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STYLE
AND SOCIETY
—
ISTANBUL'S
MUSIC SCENE
IN THE
1960s AND 1970s
:
MUSICAL HYBRIDISM,
THE GAZINO
AND
SOCIAL TOLERANCE

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Like many countries all over the world, Turkey was hit by the first wave of Anglo-American pop-rock music in the 1950s and 1960s. Various styles of pop-rock were appreciated in Turkey; they were, however, not simply copied but combined with local, indigenous elements in many different ways. This led to the birth of musical hybrids, especially Anatolian rock, *arabesk*, and belly dance. The specific qualities of these combinations, that differentiated them from parallel developments in other countries, seem to be rooted in the unique situation of the Turkish music scene. Turkey had an independent music market with a large number of non-major and non-state-run record labels as well as a complex and autonomous musical tradition of combining foreign and indigenous elements. This had mainly to do with the people involved: they mixed and mingled, ignoring social boundaries to a surprising extent, producing musical syntheses consisting of unpredictable combinations and stunning turnarounds. The main place for this kind of musical practice was the *gazino*, a special venue somewhere between restaurant, concert hall, and nightclub, with its open-minded musical programming.

This article examines the acting agents and their styles, starting from selected musical examples and taking into account—aside from Anglo-American pop-rock music and Anatolian folk music—the three styles mentioned above: Anatolian rock, *arabesk*, and belly dance. Although each addressed a very different audience, these styles were freely combined, for example in *arabesk* rock as a mixture of Anatolian rock and *arabesk*. The main question for us will be: how was it possible that in Turkey apparently paradoxical combinations could come into being, which never could have happened in the Western world? Why would elements be combined that, according to the logic of pop-rock music, appear contradictory? It seems there was a special Turkish pop-rock logic at work, which had the *gazino* at its heart, this special location for Turkish hybridized music.

Our point of departure will be a short survey of the musical scene in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. We will have a look at the persons involved, the styles they played, and the extraordinary musical hybrids¹ they constructed. These hybrids will lead us to the fundamental question for our research: how could they even be created, despite of the music-sociological paradoxes in style and audience? This article may not deliver final answers, but, hopefully, some outlines to be filled in by future research.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 The term hybridization is becoming more and more common in scholarly literature on music. It is here used as defined in a previous text by author Holger Lund: "The term hybridization is used in its biological sense, meaning something which is a product of two different species that have been crossbred. A hybrid is something consisting of different origins, transgressing the old order of the former species to build up something new" (Lund 2026/2011: 36).

Much of the resurgence of Turkish rock and funk music of the first wave goes back to 2006, when hip hop-beat producer Egon compiled the *Stones Throw Podcast #12*, the so-called “Turkish Funk Mix” (Egon 2006), which for many of its listeners changed their perspective on the world of music forever. They found themselves listening to a stunning combination of familiar-sounding elements of rock and funk music and much less familiar-sounding elements of Anatolian music.² The more so as Turkish rock and funk music were not mere copies of Anglo-American models, but themselves very distinctive hybrids of local and indigenous elements on the one hand, and global, Anglo-American elements on the other (see Skoog 2012: 3f.). This podcast pushed the interest in Turkish rock and funk music worldwide and many re-releases give proof of a continued interest until today.³

1. The Field of Music in Turkey

The Turkish Republic itself, as constructed by Kemal Atatürk and his chief ideologist Ziya Gökalp, was founded on the idea of combining East and West. Musically, this combination was realized by building hybrids of Eastern and Western elements. Not all of them were successful, but three styles in the 1960s and 1970s attracted large audiences: *Arabesk*, Anatolian rock, and belly dance music.⁴ These styles aimed at totally different audiences. Nevertheless, multiple hybrids between these three already hybridized styles took shape, in music and also in its visual, iconographic representation. For someone not familiar with the Turkish music scene, the paradoxical elements of these hybrids can be hard to disentangle.

To begin with: Which style is which and how does it sound?

First: *Arabesk* can be translated as “made or done in the arabic fashion” (Özbek 1997: 185). It is regarded as a “Turkish version of Arab popular music” with “romantic melodies” and a “saccharinic, Bollywoodish” (Spicer 2011: 46) effect—at least this is how the leading British music magazine *The Wire* still puts it today, in a pejorative manner. *Arabesk* was already a hybrid construction,

2 Gabriel Skoog said about this irritating listening experience: “One of the pleasures of list[en]ing to hybrid genres for the first time is the bending of frame involved as we re-orient ourselves in relationship to the piece” (Skoog 2012: 91).

3 See the re-releases of Finders Keepers, who pioneered Guerssen and Pharaway Sounds: <http://www.discogs.com/label/38112-Finders-Keepers-Records>, <http://www.discogs.com/label/105479-Guerssen>, and <http://www.discogs.com/label/424574-Pharaway-Sounds>; or the *Saz Beat. Turkish Rock, Funk, and Psychedelic Music of the 1960s and 1970s I–III* compilations curated by the authors (2013, 2016, and 2017; Corvo Records/Global Pop First Wave).

