

Ecstasy in Music: The Case of Sema and Semah *Müzikte Esrime: Semâ ve Semah Örneği*

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Öz

Esrime, kişinin içinde bulunduğu bir bilinç değişimi durumudur. Bu durum içerisinde olan kişi, bir iç gözlem deneyimi yaşar ve özüne döner. Mezkûr durum uyuklu veya hipnotize olma durumuna da benzetilebilir. Fakat bu durumlardan daha ziyade esrime, gelenekselleşmiş bir sıra dışılık durumunu ifade eder. Yani toplumlarda esrime durumlarına rastlanabilir ve bu esrime durumları değişebilir. Dolayısıyla esrime sadece geçmişte değil, günümüzde de var olmaya devam eder. Bu yönde esrime, kültürden kültüre farklı anlamlarla ve farklı isimlendirmelerle, evrensel bir kelime olarak karşımıza çıkar. Farklı anlamlar ve farklı isimlendirmeler ihtiva eden esrime, genel itibarıyla müzik ile ilişkilendirilir. Aslında müzik, esrime durumuna geçişte bir aracı vazifesi görür. Bu durum, esrime ve müzik arasında bir ilişkiden söz etmemize olanak sağlar. Bu ilişkide ise kültürel farklılıklar belirleyicidir. Müzik ve esrime arasındaki ilişki, konunun merkezinde yer alan semâ merasimi ve semah merasimlerinde de görülmektedir. Bu doğrultuda iki çeşit kullanım ile karşımıza çıkan semâ ve semah, aynı anlamı muhteva eder; fakat bu kelimeler uygulama noktasında birbirinden ayrılır. Yani semâ, Mevlevî ritüellerinde, semah ise Alevî ritüellerinde müzik eşliğinde ifa edilen uygulamalardır. Mevlevî semâ merasimi, müzik ve devinimsel hareketlerin bir arada olduğu esrime hali olarak imgelelenebilir. Bu esrime hali ile kişinin özüne dönme amacı doğrultusunda icra edilen semâ merasiminde müzik ve devinimsel hareketler esrimenin meydana gelmesine katkıda bulunur. Bu bağlamda müzik ve devinimsel hareketler bir nevi esrimeye aracı unsurlar olarak düşünülebilir. Mevlevî semâ merasiminde na't, kudüm icrası, ney taksimi, peşrev ve ayin-i şerif icrası ile insanın miracı hem müzik hem de devinimsel hareketlerle anlatılır. Bu merasimde esrimenin zirve yaptığı bölüm ise üçüncü selamdır. Bu selamda müziğin temposunun ve semazenlerin hareketlerinin hızlanması bundan dolayıdır. Ayrıca mezkûr merasimde ney ve kudüm çalgıları da esrimenin yaşanmasına aracı unsurlar olarak belirtilebilir. Alevî semah merasimlerinde de benzer bir durum söz konusudur. Semah merasimi de semâ merasimleri gibi bir çeşit esrime hali olarak ifade edilebilir. Bu esrime haliyle kişi özüne, yani Allah'a döner. Cem erkanlarında miraçlamaların içerisinde bir bölüm olarak icra edilen semah, müzik ve devinimsel unsurlar vasıtasıyla iki ya da üç bölümlü olarak ifa edilir. Semahların ağırlama ve yeldirme ya da ağırlama, yürütme ve yeldirme olmak üzere iki kısma veya üç kısma ayrılarak icra edilmesi semahın esrimeye yönelik olduğuna işaret eder. Bu manada semahtaki bölümlerde müzik eşliğinde icra edilen devinimsel hareketler yavaştan hızlıya doğrudur. Böylece tıpkı semâdaki gibi semahtaki müzik ve devinimsel hareketler de esrime durumuna geçişe olanak sağlayarak, esrimeye aracılık etmiş olurlar. Bunun dışında semâ merasimlerinde ney ve kudüm çalgılarının esrimenin yaşanmasına aracı oldukları gibi semah merasimlerinde de bağlamanın bu durumun yaşanmasına aracı olduğu görülür. Bu bağlamda semâ merasimleri ve semah merasimlerinde meydana gelen esrime ve esrime ile yaşanan seyir haline müziğin, müziksel unsurların ve devinimsel hareketlerin aracı olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Bu çerçevede literatüre bakıldığında Mevlevîlik semâ ritüelleri ve Alevîlik semah ritüelleri ile ilgili muhtelif çalışmanın olduğu; fakat semâ ve semah ritüellerinde esrimenin ve esrime unsurlarının ele alındığı bir çalışmanın olmadığı müşahede edilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, alandaki boşluğu doldurarak benzer araştırmalara kaynak olması açısından önem arz etmektedir. Bu minvalde araştırma semâ merasimleri ve semah merasimlerinde esrime durumlarını ortaya koymaya odaklanmaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda araştırmada betimsel bir modelle belgesel tarama yöntemi yapılmış, konu ile ilgili kaynaklar incelenmiş ve elde edilen veriler yorumlanarak bulgular ortaya konulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzik, Esrime, Mevlevîlik, Semâ, Alevîlik, Semah.

