconscious collective longing for reversing time and reclaiming more idyllic notions of everyday life and social organization—or what could vaguely be called an Arcadian-nationalist approach. It just as well needs to be seen in the context of anti-imperialistic, revolutionary elements in Turkish political discourse at the time increasingly focusing on the rural. Sharpe points out that "as the politics of the Turkish left became increasingly militant after 1968, [...] activists began heavily emphasizing the [rural] culture of Anatolia" (Sharpe 2018: 174). The political climate in Turkey was rough and adversary at the time, and many topics could not be addressed in the open.

c. Anatolian pop looks rural

In our sample of 1970s *Hey* magazine issues and record covers, we identified various ways for combining urban and rural elements in one image, and different visual strategies to construct the impression of rurbanity. We propose three different 'degrees of closeness' to be distinguished when examining rurality and urbanity in Anatolian pop imagery: juxtaposing rural and urban images side by side; conflating these motifs in one larger image; and focusing on close shots of a rurban motif.



Fig. 7: Double page article about Esin Aşşar in *Hey* magazine (April 26, 1972: 12–13).

The double-page article on singer Esin Aşşar in *Hey* magazine of April 26, 1972 (fig. 7) can serve as an example of the juxtaposition of urbanity and rurality alongside each other. The musician is shown twice on the double page: once as a young urban woman in an urban, Scandinavian-styled home setting, dressed up to date, and once as a peasant in a rural setting and clad in a corresponding

costume. As in the double-page article on Selda Bağcan shown above, these images are not presented as contradictory but rather as complementing each other. Again, the music under question is a mixture: both urban-funky and rural-*türkü* at the same time; the article advertises one of Aşşar's major hits, "Zühtü." This kind of rural/urban interplay can be observed frequently in *Hey* magazine, tying the rural to the urban and vice versa as two co-existing entities.

A photo from a front page of the magazine *Ses* (fig. 8) of March 21, 1970 can serve as a prime example of a conflation of rural and urban stock motifs in one larger image—an intensified degree of closeness, as it were. Here, the band Moğollar shows up again, this time on stage, with the electric bass player sporting a rural outfit, but with a special emphasis on the Anatolian ornaments on his vest and his strangely prominent shepherd's socks. Standing next to him, the singer is dressed in an almost formal urban suit, chic leather shoes and a kind of op-art tie. In this image, the combination and mingling of rurality and urbanity is much more highlighted than in the examples given before. The guitar player in the back represents the rurality in his attire all together: the shoes, trousers and shirt are very much urban whereas his jacket, usually referred to as an 'Afghan' waistcoat in the West (and quite a hippie fashion statement at the time), is definitely rural, a clothing item originally worn by shepherds throughout parts of Asia. As in Anatolian pop music itself, both layers of social orientation are present in this mise-en-scène, surely by different degrees, yet fusing in one musical genre.



Fig. 8: Photo from the front page of *Ses* magazine (March 21, 1970), showing Moğollar on stage.

The most intense rurban degree of closeness is discernible in portraits or close shots. Presented on the front pages of two *Hey* issues and in a double-page ad in the same magazine in 1972 (figs. 9–11), Esin Afşar, Cem Karaca, and Fikret Kızılok can all be seen in close-ups that highlight details. The all-over rural impression, produced by the Anatolian textiles and ornaments in the images is combined with urban elements: Esin Afşar sports an up-to-date urban haircut and some hippie jewellery, Cem Karaca is wearing his stylish urban sunglasses which make all the difference, and in spite of the Anatolian ornaments on his guitar strap, Fikret Kızılok holds the acoustic guitar like a *repoussoir*, or push-back object, in quite an urban rock star manner. The choice of the instruments and their presentation play an important role in the construction of rurban images. Rural instruments, for example, are often taken as a marker of the Anatolian elements of Anatolian pop, akin to props.

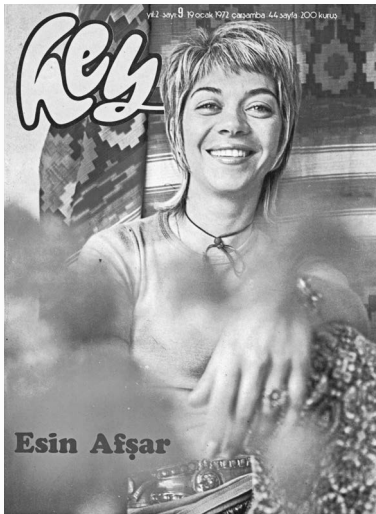


Fig. 9 (left): Esin Afşar on the front page of *Hey* magazine (January 19, 1972).