4 With its similarities to *arabesk* in status and Easternness *Türk sanat müziği*, a kind of classical, post-Ottoman ‘*alaturka*’ style, is not discussed here as a genre of its own, which of course it is (see Stokes 2003: 314). Moreover, Anglo-American and European pop music were played in Turkey as well as *türkü*, a sort of standardized folk song (see Skoog 2012: 61f.). All in all, these were the main styles one could hear during the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey.

an East-West music. According to Martin Stokes, *arabesk* originated as an “absorption of a variety of Western popular and classical genres and performance styles into a [...] monophonic Eastern or Turkish form” (Stokes 1999: 123). This was also reflected in the wide array of instruments used: classical Turkish instruments like kanun and ney, folk instruments like the saz, as well as drums, electric bass, electric guitar, piano, and Western string instruments (see Burhan Bayar in Bulut/Kaya 2010: 22:50–23:50 min, 31:31 min).⁵

Second: the terms Anatolian rock or *Anadolu pop* were used by Turkish musicians to describe hybrids of Western pop-rock music of all kinds combined with Anatolian folk music since the mid 1960s.⁶

Third: Belly dance music is music for erotic dancing and was for a large part produced for the Arabic and Turkish diaspora in the US (Thorne 2011). It was made by immigrants for immigrants and was a trend in music from the 1950s until the 1970s.⁷ Armenian and Lebanese musicians were also often involved in belly dance. During the 1960s, the style was adopted in the Arabo-Turkish region via US imports and kicked off many local productions. Due to the influence of developments in US-American music, new instruments joined in: next to traditional Arabo-Turkish instruments, electrified, electric, and electronic instruments, as well as drum sets, were integrated in the production of music. With the use of these instruments, we can consequently observe the emergence of hybrids of the traditional music of the Arabo-Turkish region and pop-rock music.

1.1. Examples

In the following, we will analyze three pairs of tunes to get a more thorough insight into the musical situation in Turkey at the time.

Pair 1: Orhan Gencebay—“Hor Görme Garibi” (1971)
and Erkin Koray with Ter—“Hor Görme Garibi” (1972).

Orhan Gencebay's piece is a typical *arabesk* tune: the song is slightly electrified and sounds a bit Western, but the arrangement of the violins and the vocals are still dominated by the tradition of *arabesk* music.

5 The term ‘Western music’ refers to a distinction made in Turkey between ‘alaturka’ and ‘alafranga’: “Alaturka and Alafranga refer, respectively, to Turkish and Western socio-cultural practices;” for music this means “Turkish (Alaturka) and Western (Alafranga) style” (Beken 2003).

6 The term is “not bound to Anatolians playing rock music, but used as an umbrella term for all sorts of music which combine different styles of Western pop and rock, psychedelic, funk, disco, progressive, folk, and so on with Anatolian folk music” (Lund 2026/2013: 48).

7 Of course, belly dancing and its music have a much richer history. It was not just an American nightclub entertainment invention exported to the Middle East, but a whole culture with a specific history in Turkey, a phenomenon in Egyptian films, and a dance-entertainment culture of several different regions (see Potuoğlu-Cook 2008). The focus in this text is on belly dance as a hybridized genre mixing traditional with electrified, electric, and electronic instruments.

The same tune was re-worked one year later by the Anatolian rock musician Erkin Koray and the group Ter, still under the title “Hor Görme Garibi.” Compared to Gencebay’s original, quite a few things have changed: Koray electrifies and Westernizes the sound, especially the vocals that, even if they still follow the *arabesk* melodic line, get an extra touch of scream, which is so typical for Western rock music. Koray injects a great portion of hard rock into the *arabesk* tune, thus building a hybrid between the two styles.

Pair 2: Orhan Gencebay—“Bir Araya Gelemeyiz” (1975)
and Erkin Koray—“Sevdiğim” (1976).

Another track by Gencebay, “Bir Araya Gelemeyiz,” is an *arabesk* tune with the intro played in a hard rock manner, featuring a rock synthesizer and a typical rock riff or lick. Here we have an *arabesk* musician playing a hard rocking *arabesk* tune. The next piece is again by Koray: “Sevdiğim” from 1976. This tune works in the opposite way: it is an Anatolian rock tune done in an *arabesk* manner, easily recognizable from the string section.

One might use the term *arabesk* rock to describe these kinds of hybrids presented in pair 1 and 2, to differentiate them from Anatolian rock as well as *arabesk*. Another example for this sort of *arabesk* rock would be Hakkı Bulut’s “Nedir Bende Olmayan” (1975). It has no string section but a combination of pop-rock guitar, partly straight rock beats by drums and bass, and *arabesk* singing along with saz playing.

Pair 3: John Tatasopoulos—“Bouzoukia Solo” (1975)
and Cem Karaca—“Demedim Mi” (1971).

The next two musical examples show that not only *arabesk* and Anatolian Rock are subject to hybridization, but belly dance as well. The tune “Bouzoukia Solo” by John Tatasopoulos comes from the US-released LP *Alla Turka*, alternatively named *Music for Belly Dancing—The Turkish Way with Özel* (1975). “Bouzoukia Solo” is not, as one may think, simple belly dance music: it is a belly dance-Anatolian rock hybrid, with an electric wah-wah bouzouki imitating an electric saz, an instrument developed in reaction to the electric guitar of rock music which became very popular in Anatolian rock music. The fact that the non-Turkish musician John Tatasopoulos plays the non-Turkish instrument bouzouki should be held against the fact that the title of the LP, in each version, suggests Turkish music, which indicates the typical melting-pot situation in the US, with non-Turkish people from Armenia, Greece, or Israel regularly playing Turkish music (Thorne 2011). The last example is Cem Karaca’s “Demedim Mi” from 1971. In this Anatolian rock-belly dance hybrid a rock group is playing a continuous belly dance line in the percussion and bass, which is extended and accentuated by a long belly dance break in the middle of the tune.

