

The Turkish Long-Necked Lute Saz or Bağlama

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Cover image: Poet-musician playing a tanbûr. Excavated tile ensemble from the summer palace of Sultan Alâ al-Dîn Kayqubâd I, Anatolia, early 13th century. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Inv. nr. 00026603.

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Bağlama:

‘Representing all that is Turkish in music
and all that is musical in the Turk...’

Martin Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate*

for Hülya

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Ten years after the Dutch edition of this book, *De Turkse Langhalsluit of Bağlama* (*The Turkish Long-Necked Lute or Bağlama*) it's time for a revised and updated and to a wider audience accessible English edition, the more as publications by authors such as Okan Murat Öztürk, Erol Parlak, Nevzat Çiftçi, and Cihangir Terzi appeared in the meantime. Moreover, new *bağlama* types such as the various *Oğur sazı* types as well as innovative playing techniques and repertory evolved.

The monumental *Folk Musical Instruments of Turkey* (1975) of Laurence Picken is still an important source of information about Turkish folk musical instruments, among which the various Turkish long-necked lutes, containing a wealth of information about their historical background, construction, acoustics, tunings, playing techniques, and terminology.¹ Important Turkish sources are *Ülkelerde Kopuz ve Tezeneli Sazlarımız* (1975) by Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihâl and *Türkiye'de el ile (şelpe) bağlama çalma geleneği ve çalış teknikleri* (2000) by Erol Parlak as well as various articles by authors such as Okan Murat Öztürk, Cihangir Terzi, and Nevzat Çiftçi.²

The main focus of this book is the cultural-historical background of the *saz/bağlama*. In additional chapters, the construction, tuning, and playing technique are briefly discussed. The book concludes with a *Glossary of Musical Instruments*, *Discography*, *Bibliography*, *Illustration Credits*, *A Note on Turkish*, and an *Index*. This book is not only intended to be a provisional revision of the official Turkish political-ideological approach of the folk musical traditions of Turkey and the *saz/bağlama*, but also aims initiating further scientific research.

This study benefited from the work of many scholars in various scientific disciplines. It is impossible to credit them all. My intellectual debts are evident from the footnotes and *Bibliography*.

I particularly want to acknowledge the work of Henry George Farmer, Laurence Picken, Jean During, Richard Campbell, Fivos Anoyanakis, Tamila Djani-Zade, Walter Feldman, Ameneh Youssefzadeh, Ricardo Eichmann, Okan Murat Öztürk, and Erol Parlak. For the broader background of my study I have benefited from the work of numerous historians, such as Marshall Hodgson, Jerry Bentley, Joan Aruz, Robert Canfield, Christopher Beckwith, and the late Halil Inalcık, and art historians, such as Stuart Cary Welch, Milo C. Beach, Walter Denny, Norah Tittle, Michael Barry, Banu Mahir, and Filiz Çağman.

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¹ Picken, L. *Folk Musical Instruments of Turkey*.

² Parlak, E. *Türkiye'de el ile (şelpe) bağlama çalma geleneği ve çalış teknikleri*.

Bölümü Başkanı, Türk Musikisi Devlet Konservatuvarı, İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi) for his hospitality and introduction to his work as well as his generous permission to use images from his book *Bağlama. Yapım sanatı ve sanatçıları*. The luthier Süleyman Aslan (Dutar Müzik, İstanbul), whom I met in May 2006 at the *Uluslararası Müzik Kongresi* (International Music Congress) in İstanbul, for sharing his opinion about the traditional construction which according to him no longer meet the requirements made on the contemporary *bağlama*. The luthier Engin Topuzkanamış (İzmir) for generously sharing with me his knowledge about the construction of the *bağlama* and the *Oğur sazı* as well as the various digital images of the construction process of *Oğur sazısı* made by him.

I thank Dr Gülay Yurdal-Michael and Dr Engin Akarlı for their translation of *On dört yıl dolandım Pervânelikte* (Fourteen years I wandered in the moth's orbit) of the poet Sıtkı (Sıtkı Baba, 1865-1928) which inspired the late Ali Ekber Çiçek to compose his version *On dört bin yıl gezdim pervanelikte* (I wandered for fourteen thousand years) exploring innovative playing techniques.

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In Japan, I thank the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku, Japan) for sending the catalogue of the musical instruments of The Koizumi Fumio Memorial Archives. Professor Koizumi Fumio (1927-1983) collected these instruments during his travels to West Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, America, and Oceania for ethnomusicological and organological studies.

In the Netherlands, I thank Adnan Dalkiran and Veronica Divendal of the Kulsan Foundation in Amsterdam access to their archive and images. The Plantage Library of the University of Amsterdam for making a slide of an engraving from the *Description de l'Égypt. Des instrumens à cordes connus and Égypt* by Guillaume-André Villoteau depicting various *tanbûrs*. The slide of the engraving was made by photographer Louis van der Laan (d. 2002), who was affiliated with the University of Amsterdam. Henny de Bruin, *Atlas of Plucked Instruments*, for his permission to use digital images of his collection. The luthier J.J. van Gool, for answering technical questions about lute construction and reading and commenting the chapter on the construction of the *bağlama*.

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Several people read all or parts of the manuscript and shared valuable comments and suggestions.