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Abstract

Ecstasy is a state of altered consciousness in which a person is in a state of trance. The person in this state experiences an introspection and returns to their essence. Such a state can also be likened to being asleep or hypnotized. But more than these states, ecstasy refers to a conventionalized state of unusualness. In other words, ecstasy can occur in societies and these moods of ecstasy can change. Therefore, ecstasy continues to exist not only in the past but also in the present. In this regard, ecstasy appears as a universal word with different meanings and different nomenclatures from culture to culture. Containing different meanings and different nomenclature, ecstasy is generally associated with music. In fact, music acts as an intermediary in the transition to the state of ecstasy. This situation allows us to speak of a relationship between ecstasy and music. Cultural differences are decisive in this relationship. The relationship between music and ecstasy is also seen in the sema ceremony and semah ceremonies, which are at the center of the subject. In this direction, sema and semah, which are used in two different ways, contain the same meaning; however, these words differ from each other in terms of application. In other words, sema is performed in Mevlevi rituals and semah is performed in Alevi erkans/rituals accompanied by music. The Mevlevi sema ceremony can be visualized as a state of ecstasy in which music and kinetic movements are together. In the sema ceremony performed for the purpose of returning to one's essence with this state of ecstasy, music and kinetic movements contribute to the occurrence of ecstasy. In this context, music and kinetic movements can be considered as a kind of mediating elements for ecstasy. In the Mevlevi sema ceremony, the human ascension is described with both music and kinetic movements through the performance of na't, kudüm, ney, peşrev and ayin-i şerif. The climax of the ecstasy in this ceremony is the third salute. This is why the tempo of the music, and the movements of the whirling dervishes accelerate in this salute. In addition, in the aforementioned ceremony, ney and kudüm instruments can also be mentioned as instrumental elements in the experience of ecstasy. There is a similar situation in Alevi semah ceremonies. Semah ceremonies, like sema ceremonies, can be described as a state of ecstasy. In this state of ecstasy, the person returns to his/her soul, that is, to Allah. Semah, which is performed as a part of Miraçlama in cem erkans, is performed in two or three parts with the help of music and kinetic elements. The fact that the semahs are performed in two or three parts, namely, hospitality and swaying, or hospitality, execution and swaying, indicates that the semah is directed towards ecstasy. In this sense, the kinetic movements performed in the sections of the semah accompanied by music move from slow to fast. Thus, just like in sema, the music and kinetic movements in semah mediate ecstasy by enabling the transition to a state of ecstasy. Apart from this, it is seen that the ney and kudüm instruments mediate the experience of ecstasy in sema ceremonies, as well as the bağlama in semah ceremonies. In this context, it is possible to say that music, musical elements and kinetic movements are the mediators of the state of ecstasy and the state of motion experienced with ecstasy in sema ceremonies and semah ceremonies. In this context, when the literature is examined, it is realized that there are various studies on Mevlevi sema rituals and Alevi semah rituals; however, there is no study that deals with ecstasy and its elements in sema and semah rituals. In this regard, the study is important in terms of filling the gap in the field and being a source for similar studies. In this manner, the research aims to reveal the state of ecstasy in sema ceremonies and semah ceremonies. In line with this purpose, a documentary research method with a descriptive model was used in the research, the sources related to the subject were examined and the findings were revealed by interpreting the data obtained.

Keywords: Music, Ecstasy, Mevlevi Order, Sema, Alevism, Semah.

Introduction

Music, which is at the focal point of the spiritual system and religious rituals, has an important place in Sufi worship, which is the esoteric aspect of Islam. In this sense, music, which is important in Sufi worship, is approached from different perspectives in sects and belief systems. In this context, while music and dance are forbidden in some belief systems, in others music and dance appear as an indispensable part of rituals (Uyar and Beşiroğlu, 2012: 138). Such is the case in the beliefs of Mevlevi order and Alevism, which are at the center of this study. In other words, music is an indispensable part of rituals in these belief systems.

The Mevlevi sect, which has survived to the present day on the axis of Hz. Mevlânâ's doctrines, is based on an esoteric belief system. As a reflection of this belief system, sema draws attention as a ceremony that contains symbolic meanings at every stage (Uysal, 2016: 37). In other words, the ceremony of sema contains subtle meanings that go far beyond the external. In the framework of these meanings, the purpose of the sema ceremony is expressed as the ascension of the person to the divine realm in ecstasy through the performances of na't, kudüm, ney, peşrev and ayin-i şerif, which are accompanied by music and rhythmic movements. In this sense, the sema itself can be considered as an element of ecstasy (Altınölçek, 2014: 855-856).

Alevism, like Mevlevi order, is based on an implicit belief system. In the aforementioned belief system, the practices in which worship is performed and the teachings of this community are repeated are cem erkans. One of the inseparable parts of these erkans/rituals is semah. Semah, like sema rituals, should not be considered as a ritual or ceremony involving only music and kinetic movements. Each part of the semah contains symbolic meanings and symbolizes a kind of ecstatic state of reaching Allah. In other words, this is a state of isolation from the material world and integration with the creator in the spiritual world, that is, a state of "monotheism" (Bulut, 2023: 198).