2.

The Complexity of the Situation

These examples give a good idea of the complexity of the musical situation in Turkey. Styles that are already hybrids themselves, are combined to form multiple hybrids. The number and variety of these hybrids, the fluid and surprising combinations within them, are simply astonishing. In this aspect, by the way, the musical production of Turkey differs from that of comparable post-Ottoman countries. In the unexpected combinations of styles, the unusual instrumentations, the stunning arrangements and compositions, Turkish hybrid music shows complete autonomy (Skoog 2012: 29f., 34).

When we search for the reasons of this development, we find different contributing factors. On the one hand, there is the specific situation of Turkish culture and its historical development, which we will analyze later on. On the other hand, the particularities of the Turkish music economy have to be taken into account. Different to most other non-Western countries, the Turkish music market was neither dominated by globally acting major labels, working as hegemonial gatekeepers, nor by nationally acting state-run or state-controlled labels, dominating the national production, but instead by many smaller or bigger independent labels, some of them lead by Turkish musicians.⁸ Compared to other countries, the music production was relatively uncontrolled and unregulated. A homogenization of the market by major or state-run labels did not take place in Turkey in the first decades of pop music.⁹

Gabriel Skoog also mentions that the Turkish Republic, especially Istanbul, "never felt the direct long-term effects of European colonialism" (2012: 24). Thus, Turkey's autonomy was unbroken by colonial power structures. The latter normally would set the cultural standards, imposing them on the colonized people, engraving in their minds which 'developed' standards should be adopted and which more 'primitive' ones should be devalorized and erased. This did not happen in Turkey.¹⁰

8 The number of Turkish labels was extraordinarily high in the 1960s and 1970s. To our knowledge, there exists no compendium listing them all. After years of research in vinyl record stores, one will still discover more and more labels from that period. We estimate that about 50 to 70 independent labels have existed in Turkey. Some of the old ones are still active and are located at İMÇ (İstanbul Manifaturacılar Çarşısı), Unkapanı, Blok 5 and Blok 6 in Istanbul.

9 As far as the authors know, in the same period of time only the musical panorama of Pakistan showed a similar complexity concerning combinations and unpredictable musical developments in songs—despite the fact that the music market in Pakistan was dominated by only a very few major labels. The reasons for the complexity of the situation in Pakistan, however, still have to be explored.

10 Skoog emphasizes that Turkey "was never colonized by a European power." Therefore, Turkey is an autonomous "competing aesthetic center" to him (Skoog 2012: 151).

2.1. Arabesk vs. Anatolian Rock (?) vs. Belly Dance (?)

Most noteworthy about the complex situation in Turkey is that it really should not exist, considering the music-social frontiers valid especially in the Western world. Apparently contradictory elements were put together in musical practice, were freely combined and hybridized. But first of all, what exactly do we mean when we speak of contradictory elements?

Arabesk had, outside its audience, a very bad reputation in Turkey. This had to do with the audience itself: poor, little educated, mostly Anatolian immigrants and workers in the periphery of the big cities like Istanbul. *Arabesk* was called “minibus music” (Gencebay in Bulut/Kaya 2010: 37:31 min) or also “migration music” (ibid.: 15:44 min and 28:32 min). It was considered by the urban, well-educated middle class as uncultivated, imitative (being Arab-like), pre-modern and non-Western (see Stokes 2010; Köksal 2012). A typical audience can be seen in the film *Derdim Dünyadan Büyük* (1978), which shows *arabesk* musician and actor Gencebay with the poor people that formed his fanbase.

While we might view *arabesk* as a “domestication of an international soundscape [...] presenting it for a Turkish audience,” as Stokes (1999: 135) does, Anatolian rock on the contrary can be regarded as “internationalizing a local music, connecting it to the international counterculture” (ibid.).¹¹

Proof of this is found in photos like the one showing Koray together with John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1971, exemplifying a certain affirmative orientation towards Western modernity (fig 1).



Fig. 1: Arda Uskan (left), Erkin Koray (right) with John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Cannes, 1971, photo from a Turkish press article by Arda Uskan, 1971.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that Skoog, in opposition to Stokes, sees it just the other way round: “Anadolu Rock can be understood as a local music scene which first grew out of a large, mass-mediated, translocal scene, but with time turned into its own local phenomenon.” His explanation: “Anadolu Pop artists combined genre cues to create a new style which would appeal to a local audience, and it was the positive response to this localized style which kick started a local Anadolu Rock scene.” Therefore, he concludes: “Anadolu Pop is a localized global genre” (Skoog 2012: 162f.). Both views may be correct. Depending on the point of view one can define Anatolian rock as the localization of an international music or as an internationalization of a local music. Skoog himself shifted his point of view: “Anadolu Pop artists such as Moğollar, Barış Manço, and Cem Karaca all attempted to have an effect on the larger global rock scene through participation in the European market. Indeed, Barış Manço went as far as to release an English language album” (Skoog 2012: 164, see also 168f.).