I would like to mention Dr Leo Plenckers from the Musicological Department of the University of Amsterdam for his invaluable contribution to the first edition of this book in 2009 being the starting point for this revised and updated version.

I'm deeply indebted to Dr Saskia Willaert of the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) in Brussels for reading and commenting the first chapter, the luthier Engin Topuzkanamış for reading and commenting the Chapters 2-5, and Dr Martin Greve of the Orient Institut in Istanbul for reading, commenting, and editorial suggestions.

More recently museums of musical instruments in Europe started, often in a combined effort, to digitalize their collections making them accessible for scientific research and a general public. In 2009, the Musical Instruments Museum Online (MIMO) started to create a central digital resource for musical instrument collections held in European museums. To become a tool for research this digital database should furthermore be expanded to cover musical instruments worldwide as well include iconographic and literary sources.

Apparently, this book is not the definitive study of *saz/bağlama*. It has shortcomings and lacunae requiring further updates and point to areas of further research. There are still many literary and iconographic sources, particularly in Turkey, waiting for scientific research and analysis, as well as Turkish long-necked lutes in the musical instrument collections in museums and private collectors in and outside Turkey.

Istanbul, June 2020

General Introduction

The *saz/bağlama* is the core instrument of all folk musical ensembles and orchestras and a popular instrument in the *arabesk* , entertainment, and pop music in Turkey. The *saz/bağlama* also plays an important role during the ceremonies of the Alevî and Bektaşî and among the âşîks, the Anatolian wandering poet-musicians, to accompany their partly religious repertory. The *saz/bağlama* plays furthermore an important role in musical education to teach folk musical theory, notation, performance, and acoustics and instrument construction. Its importance is also demonstrated by the fact that musicians, such as Arif Sağ, Musa Eroğlu, Erdal Erzincan, Okan Murat Öztürk, Erol Parlak, and Kemal Dinç play the *saz/bağlama* as solo instrument on the national and international concert stages.³

The lutes of the *saz/bağlama* family are characterized by a long and narrow neck, a carved-hollowed-out or carved-built pear or oval-shaped, and generally round-backed bowl. The origin of the Turkish long-necked lutes, which belong to a large family of long-necked lutes which are also called *tanbûrs* , is probably ancient Persia.⁴ *Tanbûrs* travelled to Anatolia with the Seljuks and even maybe before, initiating a variety of long-necked lutes in Turkey.

As an initially small nomadic two-stringed lute, the *tanbûr* left considerably less literary and iconographical traces. In Turkey, contrary to Persian and especially Mughal miniature paintings which abundantly depict often beautifully ornamented *tanbûrs* in a mainly courtly and urban environment, sources are limited. Moreover, sources in rural areas in Turkey remained scarce well into the 20th century.

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*) in 1923, the development and establishment of a theory folk music, being a body of modal structures, instrument tunings, and rhythms inseparable linked to the *saz/bağlama* , played an important role in the creation of a cohesive and culturally unified nation state. Musicologists, composers, and musicians played, supported by politicians, ideologists, bureaucrats, and journalists, a crucial role in the political-ideological approach of Turkish folk music. It is therefore important for obvious reasons that the Turkish folk musical tradition and the *saz/bağlama* , its education as well as scientific research should emancipate from this political-ideological approach.

Since the 1960s, Turkish long-necked lutes spread to Western Europe, America, and Canada, where they are played in diaspora communities, crossover ensembles consisting of musicians with diverse backgrounds, and by multi-instrumentalists. Moreover, new *saz/bağlama* types continue to evolve due to changing musical and tonal demands made on them.

In an increasingly globalizing world in the 21st century, the musical landscape in Turkey shows a “tendency towards a disintegration of musical traditions into internationalism and multiple musical hybrids which might be described as a process of individualization. The category of

³ See Zeeuw, J. de. De Turkse Langhalsluit of Bağlama; Zeeuw, J. de. Tanbûr Long-Necked Lutes along the Silk Road and beyond: 122-136.

⁴ There is much misunderstanding in the West about the names ‘Persia’ and ‘Iran.’ In this study, Persia is generally used to avoid the misconception that the Persian musical culture and instruments only correspond with contemporary Iran.

individual as used here includes individual musicians, individual music pieces, individual life experiences, identities and approaches to music, individual musical projects, individual CDs and concerts, even individual concepts of music theory, conferences or research projects. Several factors lead to this development: a growing rate and importance of migration and international mobility; the increase of cross-cultural encounters and experiences; the availability of almost all Ottoman-Turkish, Anatolian and global musical styles, instruments and other musical elements via media; the opening up of identity discourses”.⁵ Of importance in this respect is if the *saz/bağlama* is only an instrument of a certain musical culture or if it can ‘emancipate’ from its cultural roots, “like the guitar from its Iberian roots”, and become a musical instrument in its own right’.⁶

⁵ Greve, M. Makamsiz: Individualization of Traditional Music on the Eve of Kemalist Turkey.

⁶ See Betton, J. Die Bağlama ls Teil der Hochschulausbildung in Deutschland?, in Çiftçi, N. and M. Greve (eds). Die Bağlama in der Türkei und Europa. Erstes Bağlama-Symposium in Deutschland. Berlin, 14-15 September 2013: 315.