Fig. 10 (right): Cem Karaca on the front page of *Hey* magazine (June 21, 1972).

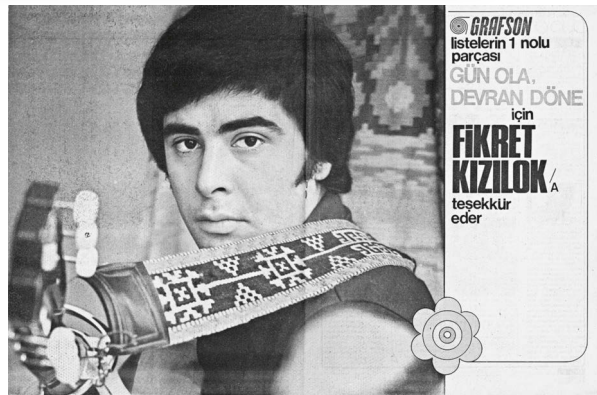
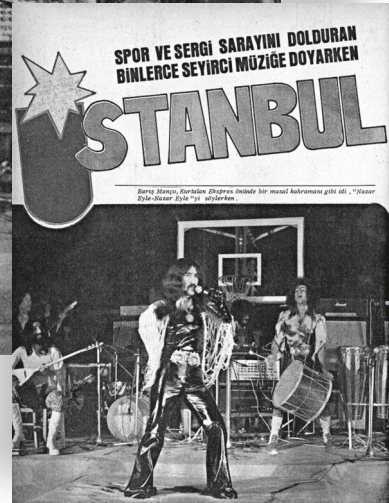


Fig. 11: Double page advertisement for Fikret Kızılok in *Hey* magazine (February 16, 1972: 22–23).



Fig. 12: Article about Barış Manço and Kurtalan Ekspres in *Hey* magazine (March 20, 1974: 26).



A concert photo of Barış Manço and his band Kurtalan Ekspres (fig. 12) shows the musicians on a stage with Marshall amplifiers, in a Western glam and hippie outfit and with some fantasy Ottoman elements adorning Manço's dress, the latter highly reminiscent of the *kostüme avantür* movie genre. Yet the musicians play an electrified saz and a Turkish timbal, thereby connecting the music to the rural Anatolian side of Anatolian pop both on an auditory and a visual level.

The examples above show that Turkish society at the time was moving back and forth between urban and rural areas, in thinking, in discourses, and in cultural production. In a period of transition, it seems that the only way to reinvigorate a political and thereby inherently cultural discourse was to reintroduce formerly neglected cultural phenomena (as rural elements were) back to the more dominant areas of popular culture. Therefore, this kind of rurban imagery became pervasive in Turkish popular culture and was not limited to pop music alone. It also manifested itself in a peculiar amalgam of comic book characters, invented mythical heroes, modes of eroticism (to a certain extent), but mostly by way of social action in ahistorical contexts and costumes. We may identify such ritualized staging of popular culture as a state of "liminality" (Turner 1969: 106). Regarding the perspectives on Anatolian

pop presented above, such a state of liminality reflects the 'in-between' perspective: both orientations—rural and urban—are represented through *mise-en-scène*, yet they are neither welded together, or merged, nor is a decision made in favor of one over the other; instead, the phenomena appear to be fluid or "betwixt and between," as Victor Turner (1969: 107) famously remarked in the context of symbolic anthropology. Urbanity and rurality appear like two sides of the same medal; hence we call it 'rurbanity.'

Such a liminal performative state—being and staging on a threshold, as it were—may pave the way for society to develop and find new ways of dealing with challenges, such as the impositions introduced by transformative processes of modernization, urbanization, and their larger contexts. Understood in such a way, a dual state of in-between-ness seems like a coping strategy and lays out possible future developments for a society in multiple ways. This openness can be identified as the *habitus* of Turkish society in the 1970s, i.e., as a formation of embodied social dispositions that so often manifest themselves in mostly unconscious and unquestioned patterns of behavior and cultural production in a society (see Bourdieu/Wacquant 2013: 160; Bourdieu 1989: 467)—observable in Turkey and elsewhere. Yet, this openness came under pressure with intensifying violent political feuds and infighting towards the end of the 1970s. The military coup in 1980 ended it the hard way. After this marked break, options for life—and music—changed.