Fig. 2: Erkin Koray, 1970.
Photo: Sayıl Eman
(published in *Hürriyet*, June 21, 1970).

Visually, Anatolian rock stations itself either as pro-rural, such as the group Moğollar who pose in rural costumes for the cover of their single “Cıgırık” (see p. 102) or it demonstrates urbanity, which could even take quite radical aspects, as in several photos of Koray naked with an electric guitar (fig. 2).

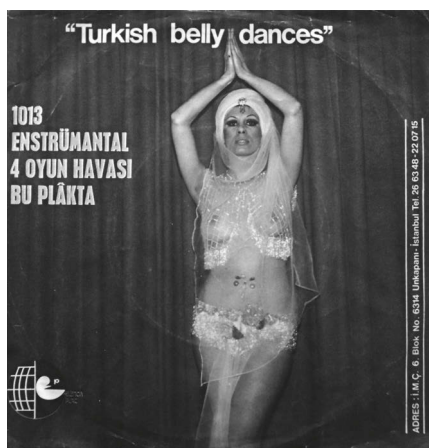
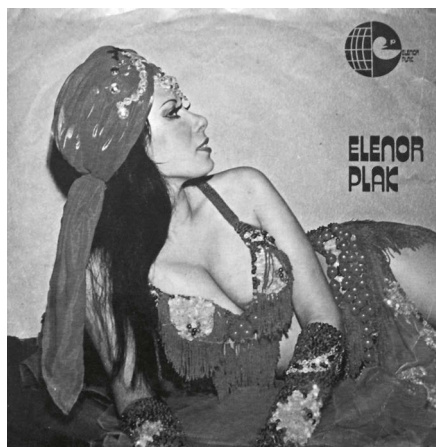
Politically, the two stylistic positions are also drifting in opposite directions: despite of some rebellious attitudes, *arabesk* music is mainly shaped by a rather conservative, fatalistic belief in a paternalist-hierarchical way of life (see Bulut/Kaya 2010), whereas Anatolian rock with two of its main agents, Selda Bağcan and Karaca, shows not only a democratic, but rather a left-wing revolutionary orientation (figs. 3 and 4). An intermingling of the two audiences, the *arabesk* and the Anatolian rock audience, should therefore never happen according to the logics of music sociology.



Fig. 3: Cem Karaca, PLO, no date.
Original source not identifiable.



Fig. 4: Cem Karaca as featured in the Turkish 1970s music and youth magazine *Hey*, no date.



Figs. 5 and 6: Cover for 4 Oyun Havası, "Turkish Belly Dances," recto & verso (ca. 1976).

Moreover, the visuals of belly dance record covers, the explicit (semi-) nudity of the women (figs. 5 and 6), is not compatible with either the more conservative *arabesk* audience or with the democratic left-wing audience of Anatolian rock. But nevertheless, a single by 4 Oyun Havası offers a cover version of Koray's "Fesuphanallah," turning his *arabesk* rock into an instrumental belly dance rock. Here again we are in a realm where all things are combined and mixed, even if they—according to the common music-social point of view—should be kept separated.

The phenomenon continues visually, defeating every potential conflict: a photo from 1976 shows Gencebay and Koray during a jam session (fig. 7).

Koray presents himself as an urban Anatolian rock musician in jeans, with long hair and a cool sitar beat instrument.¹² Gencebay, however, appears as an *arabesk* musician, with mustachio, spick-and-span white trousers, and a very traditional, non-electrified saz.

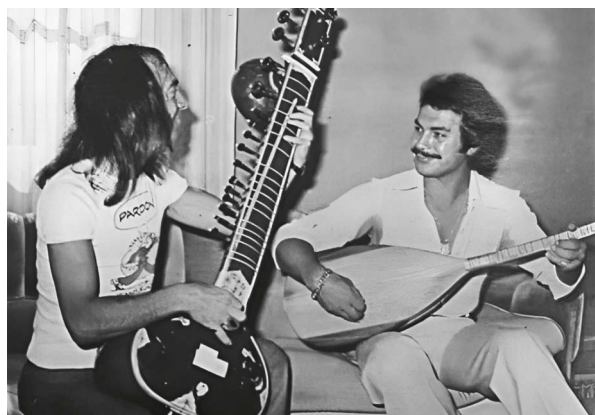


Fig. 7: Jam session with Orhan Gencebay and Erkin Koray, 1976. Original source not identifiable.

¹² The sitar, seen in its stylistic and semantic aspects, probably did not come directly to Turkey from Asia but indirectly via Great Britain (just think of the George Harrison-initiated sitar beat boom). Consequently, the sitar is in this context primarily a Western sitar beat instrument and not a classical Eastern instrument.



Fig. 8: Orhan Gencebay and Barış Manço, 1972.
Original source not identifiable.

Another photo again shows Gencebay, now with Barış Manço, in 1972. Against the correct suit of Gencebay, Manço wears a rural belt with a tied knot (fig. 8).

Some magazine photographs move another step ahead: on a cover page probably published in celebration of a musical contest in 1972, Gencebay, the *arabesk* star musician, is placed among part of the elite of Anatolian rock musicians: Manço, Bağcan, and the three Hürel brothers (fig. 9). Another, similar photo made in 1971 (fig. 10) shows Manço, Karaca, and the group Moğollar together with star singer Zeki Müren, who plays *Türk sanat müziği*, like *arabesk* a popular Eastern style (see Stokes 2003: 314). Müren appears again in an undated group portrait next to Karaca (fig. 11).

