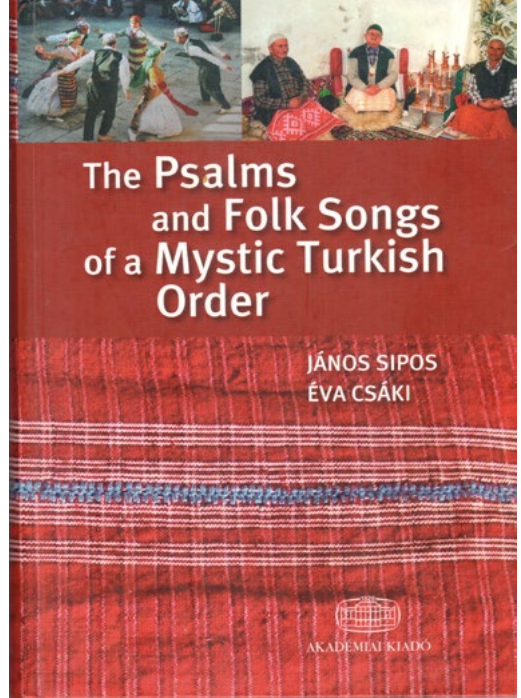


János Sipos and Éva Csáki, *The Psalms and Folk Songs of a Mystic Turkish Order*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2009.\*

Ezgi TEKİN ARICI\*\*

Sadettin KALENDEROĞLU\*\*\*

Studies in recent years related to music within a historical and cultural context tend to increase particularly in ethnomusicology, folk music, and music ethnography, where the fieldworks are highly required. In this regard, Alevi and Bektashi culture is one of the most attractive research topics for many researchers. There are many books written on Alevi and Bektashi culture and music; many of them pursue the history and philosophy of the Alevi and Bektashi community while others study rather in a cultural context that includes its symbolism and meaning. One remarkable study is the book named *The Psalms and Folk Songs of a Mystic Turkish Order* written by János Sipos and Éva Csáki. Akadémiai Kiadó in Budapest published the first edition of the book in 2009. This book mainly concentrates on the folk songs and psalms (*deyiş, nefes, semah, etc.*) of Bektashi communities living in Turkey's Thrace Region (*Western part of Turkey*). It gives a comprehensive overview of Bektashi culture, including its origins and history. The authors draw attention to the Bektashi communities that have conserved their pre-Islamic traditions and given music a prominent role in their lives. This book can also be regarded as a continuation of comparative musicological studies in Anatolia, which began with Béla Bartók in 1936.



\* Geliş Tarihi: 10.02.2021, Kabul Tarihi: 10.02.2021. DOI: 10.34189/hbv.97.016

\*\* Öğr. Gör., Niğde Ömer Halis Demir Üniversitesi, Türk Musikisi Devlet Konservatuvarı, Müzikoloji Bölümü, ezgitekinarici@ohu.edu.tr, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7096-4353>

\*\*\* Sağlık Bilimleri Üniversitesi, Gülhane Tıp Fakültesi, sadettin.kalenderoglu@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9697-9871>

This book provides readers with valuable insights into music studies particularly in three fundamental aspects. First, it presents hundreds of folk song texts including lullabies, laments, or dirges, manis, bride's farewell songs and psalms including *nefes*, *semah*<sup>1</sup> of Thrace Bektashis along with their translations in English. They also compare the texts they recorded with the other variants of the texts taken from documents such as *cönks*<sup>2</sup>. The approach in translating hymns into English could be beneficial and perhaps a model for further endeavours in this field of study. Secondly, musicologists and musicians also have access to the notation of the folk songs and religious hymns of Thrace Bektashis. Most of the transcribed songs are mainly compiled and recorded during six-year fieldwork conducted by the authors between 1999 and 2003 in 24 Bektashi villages. This provides an excellent source for learning these hymns and studying Alevi-Bektashi music in a scholarly and analytical manner. Thirdly, and most importantly, the authors pay specific attention to the musical analysis of the extensive note's collection recorded during their fieldwork. Although efforts to record and transcribe folk songs have increased since the 1920s, they point out that not enough attention has been paid to the classification, association, and analytical examinations of the collected materials.