In line with the above information, the problem statement of the study has been determined as "Is there a state of ecstasy in the sema rituals of Mevlevi and semah rituals of Alevism?". When the literature is examined in this regard, it is seen that there are many studies on the belief systems of Mevlevi and Alevism, the rituals performed in these belief systems, the practices and esoteric meanings of these rituals, but there is no study specifically on the element of ecstasy in these rituals. Therefore, this study is thought to be a source for similar studies. In this framework, the element of ecstasy, which is at the heart of the study, constitutes the backbone of the research and appears as an inseparable part of the rituals. In order to reveal the element of ecstasy in these rituals, the concepts of sema and semah will be mentioned first, then sema in Mevlevi order and semah in Alevism, and finally the element of ecstasy in sema and semah rituals will be discussed. In addition, the last part will reveal whether there is an element of ecstasy in sema and semah rituals.

1. The Concept of Ecstasy

Ecstasy, which is the equivalent of "ecstasy" in English and "extase" in French, is defined as the act of ecstasy, gashiy, gashyolma, rapture, vecit, wajd, trance, inspiration, feeling, a state of altered consciousness experienced in the heart without any intention or effort (Turkish Language Association Dictionaries; Uludağ, 1991: 514). In this sense, ecstasy can be likened to a state of sleepiness or hypnotism in which the person is unaware of his/her surroundings and actions (Akter, 2022: 114), and has limited sensory and motor skills. The person in this state undergoes an experience of introspection in which he/she feels nothing but his/her own body (Becker, 2004: 38).

Trance, or ecstasy, refers to a mysterious state in which the sense of self and ego disappears (Becker, 2004: 25). Music, on the other hand, acts as an intermediary in experiencing this state. In this sense, ecstasy is a state of

absence, slippage or a kind of syncope. Syncope can be divine or demonic. In this respect, it is possible to encounter different sources indicating that there is a relationship between music and ecstasy. In this respect, it is seen that the relationship between music and ecstasy is shaped according to cultural expectations. In other words, social context and cultural determinism are important in this relationship. In addition, all kinds of vocal or instrumental music can be associated with ecstasy (Rouget, 1980).

Ecstasy should not be considered as an ordinary state of altered consciousness. Rather than an ordinary state of altered consciousness, ecstasy is a traditionalized state of unusualness. This indicates that ecstatic traditions exist in societies and that ecstatic traditions change. Therefore, ecstasy continues to exist not only in the past but also in the present (Öyken, 2009: 85). In this respect, ecstasy appears as a universal word with different meanings from culture to culture (Holm, 1982: 9; Hell, 1999: 9). In other words, words such as change of consciousness, trance, ecstasy, rapture correspond to the same meaning.

In general, ecstasy is defined as a state of altered consciousness; however, when defining ecstasy, it is important to keep in mind that there are different types of it. In this sense, apart from intoxication caused by the use of psycho-active substances, the first type of ecstasy that comes to mind in various cultures is the type that takes place in collective religious ceremonies. This type of ecstasy is also found in different belief systems such as the cult of Dionysus and the cult of the Phrygian Mother Goddess. It is likely to find different factors of ecstasy in these belief systems. Intoxicants, music and dance, elements with sacred content are some of them. The use of these elements may vary from culture to culture (Öyken, 2009: 87-89).

According to the literature, collective religious ecstasy belongs to the distant past of Greek culture. In this sense, it is observed that there is a religious framework in the types of ecstasy caused by gods such as Dionysus, Apollo, Cybele, Hecate, Hera, Ares or divine beings such as Korybas or Nymphas; however, collective religious ecstasy is understood exclusively as the type of ecstasy experienced collectively by people who take part in the rituals of Dionysus and Cybele belief systems (Öyken, 2009: 95).

It has been stated in general that the origin/root of ecstasy is religious in nature. In this context, there is information that ecstasy is mainly related to Shamanism (Burkert, 1972: 162). In this framework, it is thought that the tradition of ecstasy may have been carried to Greek culture from Asia by the Black Sea Scythians (Dodds, 1966: 140-141) and it is pointed out that ecstasy is in parallel with ecstatic traditions in many other cultures, including the shamanic tradition in Asia (Rohde, 1927: 278).

It is possible to say that collective religious ecstasy is also present in Mevlevi and Alevi semah rituals, which are the main focus of this study. In these rituals, some elements mediate the state of ecstasy. Some of these elements are melody, lyrics -music- and kinetic movements.

Based on the relevant literature, it is apparent that sema in Mevlevi order and semah in Alevism refer to the same religious ceremony; however, there are differences between them in terms of practices (Yöndemli, 2007: 248). In this respect, the concepts of sema and semah will be discussed below, followed by the ceremonies of sema in Mevlevi order and semah in Alevism, and the states of ecstasy in sema and semah.