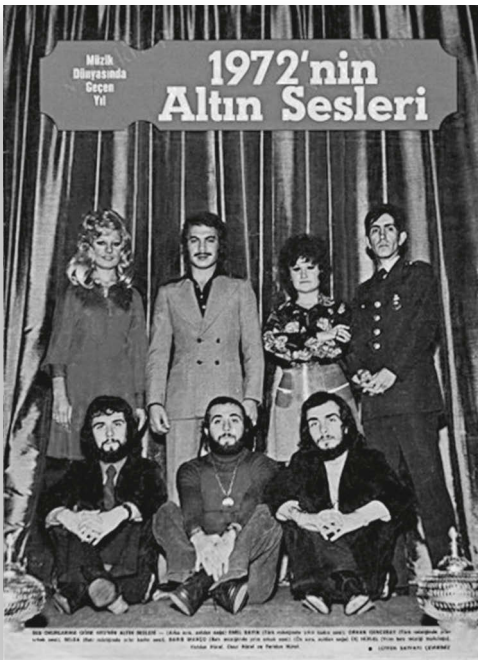


Fig. 9: Cover of a magazine with Emel Sayın, Orhan Gencebay, Selda Bağcan, Barış Manço, and the three Hürel-brothers, 1972.



Fig 10: The music group Moğollar (back row) with Barış Manço, Emel Sayın, Zeki Müren, Ajda Pekkan, and Cem Karaca, 1971 (published in *Ses*, October 1, 1972)

Given the sociological differences between the musicians, such photos are an extension of what is happening in the music itself, the paradoxical but nevertheless practiced musical hybrids or multi-hybrids.¹³

How could this happen? And did the Turkish people back in the day also regard and experience these hybrids as paradoxical? In the following, we will try to give some answers to this question.

As we have mentioned, an intermingling of these audiences would not have been possible according to Western music-sociological thinking. The main reason, as Diedrich Diederichsen explored in depth, is that from the 1950s to the 1990s pop music has been used in the Western world as a means to differentiate identity, to express different political and social attitudes. The decision to adopt a certain style (and the attitude related with it) implied always the negation, even radical negation and non-acceptance, of all other styles (and attitudes related with them) (Diederichsen 2014: passim). If such very different things come together, as in the musical and photographic examples mentioned above, there must have been some shared fundamentals as common ground.

13 Indeed, there exist musical pendants to the photos discussed above (figs. 5 to 11): Barış Manço, for example, played "Ağlama Değmez Hayat" (1969), a famous tune of *Türk sanat müziği*, which Zeki Müren recorded in the same year. Or think of the musical pairing we have analyzed in chapter 1.1.



Fig. 11: Group photo with Hakan Balamir, Tarık Akan, Zeki Müren next to Cem Karaca, Rıza Silahlıpoda, Ajda Pekkan, Türkan Şoray, Müjde Ar, no date. (published in *Kelebek ev gazetesi*, January 11, 1976)

2.2. Shared Fundaments and Where They Came From

It is useful to consider the parameters shared collectively by the three styles. All of them, *arabesk*, Anatolian rock, and belly dance, were allowed to be practiced by the state authorities, but were not supported by them at all. The national radio barely played the songs of any of these styles (see Kadir Çöpdemir, in Bulut/Kaya 2010: 6:28–7:11 min.; Stokes 1999: 123), and the Turkish Radio and Television institution TRT published only two Anatolian rock records over all the decades, *TRT Ara Müzikleri* I and II.

They were treated as outsider music, although for different reasons. All three styles were related to Anatolian folk and *türkü* and therefore had a common musical fundament. This important fundament should not be overlooked, as the use of a shared musical tradition has a strongly connecting effect (which is not easily understandable from a German perspective, for example, where the Volkslied, after being commonly abused by the Nazis, in general died, morphing into the genres of schmaltz or Schlager afterwards).

Considering the massive social differences of those involved, however, these commonalities are not strong enough to explain the photographs and musical hybrids. One may suspect that it was all about money and that musical hybrids addressed a crossover audience to widen the market. However, this would have meant committing a sort of musical hara-kiri, just as if, in those days, someone had combined German Schlager singer Heino with hard rock to enlarge the target group. Today, in our post-modern era, this works well, as the very example of Heino shows. In the much more strictly modern era of the 1960s and 1970s, when social identity was constructed with and by the use of differentiating musical styles, these kinds of hybrids were definitively unthinkable in the Western world—but were apparently possible in Turkey as the examples above show. Instead of a hara-kiri a special solution has been developed to which we will come back later on.

Another idea suggests that the elite of session musicians in Turkey was so small and so limited in its access to electric and electronic gear as well as in its competence to use it, that this small group of people had to play all styles.¹⁴ Admittedly, session musicians will be hired for any job in any style; that is how they are defined. But anywhere else these musicians do not hybridize musically and visually in public, they do it behind the scenes, in the studio, in secret. Otherwise, they would hurt their public musical identities, their image on the market. Both the schmaltz guitar player and the hard rock guitar player would mutually destroy themselves if they showed up in personal union. They have to stay separate in the public space, stay different, this is their proper function in order to build social identities and possibilities for identification for their audiences.