After this brief survey, the book can be examined under three main topics in terms of subjects it covers. The "Introduction" provides an overview of the Bektashi community's history to a great extent and its spreading in Thrace by depicting historical events that impacted the formation of Bektashism throughout centuries. The authors strongly emphasize the influence of the Central Asian and pre-Anatolian eras of Turkish history. Since Turks have interacted with various religions and cultures, they borrowed elements from each to integrate into their belief system. Therefore, when they embraced Islam as their primary religion, they did not abandon their former traditions and beliefs. Thus, they adopted a mystical interpretation of Islam called Sufism, in which they could practice more archaic rites and keep earlier faiths alive along with new religion and its practices.

When it comes to the geographical area where earlier elements of the Bektashi Order began forming, Khorasan, a region in today's Iran, was an important location from where Turkish people migrated to the west (Anatolia and Balkans). Hoca Ahmed Yesevi, a significant Sufi master and poet who influenced many belief systems in Anatolia, appeared there. He was a prominent figure among the earlier representatives of mystical poetry in Turkish language. He tried to introduce the recently adopted religion's main principles and duties to nomadic Turkish tribes in his teachings. Elements from earlier belief systems and explanations of Islam's core beliefs can still be observed in his poems. Hacı Bektaş Veli, who brought the Khorasan-based wisdom to Anatolian peninsula, is considered as one of Hoca Ahmet Yesevi's followers. The Bektashi Order has not been established during his lifetime, but his ideas and Khorasan-based wisdom arrived to Thrace and the Balkans through religious leaders such as Othman Baba, Seyyid Ali Sultan, Sarı Saltık and this lead to the Islamization of the Balkans.

In Chapter “Religious Ceremony”, the authors extensively define, depict, and analyze the religious gathering (*Ayin-i Cem*) of the Thracian Bektashis. It should be concluded that the *cem* ceremony is the most important communal practice of worshipping in their belief system, similarly to other Alevi communities across Anatolia. The *cem* ceremony provides a way to conduct communal justice, and unity in the society and transmit principles of the order over generations. Besides, it consists of rites representing and derived from theogony, cosmogony, and anthropogony of Islam’s exoteric aspects within Alevism and Bektashism. Various types of ceremonies, each possessing a unique function in terms of their role in society and individuals, are presented named *ikrar verme cemi* or ‘ceremony convened for taking the initiation oath’, *musahiplik cemi* or ‘ceremony of sworn brotherhood’, *görgü cemi* ‘mirror ceremony’. Services within a *cem* ceremony and people performing them called ‘service person’ or *hizmet sahibi* are also explained according to their duty in the *Cem Ritual*. The authors state that while most of the Alevi and Bektashi communities in Anatolia practice whirling (*semah*) accompanied by a musical instrument like ‘bağlama’, the Thracian Bektashis often practice it by singing without instrumental accompaniment.

In chapter “The Music of the Bektashis in Thrace” the authors deal with the Alevi and Bektashi music in cultural context. In this sense, they review several documents and archives for the Bektashi culture’s music repertoire. After a careful examination of the available note archives of Alevi-Bektashi literature, they compare the music pieces in these sources with the examples of music still performed by Thracian Bektashis. First, the authors give brief information on the musical analyses and classify the Bektashi melodies. The element of the classification are the melody types, that is melodies being close variants. The primary criterion of the classification is the melodic line, which is the most complex and most comprehensive musical characteristic. Later, chapter “Detailed Musical Analysis” deals extensively with the details of the musical analysis of the songs.

At the end of the book, there is a glossary explaining the Bektashi Order’s religious terminology. Since the terms used by Bektashi literature may be slightly or even sometimes completely different from the colloquial Turkish, the glossary can help researchers who have just begun studying this field.

## Sonnotlar

---

<sup>1</sup> Genre of the sacred songs.

<sup>2</sup> Collections of the poems or hymns.