2. The Concept of Sema and Semah

The word “sema” etymologically comes from the Arabic root “sm” and appears as an infinitive like “sam” and “sim”. Semantically, it means hearing, listening, sky, flying, song, tune, dance, ecstasy, going into a trance while listening to musical melodies, moving and spinning, performed music and dhikr practiced ayin specific dervish by estates and sects (Ayışit Onatçı, 2007: 58; Erseven, 1998: 86-103; Bozkurt, 1990b: 15; Menteş, 2011:

25; Güray, 2012: 10) Apart from these meanings, the word sema is also considered from a different perspective and all sounds, spiritual truths, secrets, wisdoms and even silence heard through the ear are expressed as sema (Uludağ, 2004: 69).

The origin of the word semah, which is known by different names such as semah, samah, zamah, zemah, zamak, semak, semağ, is thought to be “sema” and the origin of this word is thought to be based on the Arabic root “sema” or “sima”. Thus, the letter “a” in the word sema was changed with the letter “h” and the word semah was formed (Güray, 2012: 10). In this direction, it is thought that the word semah originated from the word sema (Güray, 2018a: 31). When the word semah is considered semantically and from a musical perspective, it means hearing and listening (Erol, 2018: 146).

Apart from these, the concept of sema/semah stands out as the reflection of the fertility cult and the messianic tradition, that is, the divine power, in the world within the world of historical meaning in Ancient Greece (Xeravits, 2001: 342, 343). It is pointed out that these two concepts mentioned here are important in the reflection of cyclical worship systems (Güray, 2018b: 615).

In addition, it is seen that the word sema/semah was also used to symbolize divination based on the heavens, signs, celestial bodies and fortunes (Liddell et al., 2011). In this context, Güray (2018b: 613-614), uses the concept of sema/semah to describe dhikr with music and dance, he states that it is important that it points to a “heavenly” tradition before the Islamic Medieval Period, when it began. When it came to the Islamic period, the tradition in question diversified; Anatolia of sema and semah traditions and surrounding regions (Güray, 2012: 8-9).

The words sema and semah, which are used in two different ways, have the same meaning; however, these words are the names of two different forms of dances. In this context, sema is used in Mevlevi and other Sunni sects, while semah is the name of a religious dance performed with musical accompaniment in Alevi-Bektashi erkans/rituals (Bozkurt, 1990b: 15; Erseven, 1998: 104; Korkmaz, 1993: 310; Birdoğan, 1995: 441; Er, 1998: 75). There is no change in the origin of the word sema in the Mevlevi sect; however, instead of the word semah in Alevism, different words such as pervaz, çark, dem are used according to ethnicity and spoken language (Ayışıt Onatçı, 2007: 59; Özdemir, 2022: 11; Özdemir and Ersoy Çak, 2022: 191). In addition, the words samah, zamah, zemah, zamak, semağ, zamağ, zemak are also used instead of the word semah in Anatolian dialects (Elçi, 1999: 172-173; Er, 1998: 75; Bozkurt, 1990b: 20; Birdoğan, 1995: 441).

In this context, it would be worthwhile to include information on the origins of sema in Mevlevi order and semah in Alevism. It is not possible to find clear information about the origins of sema and semah in the documents; however, there is information that there are some similarities between Mevlevi sema rituals and Alevi semah rituals and Shaman rituals (Bozkurt, 1990a: 88).

It is seen that there are similarities in the rituals of Shamanism and Mevlevi order, especially in terms of the inclusion of melody, lyrics and dance elements and the state of ecstasy accompanied by these elements (Yöndemli, 2007: 224-228). There is similar situation in Alevi erkans/rituals (Birdoğan, 1995: 464-487; Turan, 2013: 155-158). However, it would not be correct to say that there is only the influence of Shamanism in neither sema nor semah rituals (Zelyut, 1992: 330), because there is some information that there is also the influence of Islamic mysticism and ancient Anatolian cultures in sema and semah rituals in addition to the influence of Shaman belief (Ayışıt Onatçı, 2007: 67; Er, 1998: 75; Paşlı, 2013: 148; Yöndemli, 2007: 224-228).

3. Sema in Mevlevi Order

In Sufi symbolism, the state of ecstasy is expressed with words such as ecstatic, mesmerized and intoxicated. The combination of music, sema and the state of divine ecstasy, even if symbolically, brings to mind the Apollon-Dionysus (Apollon-Bacchus) dualism that Nietzsche uses to explain artistic events. In this dualism, the Dionysian or Bacchusian state is united in music because no phenomenon in music can be expressed in words. The Dionysian or Bacchusian human being searches for the subtle, not the overt. In this sense, the Dionysian or Bacchusian state appears as an expression of the human being's desire to return to his essence (Yöndemli, 2007: 268).

In Islam, sema is similar to Nietzsche's Dionysian or Bacchusian state. In this respect, sema is expressed as a movement or a demonstration of the love of God that reminds us of the pleasure of the sounds of music in God's address "Am I not your Lord?" in the assembly of bezm-i elest (Hidayetoğlu, 2010: 185; Yiğitler, 2005: 200).