14 Which is indeed true and can be easily observed looking at the credits on the covers of completely different music styles: the same names appear all the time.

Another approach to the question can be found in Çağdaş Uyar's liner notes for the Bunalım re-release (Uyar 2006). He posits that some of the songs by the group Bunalım can be seen as a proof of an interest in non-hybridized rock, taking Anglo-American productions of the time as a model. What prevented them and all the other Turkish musicians from following that model was the specific music-political situation. The latter was marked by repression, and fear of repression, concerning non-Turkish music on the one side, and acceptance of, as well as support for, hybridized Anatolian rock music on the other side, starting with the big pop music contests by Hürriyet and Milliyet in the mid 1960s (see Lund 2026/2013: 49).

The tendencies to support hybridization can be traced back to the founder of the nation, Kemal Atatürk, and his chief ideologist Ziya Gökalp. They initiated and supported a new hybrid East-West music for the new Turkish republic, a kind of a modernized and Westernized version of Anatolian folk music (ibid.; see Erol 2010; Tekelioğlu 2001). Stokes calls Gökalp's concept a "nationalistic cosmopolitanism" (Stokes quoted by Burkhalter 2012: 44). He sees it as a part of the music-political strategy of the state, leading to an amalgamation of indigenous Turkish and Western music. 'Nationalistic cosmopolitanism' may sound paradox, but the term very precisely describes the national point of view from which a hybridist cosmopolitan point of view was developed. Hybridization then had become the standard, and consequently non-hybridized music was not much in favor. Therefore, non-hybridized pop-rock music was only seldom released.

Yet, we still do not know how the musical hybrids and multi-hybrids could be realized, despite the fact that they were violating the borders of social identities. The audiences themselves were keen on differentiating one from another. None of the urban, middle-class citizens would ever share the same cultural space with the poor, rural immigrants of the *gecekondu* (informal settlements in the periphery of the big cities). And vice versa, immigrants wouldn't dare to show up in an urban cultural audience, their clothing and manners would have betrayed them instantly as belonging to another social context. So, what seemed to be impossible in real life, was realized and practiced in music.

Next to the idea of a collectively shared traditional musical fundamen-
 t it could be helpful to have a closer look at how one of the audiences
 would see the other. For the democratic, left-wing people of Anatolian
 rock, the immigrants listening to *arabesk* appear in a positive light, as
 they fit with their pro-rural tendencies (most of the immigrants coming
 from a strongly rural background), and the moments where lyrics of
arabesk music expressed critical views on the circumstances of life were
 appreciated. Politically, *arabesk* music was not per se strictly conserva-
 tive, differentiations must be made here in many directions (see Bulut/
 Kaya 2010; Stokes 2000; Doğtaş/Labastida 2014). Furthermore, *arabesk* music was
 related to the workers and (ex-)farmers, which was the part of the popula-
 tion that democratic politics focused on.

2.3.

The *Gazino*

Yet perhaps the most important key to the whole situation is the *gazino*. It was a very special location, existing mainly in Istanbul (Beken 2003) and Izmir, which brought different audiences, working and urban middle class people, together in one place. From the musical point of view, it was a very open



Fig. 12: Interior of an early *gazino*, Istanbul, 1931.
Original source not identifiable.

urban venue for entertainment, something between a restaurant, a show and concert hall, a dance hall, and a nightclub and cabaret. The main period of the *gazino* culture, consisting basically of East-West music performed within a Western architectural frame, started in the 1930s and ended in the 1970s (figs. 12 and 13). Clearly, the *gazino* helped to establish the aforementioned multiple musical hybrids

between the three styles. Their owners, driven by commercial interests, changed the paradigm: what elsewhere in the world of pop-rock music had been separated as (life-)styles and opposing identities, was thrown together in the *gazino*, musically and in the visual aspects related to the music.



Fig. 13: Interior of the Taksim Belediye Gazinosu, Istanbul, 1960.
Original source not identifiable.

The venue served as a point of intersection for different audiences. The *gazino* was a place where citizens, landowners, farmers, and workers came together under the sign of a collectively shared Anatolian musical fundament.¹⁵ And it did not matter that Anatolicity for each audience meant something very different: whereas Anatolia was the lost home, but still the heart of their identity for the rural and ex-rural *arabesk* audience, it was a concept promising a more natural identity for the urban Anatolian rock audience, an object of a certain turko-rural longing.

Münir Nurettin Beken explains the musical fluidity of the *gazino* as follows: the “*gazino* always reflected the taste of the paying customers. Therefore, the impact of changing demographics and aesthetics of society has always been reflected on the *gazino* show and its physical space” (Beken 2003). Depending on the owners and audiences, everything could take place in the music: *arabesk*, belly dance, Anatolian rock and pop (see *ibid.*).¹⁶ This is reflected by the fact that the *gazino* usually had different orchestras: at least one *arabesk* orchestra and one pop orchestra for the same location were the standard. Members of these orchestras could meet each other, for example in back-stage concerts.¹⁷

When programming the *gazino*, the owners were primarily focused on their audiences and their heterogeneity: “Expectations of the consumers from all the different domains are fulfilled by the management at big *gazino-s* [sic!]” (*ibid.*). This heterogeneity is worth taking a closer look at: “At the beginning of the twentieth century [...] *gazino* customers were Turkish intellectuals and non-Muslims of the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. After the foundation of Turkish Republic, Turkish intellectuals and statesmen continued to be regular customers of *gazino*” (*ibid.*).