Conclusion: Anatolian Pop Images and the Habitus of 1970s Turkey, and Beyond

To analyze the habitus of a period is not an easy task; capturing the embodied social dispositions of a particular period unfolding in a country in turmoil (as Pekesen 2020 puts it) is even harder. Yet this article, by employing the approach of the sociology of knowledge, attempted to outline a few key insights—to cover some ground, so to speak—that can be used for future research and further theory-building.

Taking into consideration what Anatolian pop looks like in the images analyzed so far, we can conclude that this musical genre and its attached social practices look rural or rurban in most cases; at times rural and urban motifs are conflated into a rurban look (to varying degrees); rarely does Anatolian pop look strictly urban. This still leaves us with the question *why* such rural and rurban elements are favored over an urban imagery. One answer points at the core principles of the music itself. Anatolian pop music was a wild, non-domesticated pop phenomenon. The usual domesticators, i.e., global major record companies, were not dominating the Turkish music market in the 1970s (see Lund/Lund 2026/2021: 180–181). Instead, and despite censorship, this market was a relatively unregulated independent music market. Many scholars attest Anatolian pop music an experimental, surprising character and describe it as a music in a continuous reach-out and try-out mode. It was an unrestrained pop music full of experimentation (see Söylemez 2022: 183, 188).

The designer Raymond Loewy once invented the so-called MAYA formula: Most Advanced Yet Acceptable (see Loewy 1951). Loewy always had the audience, the consumers in mind. Arguably, and more or less consciously, the same happened in Turkey with Anatolian pop music and its images. The rural and the rurban elements in that imagery restrained and balanced the music, at least visually, for the audience and their internal migration background in order to find calm in a society full of rifts and turmoil. The imagery rooted the music in something the audience knew—as a form of incorporated social knowledge—and could always refer to, like the *türkü* and *aşık* tunes which serve as fundaments for so many Anatolian pop songs. Thus, in a way, the imagery delivered a sort of homecoming. Yet, at the same time, the rurban imagery, like the music itself, referenced both a rural past and new styles of urbanity, in a combination of various degrees of urbanization.

The rurban imagery therefore both refers to the 'in-between' status of a large number of Turks with internal migration experiences and alludes to a then emerging urban middle-class youth (see Mumcu 2020), mostly educated in foreign high schools in the big Turkish cities. In the early 1970s, this urban youth had no first-hand migration experiences but nevertheless tried to figure out their identity in a period when a new, Americanized urbanism-as-lifestyle

served as a model (see Zürcher 2017: 231–232; Gürel 2009). At the same time, references to rural Anatolia gained importance, not only via internal migration but also connected to political messaging and political self-definition, especially when it came to Anatolian pop music as a form of protest.

At the beginning of this article, a polycultural, transnational context (see Lund 2026/2020) was mentioned, which is thought to bring together European, Mediterranean, Arabic, Balkan, and other post-Ottoman ‘musicscapes.’ A prominent function of the rural imagery may also be seen in rooting the polycultural, transnational aspects of Anatolian pop—the non-Turkish ‘otherness’ that it partly includes—in the Anatolian core homeland, thus nationalizing (consciously or unconsciously) this kind of music. Instead of opening it up, by way of integrating non-homegrown, non-Turkic imageries and styles, in Turkey the visuals were narrowed down to a markedly Anatolian imagery. This seems to be in contrast to what sometimes happened outside of Turkey in the post-Ottoman era, when for example Greek musicians recorded an album entitled, and containing, “Turkish Hits” for an Israeli record label, or made cover versions of Barış Manço’s songs in the Greek language (see Lund 2026/2020). The urban left-wing factions of the nationalist movement in Turkey (see Ramm 2020) seem to have been more interested in re-defining Turkey by anchoring local national identity in Anatolia than in reframing Turkey in a post-national context by enlarging the country’s imagery and moving it beyond the frontiers of Anatolia. Therefore, a wider research perspective would have to take into account, and include, non-Anatolian rural, urban, and rural imageries produced for Anatolian pop recordings outside of Turkey. In a similar vein, for further research, comparisons with nationalizing 1960s and 70s ‘musicscapes’ and their adorning imageries from outside of the post-Ottoman circle of countries would yield equally interesting comparative case studies.

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