In general terms, sema is defined as hearing the sounds of music, going into a state of ecstasy and whirling. The act of whirling appears as a mystical dance. This movement is inspired by cosmic symbolism; it is a representation of the planets revolving around the sun and the search for God symbolized by the sun (Yöndemli, 2007: 266). Sufis perceived the universe as a manifestation of God, and accordingly, they stated that sema is not just music or the act of whirling. In fact, according to Mevlevi dervishes, sema, as a form of prayer and a spiritual journey, is a state of ecstasy that enables direct communication with God (Gribetz, 1991: 43).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that sema is not a phenomenon that started with Hz. Mevlânâ or Mevlevi order and that these rituals have been performed since the pre-Islamic true religions (Özer, 2015: 96); that sema began with Hz. Ebubekir and the first person to perform sema was Hz. Ebubekir; and that sema later became a religious ecstasy during the time of Ebu Said-i Ebu'l-Hayr and two centuries later during the time of Mevlânâ (Duru, 2012: 34). However, in general, the appearance of sema is attributed to the time of Hz. Mevlânâ (Çetinkaya, 2016: 122).

There is no definite evidence in the sources that Mevlânâ performed sema as it is done today. In this period, sema ceremonies were not regulated in a certain order. After Mevlânâ's lifetime, these ceremonies were organized until the time of Sultan Veled, Ulu Ârif Çelebi and Pîr Âdil Çelebi (Ak, 2011: 163) and finalized with the rules set by Pîr Hüseyin Çelebi (Talu, 2014: 941).

As mentioned above, the ceremony performed in the Mevlevi sect is called sema (Tanrıkorur, 2019: 116). Every practice and each act in this ceremony contains symbolic meanings. In this direction, the sema ceremony stands out as a ceremony in which the relationship between God-human-universe is explained as a form of recitation with a dense meaning content and as a reflection of the journey of human creation (Gürer and Ulupınar, 2023: 111-112).

The sema ceremony, which has an esoteric meaning, consists of four parts. These four parts are actually important in terms of revealing the spiritual aspect of the ceremony. In this context, the four parts, which are expressed as çarh, raks, muallak and pertav, represent certain periods of human life. The çarh, which is performed by turning in a circle, symbolizes the spring of human life -the first 20 years of life-; the raks, in which the body moves in place, symbolizes the summer of human life -between the ages of 20 and 40-; the muallak, in which the body rises into the air, symbolizes the autumn of human life -between the ages of 40 and 60-; and the pertav, which represents the state of old age, such as flaking, swaying and falling, symbolizes the winter of human life -after the age of 60-. Moreover, the last part symbolizes the integration of the person with God (Erseven, 1998: 106-113;

Ergin, 1995: 117; Bozkurt, 1990b: 43-44). In this framework, sema, which is performed in four parts, appears as one of the instruments that enable a person to get closer to God or to meet God (Menteş, 2011: 18-27).

When the sources are examined, not much information can be obtained about the division of the sema into four parts. The reason for this may be that the information in question is not widely accepted.

The sema ceremony begins with Na't-ı Mevlânâ, composed by Buhûrîzade Mustafa İtrî in Rast mode and praising the Prophet Muhammad. When the na't is over, a few blows are played by the head of the kudüm player, followed by the ney improvisation. When the improvisation is over, while the peşrev is being performed, Devr-i Veledi -walking around the sema house three times- takes place. At the end of Devr-i Veledi, the ritual is performed with the ney improvisation (Alvan and Alvan, 2019: 232-236).

Mevlevi rituals are the musical pieces performed by the musicians during the return of the whirling dervishes (Çakır, 2018: 120). The rituals consist of four sections called selam (salute) and after the four salutes are performed, the last peşrev and the last yürük semai conclude the composed part of the ritual. In case there is a special occasion, the last peşrev and the last yürük semai are not played; The Niyaz cantus composed by İtrî is recited, the last improvisation is performed, and the sema ceremony ends with the aşr-ı şerif (the honorable ten verses) and prayer (Alvan and Alvan, 2019: 232-236).

4. Semah in Alevism

In the Alevi belief system, the ceremony performed with the congregation accompanied by music is called "cem" (Ayışit Onatçı, 2007: 28; Demirci, 2019: 4) and it is known that this ceremony has a systematic and hierarchical structure. Of course, there are differences in these services and practices from region to region or from community to community; but despite these differences, the purpose of cem erkans performed with a Sufi understanding is common. This purpose is to bring the person closer to God (Öcal, 2023: 11-14).

When we look at the literature, lyrics, music and dance are some of the ways of expressing belief in Alevi cem erkans. In this sense, semahs are considered as a combination of these three elements. In this context, semahs have both a physical and a spiritual quality since they have a musical, poetic and bodily content. Therefore, semahs stands out as a structure that can fulfill the purpose of cem erkans (Özdemir and Ersoy Çak, 2022: 191-192).