15 “The Turkish musical scene may be viewed in terms of three categories: *alatürka*, which refers to Turkish sociocultural practices; *alafranga*, which refers to Western ones; and *arabesk*, which denotes the culture of peripheral urban immigrants. The *gazino*, a type of nightclub, provides a common denominator for *alatürka* and *arabesk* music in an *alafranga* space” (N.N. 2011). Beken notes: “While the program indicates connections with Ottoman institutions like coffee-houses and *meyhane-s* (a restaurant type), the *gazino* space itself resembles earlier Western style establishments in Istanbul. The variety show is one of the determining aspects of the *gazino* program and it probably goes much further back in history” (Beken 2003). The main period of the *gazino* is 1930–1980: “The advent of television and economic fluctuations since the 1970s caused a steady decline for the business of *gazino*. The glamorous large *gazino-s* of the mid-twentieth century Istanbul disappeared” (*ibid.*).

Interestingly there is a parallel noticeable to developments in Brazil. When the Portuguese Royal Family took Rio de Janeiro as new capital of the empire in 1815 (fleeing Napoleon’s army), a new type of culture developed in the capital: “the urban transformations [...] allowed the emergence of new types of musical venues, such as clubs and vaudevilles, which conceptually combined drinking, eating, and dancing, thus resulting in a new type of entertainment [...]”. These venues would have been responsible not only for the introduction of new European musical genres—which would soon reinforce the repertoire of danceable songs—but would also serve as a place for lay musicians to learn and work” (Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 12).

16 See also old *gazino* programs: <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de>, <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de/2012/12/1976-yinda-istanbul-gazino-programlar.html>, <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de/2012/12/gazino-savaslar-1976-1.html>, and <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de/2012/12/gazino-savaslar-1976-2.html>.

17 According to Beken the back stage was also a place for music theory and discussion (see Beken 2003).

After WWII, two new audiences came to visit the *gazino*, rich landowners from the countryside and formerly poor farmers, which had immigrated to the big cities and made a fortune there. Beken notes: "This societal shift was reflected in the addition of the Folk Music as a fabricated urban genre into the *gazino* repertoire" (ibid.). Accordingly, folk music orchestras were established. The social climbers pushed the change to *arabesk* music: "As soon as they could afford it, former *gecekondu* inhabitants became part of the frame of *gazino* customers. Their consumption of *Arabesk* music [...] was also reflected later in the *gazino* show" (ibid.). In addition to the evening program, affordable matinees were offered for "middle-class families from a variety of backgrounds with a regular limited income" (ibid.). The crucial point was the heterogeneous programming the owners proposed:

"The music, like the food, is presented as a fixed menu. [...] An individual who comes to a *gazino* to listen to and experience the show of, say, an *Arabesk* star, by necessity ends up tolerating other genres" (ibid.).

And so, the public had to eat the whole 'menu': all the *gazino* genres like "*Fasil* [ottoman classic], Turkish Art Music, Folk Music, *Arabesk*, Turkish Pop Music, Belly Dancing and Comedy" (ibid.). Beken concludes:

"Changes in the *gazino* show are related to changes in 'the code' carried by the consumers. Political, economic and social changes superimposed radical changes in the aesthetics and resulted in aesthetic islands in the map of the Turkish society" (ibid.).

Indeed, with all variety of the genres allowed and mixed, the *gazinolar* were 'aesthetic islands' in Turkish society. A last crucial point was the social coding of the music:

"Certain parts of the *gazino* show reflect [...] two types of power. While *Arabesk* reflects economic power, traditional genres like *Fasil* or tango reflect the social prestige of *Alaturka* and *Alafranga*. An individual's economic power may buy the best seat in the *gazino*; social prestige, however, still comes with one's interest in more traditional genres, such as the Turkish Art Music. The *gazino* consumer gets educated by tolerating other genres that have historical dimensions" (ibid.).

Beken shows that the *gazino* was constructed to have a pedagogical function toward tolerance, insofar as visitors wanted to combine economic power, coded in hybrid genres with Western elements, with social prestige, coded in traditional Turkish genres. They could achieve that only by tolerating all the different genres.

The architecture also had an effect of reinforcing the tolerance of the public. Beken describes it as follows:

“The Caddebostan Maksim Gazinosu (CMG) was situated in a modern building with a parking lot. Its modern exterior architectural design was similar enough to a Western fine art gallery or institution that it could be characterized as an Alafranga space.

The cream-colored columns, moldings, niches, cornices, and other architectural ornaments were reminiscent of classical Western architecture, although the use of geometrical shapes in the exterior was closer to Art Deco. There were also a few windows, some of which had stained glass with modern-looking Art Deco designs.

Further evidence of Western influence could be found in the CMG’s interior, with its Art Nouveau-style wooden picture and mirror frames, the bronze sculptures, light fixtures, vases, stained glass, paintings, classical Greco-Roman style columns, moldings, cornices, and white-colored sculptures in illuminated niches” (ibid.).

The architecture marks a clear statement for modernity and social climbing:

“The *gazino* transports the audience [...] to a high status. The Western cultural codes conveyed through the visual arts contribute to this illusion created for them” (ibid.).