In this context, it would be appropriate to mention the origin of semah. The origin of semah is generally attributed to the semah that Hz. Muhammad whirled with the Kırklar on the night of Miraj (Kaya Şahin, 2023: 114). Different definitions of semah, which is shaped within this framework, are also seen in the literature. In this direction, semah appears as a genre created to accompany the dance performed in cem erkans and expressed as semah (Güllü, 2022: 5; Öztürk, 2006: 2; Ayaz and Sultanova, 2013: 129; Demir and Demir, 2022: 222-224).

In addition to being a genre, semah is defined as a form of worship and a form of practice based on beliefs related to religion (Ayışit Onatçı, 2007: 59). Besides being a genre and a form of practice based on beliefs related to religion, semahs are also defined as one of the services included in Alevi cem erkans (Bozkurt, 1990b: 48).

Apart from the above-mentioned definitions, it is seen that semah is mostly expressed as a dance-based dhikr or ritual. In this context, semah is defined as a set of movements performed in Alevi erkans/rituals (Özbek, 1998: 158), a religious dance performed by men and women with rhythmic movements (Alvan and Alvan, 2019: 317), a folkloric dance in which the myth of Kırklar is dramatized in Alevi erkans/rituals (Mustan Dönmez, 2013: 76), and a practice consisting of verbal, melodic and figurative features performed during cem erkans (Tamay, 2009: 168). Even though there are melodies and rhythmic movements in the structure of semahs, which cannot be

separated from cem erkans, semahs should not be considered only as a dance because semahs are expressed as a form of worship rather than dance (Erol, 2018: 145).

As well as being expressed as a form of worship, semah is also defined as an activity in which community members display the ability to act and move together with melody and rhythm. In this sense, semah, which is generally performed accompanied by bağlama, appears as an integral part of Alevi cem erkans and is expressed as a ritual movement (Öztürkmen, 2005: 251).

In short, semah is a structure in which lyrics, music and rhythmic movements -dance elements- come together in a metaphysical perspective and cultural perception (Sayın, 2020: 42). In this sense, it is possible to define semah as one of the religious dance rituals performed during Alevi erkans/rituals and the melody accompanying this dance (Aykurt and Börekci, 2020: 494). Apart from the aforementioned definitions, semah also represents a threshold to reach religious satisfaction with the relationship between voice, word and body within the cem erkan (Özdemir and Ersoy Çak, 2022: 187).

When we look at the literature, we come across semahs with two or three parts. In this respect, two-part semahs are named as welcoming (ağırlama) and swaying (yeldirme) (Bozkurt, 1990b: 29); three-part semahs are named as welcoming (ağırlama), revival and swaying (yeldirme). In other words, the semahs are characterized by slow and fast or slow, medium and fast movements (Korkmaz, 1993: 311). This is also applied to musical performance.

As a result of all these conveyances, a general definition can be made for semah. Semah is the name given to a set of movements and the accompanying melody in Alevism, which are performed in the cem erkan with the aim of reaching religious satisfaction and integrating with the divine essence through melody, lyrics and rhythmic movements. Although Semahs differ musically, structurally and literarily according to customs and belief structures, they have the same function in Alevi communities in terms of belief. This function is that the person experiences a state of spiritual navigation and reaches absolute existence (Özdemir and Ersoy Çak, 2022: 191).

5. Ecstasy in Sema and Semah

Mevlevi sema rituals and Alevi semah rituals have an esoteric meaning, describing the state of ecstasy in which a person is freed from the world in longing to reach God (Önder, 31). In this sense, the ecstasy experienced during sema is expressed as the outcome of sema (Uludağ, 2004: 172). In other words, ecstasy can be considered as the result of sema. Therefore, sema or semah serves as a means to enter a state of ecstasy.

When we look at the literature, it is seen that researches aiming at universal and objective explanations of the relationship between music and ecstasy are at the forefront. In this sense, it is reported that the rhythmic elements in the rituals cause unusual behaviors (Akter, 2022: 114-115). It is possible to talk about the same situation in the sema and semah rituals, which are at the center of the study. In this context, it would be appropriate to say that the element of rhythm in the rituals contributes to ecstasy.

Music and poetry appear as inseparable parts of the rituals in Mevlevi sema rituals, where a state of ecstasy is experienced from beginning to end. In fact, music, in these rituals, is expressed as a divine source and poetry as a complementary element to music (Erseven, 1998: 113). Furthermore, music and poetry allow the person to become entranced, in other words, to experience a state of ecstasy. Therefore, the sema ceremony, in which music and poetry are together, can be defined as a kind of ecstasy. In this respect, sema has a feature that brings people closer to Allah (Bozkurt, 1990b: 17).

In line with the aforementioned purpose, Mevlevi sema symbolizes the spiritual journey of human beings, in other words, their ascension. In this framework, every phenomenon and every act in the sema ceremony intrinsic meanings as a representation of this journey. In this respect, it is probable to state that ecstasy is experienced, and the person completes his ascension by reaching Allah with the practices realized in the Mevlevi sema ceremony. The sema ceremony begins with the na't (poem praising the prophet Mohammad), which is stated as the example of the human being. In this sense, na't appears as the manifestation of the goal of becoming a perfect human being under the leadership of the Prophet (Gürer and Ulupınar, 2023: 114). After the na't is performed, the blows hit by the head of the kudüm player on the kudüm on the right also carries mystical meanings, just like the na't. The strokes are Allah's command to the whole universe to "kün", that is "be". In fact, the command of kün is an indication that the process of maturation has begun (Menteş, 2011: 80). The improvisation performed by the ney after the na't describes the divine breath that gives life to the universe and the human being who desires to be reunited with Allah. When the improvisation is over, Devr-i Veledi takes place accompanied by a peşrev performed in the Devr-i Kebir usul. The kinetic movements performed during Devr-i Veledi represent resurrection after death (Talu, 2014: 945). The peşrev is performed uninterruptedly during the realization of Devr-i Veledi, even returning to the beginning. Devr-i Veledi symbolizes the stages of ilme'l-yakın (knowing God with knowledge), ayna'l-yakın (seeing God) and Hakka'l-yakın (becoming one with God) in the spiritual journey of man (Önder, 34; Alvan and Alvan, 2019: 34). In other words, Devr-i Veledi is the process of human maturation. In Mevlevi rituals performed after Devr-i Veledi, each salute has a different meaning and expression. The first salute is to observe the universes (Önder, 36). This section represents the glory of Allah, the fact that there is no creator but him (Ateş, 2015: 144) and the realization of one's own servitude. The second salute symbolizes admiration for the glory of Allah. The third salute describes the transformation of this admiration into love, surrender, and annihilation in the beloved. This section, which is a kind of ascension state and expressed as the climax of ecstasy, is the sacrifice of the mind to love (Adar, 2015: 1397). This is expressed as Fenafillah in Islam and Nirvana in Buddhism (Top, 2001: 136). This salute is the part where the enthusiasm reaches its peak, that is, a kind of miraculous situation occurs. In this respect, it differs from other salutes. Moreover, the difference of the third salute from the other parts is the use of mode and tempo transitions. In this section, there is no information about whether the passages of mode contribute to the ecstasy. In any case, when approached from an ethical perspective, that is, from an external point of view, a clear conclusion cannot be reached. It is seen that this salute usually starts with the Devr-i Kebir usul, rarely with the Frenkçin, Heavy Düyek and Evsat usuls. After this section, it is connected to the Yürük Semai section with the instrument terennüm in the Aksak Semai usul. (Çevikoğlu, 2008: 97). In addition, the fact that this section is in high pitches and the tempo is gradually accelerating shows that it is different from other sections (Yöndemli, 2014: 937). Thus, with the increase in the speed of this salute, the rotation of the whirling dervishes also accelerates and the ecstasy in the sema reaches its climax. In this sense, it can be said that the increasing tempo contributes to the experience of ecstasy. The fourth salute signifies the end of the spiritual journey and the return of the human being to the mission of creation, servitude (Adar, 2015: 1397). After the fourth salute, the last peşrev, last yürük semai, last improvisation, aşr-ı şerif (the honorable ten verses), Fatiha and gülbank are performed in Düyek usul and the ceremony ends.

As mentioned before, the musical and kinetic elements in the sema ceremony contain intrinsic meanings. In the sema ceremony performed on the axis of these meanings, music and kinetic movements can be considered as elements that mediate a kind of ecstasy. The na't, the kudüm performance, the ney improvisation, the peşrev

and the ayin-i şerif, which are performed respectively in the sema ceremony, describe the miraculous journey of the person and the return of the person to servitude through both music and kinetic movements. This journey/ascension is likened to propeller or butterfly, stars or pigeons (Feratan and Solmaz, 2023: 325; Tanrıkorur, 2014: 913). Because the body of a person is like a cage and the soul wants to leave the body and return to its original homeland. In this sense, the soul is like a propeller, a star or a pigeon that is constantly longing (Özköse, 2005: 239).

Especially the third salute of the ritual stands out as a part where the rhythm and the speed of the whirling dervishes increase and the enthusiasm reaches its peak. In addition, the ney and kudüm performed during the sema ceremony appear as elements that mediate the transition to a state of ecstasy.

The projection of rituals in Alevi society is the cem erkans in which worship is performed. Just like in the Mevlevi faith, music is the sine qua non of rituals in cem erkans. Semah, which is a combination of melody, lyrics and rhythmic movements, is an integral part of cem erkans. As in sema, it is thought that semah is based on a state of divine ecstasy, in other words, semah has a feature that brings people closer to God (Alpaslan, 2012: 285). In this respect, semah is defined as a journey towards one's essence, one's original self; in other words, it is defined as the experience of dying before dying, of passing into ecstasy and reaching to God (Öcal, 2013: 354). In this context, we can say that the music and rhythmic movements in the semah, and even the semah itself, mediate the person's reaching God by entering a state of ecstasy.

For the purpose of reaching God, semah in Alevism is expressed as the ultimate point of ascension. In this sense, ascension is the integration of the individual with Allah and the annihilation of the self in divine love. In Sufism, this state is called "fenafillah". In this framework, semah appears as the last divine level (Kaya, 2010: 140).