This continues in the medial and spatial context of the *gazino*, which itself has a pedagogical effect on the public:

“The newspaper advertisements, and neon lights in front of the *gazino* help foster this illusion. The audience’s preferred clothing, make-up and other behavioral changes reflect their efforts to adapt themselves to this atmosphere” (ibid.).

The atmosphere created this way could be described with Negri and Hardt’s term as “multitude” (see Hardt/Negri 2000), a multiplicity and variety of persons and styles. And exactly this character of multitude was a requirement for the *gazino* to become what it was: a place that led musicians and audiences to musical hybrids and tolerance, bridging over their differences. Of course, there was still a lot of conflict going on, mainly between the owners of the *gazinolar* as artistic directors and the musicians (see Beken 2003). The multitude was not the basis, but the result of a continuously ongoing process of negotiation between owners, the audiences, and the musicians.

In the 1970s, the Turkish music magazine *Hey* had a similar effect in combining and developing tolerance. Comparable to the German *Bravo*, to which *Hey* in the beginning saw itself as an equivalent, hit lists mixed

international pop music stars with local ones, in this case Turkish Anatolian rock musicians. Unlike *Bravo*, *Hey* had a separate hit list for *arabesk*, *Türk sanat müziği*, and *Türk halk müziği*, which mostly ran under the term *Türk müziği*. And all the musicians—regardless of their style—got reports in the magazine. Sometimes a tune like “Zühtü” appeared in both hit lists, once in the funk version by Esin Afşar (list *Hey Disko*), once in the folk version by Bedia Akatürk, and once in the *arabesk* version by Şenay Şenses, both on the list *Türk müziği* (*Hey* 4 (7), 1976: 4, 9). A singer like Neşe Karaböcek could appear, according to her different styles (pop and *arabesk*), in the same magazine in both hit lists (*Hey* 51 (3), 1973: 4–5). Or she could appear even with the same pop-*arabesk* hybrid tune “Demiyom mu” in the same magazine in both lists (*Hey* 29 (4), 1974: 4, 67).

For both Anatolian rock as well as *arabesk* or *Türk müziği* record releases, ads were placed, even directly following each other. Attitude and intentions of *Hey* would need further examination. As *Hey* belonged to the Milliyet media group, the same forces, which pushed the *Altın Mikrofon* contests in the 1960s towards Anatolian rock could have been at work (see Lund 2026/2013: 49). In any case: in the 1970s, Milliyet promoted contests like *Türkiye Liselerarası Müzik ve Halk Oyunları Yarışması*, which combined sections of rock music with sections of traditional folk music (see *Hey* 10 (4), 1974: 20). So *Hey*, like the *gazino*, functioned as a place for different musical styles and their audiences, bringing them together and promoting tolerance.

3. The Turkish Pop Logic

To sum up: apart from the Kemalist hybrid-friendly music politics, there are three main arguments to explain the building of hybrids in Turkey: a collectively shared musical fundament (Anatolian folk music), a collectively shared political fundament (rebellious left-winged), and a collectively shared space (the *gazino* in three-dimensional architecture and *Hey* in two-dimensional print). Not on their own, but connected and interacting, an exploration of these overlaps may lead to an explanation for the hybrids and multi-hybrids one can hear and see in music and the accompanying materials. The Turkish pop logic then could perhaps be described at its core as a logic of multitude, which has the power to put together what elsewhere, especially in the Western world, would seem to be a music-social paradox, a conflict of identity.

The way to this logic of multitude was opened up by two main elements: on the one hand by the Turkish Republic's version of modernity, the 'nationalistic cosmopolitanism,' which functioned as a stepping stone for stylistic combinations between East and West, and on the other hand by the *gazino* with its commercially driven programming, opening the way—and space—for audience tolerance, which was additionally supported by magazines like *Hey*. Antoine Remise recently came up with a surprising idea:

“In a way, ‘Anatolian Rock was more an easternization [sic!] of Turkish music trends than the westernization [sic!] that is usually discussed.

The bands and artists started to copy less and less their Anglo-Saxon models and developed their own genre.

The audience's response was huge; their amazing and unique melodies had a fresh energy that touched the hearts and minds of many who wanted to be a part of the bigger modern world whilst enjoying their Turkish identity” (Remise 2014).

This is a complete change of perspective—seeing Anatolian rock as an Easternization of Turkish music—, but perhaps much closer to the Turkish pop logic as a viewpoint from inside this logic. So, it was Anatolian folk music to which an already Westernized Turkish youth started to turn in its quest for identity (see *ibid.*).¹⁸ This twist in thinking is perhaps neither a contradiction of Stokes (1999: 135), who sees Anatolian rock as “internationalizing a local music, connecting it to the international counterculture,” nor of Skoog (2012: 162f.), who regards Anatolian rock as the localization of an international music. The Turkish pop logic contains several perspectives, including them all, not excluding one or the other. It is a logic of multitude, again.

¹⁸ Historically, one could see it this way: Turkish rock music started in the late 1950s with copies of anglophone songs, continued with Turkish versions of them, and then, with Tülay German's “Burçak Tarlası” (1964), which features Turkish folk music with Western instruments, Anatolian rock was invented (see also Skoog 2012: 3, 116f.).

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