Semah, which represents the origin of the cem erkan in Alevism, is a way of keeping the assembly of Kırklar alive and reaching God; an effort to make sense of individuals' faith; a spiritual fulfillment and many other meanings. In this framework, semah is expressed as a point where ecstasy reaches its peak. Therefore, the semah symbolizes the most ecstatic moment in which a person abstracts from everything external and worldly and disappears in the Truth. In fact, the purpose of cem erkans is to reach this ecstatic moment and experience the first semah that took place at the Assembly of Kırklar. In this sense, when we think of semah, what comes to mind is the Cem of Kırklar and the semah performed in this cem. The Kırklar semah, which is a part of the music of ascension performed in cem erkans, is performed after the verse describing the start of the semah by Prophet Muhammad and the Kırklar. In the ascensions performed in these rituals, there is a verse indicating the transition to the semah. After the Zakir (the reciter) recites this verse, the semah begins; the semah is performed at a fast rhythm called çark and ends with the completion of the music of ascension. When the music of ascension is over, the other parts of the Kırklar semah, if any, the tawhid or other semahs are performed. This order or form of performance may differ according to the communities or regions. In addition, when we look at the content of semahs in some regions, we come across semahs that do not contain any trace of Kırklar, except those that are about Kırklar Cem; However, despite this situation, it is generally seen that the semah is associated with the belief in Kırklar (Akın, 2020: 101-104; Üçer, 2005: 365; Subaşı, 2010: 109; Özdemir and Ersoy Çak, 2022: 189-190).

The fact that the semahs are divided into two parts, namely, welcoming and swaying /acceleration, is due to the ecstasy-oriented nature of the semah. In line with this purpose, the movements in the semah, mediated by music, move from slow to fast. These movements represent the distance between Mecca and Masjid al-Aqsa, the

first stage of the ascension. This path is started by bowing to the left and right. The second movement is the distance between Masjid Aqsa and Sidre-i muntaha, the end point of space. In this section, the first movement is done on the spot and the second movement is started. The section called the wheel, or the jib symbolizes the distance between the end point of space and the Throne of Allah. In fact, this distance is an indication of the glory of Allah. In this section the movements are fast and the semah is whirled quickly. These turns symbolize flying. The *glbank* recited at the end of the semah is the herald of the completion of the music of ascension of the performers (Mustan Dnmez, 2013: 77; Kaya, 2010: 140-142). In addition to two parts, semahs can also consist of three parts: welcoming -heavy-, revitalization -medium- and swaying -fast- (Korkmaz, 1993: 311). The kinetic movements in three-part semahs also move from slow to fast, as in two-part semahs. This situation is again related to the fact that the semah is for ecstasy. In this regard, it is possible to state that the music and kinetic movements performed in the semahs provide the experience of ecstasy and therefore mediate the ascension of the person, that is, bring him closer to God.

The interview with C. Y., who regularly attends the cem erkans, confirms the above information. Accordingly, C. Yeniay's (personal communication, April 4, 2024) feelings upon returning from the semah are as follows:

"I don't see anyone when I'm spinning. I feel like I'm getting closer to God, especially in the fast part we call *yeldirme*. So I'm in a trance. In addition, returning to semah makes a positive contribution to my psychology and body. For example, if I had a headache that day, after the semah, my headache goes away and I feel psychologically relieved."

Based on the above statements, she said that the semah brings a person closer to Allah; that it causes ecstasy in the person; we can also say that it has a positive contribution to the body and psychology.

In general, semah, which is performed with kinetic movements accompanied by music, is a kind of ecstasy (Zelyut, 1992: 330). The kinetic movements performed by means of music and rhythmic movements in semah describe the eternal cycle of time. Therefore, this dance depicts the process of becoming a human being (Gray, 2010: 123-127). In addition, these kinetic elements express the idea of returning to the essence; in other words, the element of rotation expresses the stages of reincarnation, reaching the point of human perfection and reunion with God. At the same time, semah mediates the individual's realization of his/her essence by disconnecting from this world with the ecstatic effect of spinning (Erdemir and Harmanah, 2006: 275; zmen, 2020: 80).

As a result, in line with the aforementioned purposes, we can say that in sema and semah rituals, ecstasy is experienced accompanied by music and kinetic movements, and that music and kinetic movements mediate the transition to the state of ecstasy. In fact, the separation of the soul from the body during ecstasy means accessing absolute existence, that is, leaving the material world and accessing the spiritual world. In this context, the music and kinetic movements performed in sema or semah represent this desire (Yndemli, 2007: 227).

Conclusion

Ecstasy is a state of altered consciousness in which the person is not aware of the events around him/her and the sense of self is lost. This state should not be considered as an ordinary change of consciousness because ecstasy, as a traditional state of change, has continued to exist with different expressions -such as change of consciousness, trance, ecstasy- and different meanings from the past to the present.

When we look at the literature, it is observed that the original ecstasy is of a religious nature. In this framework, it is possible to state that religious ecstasy is also experienced in Mevlevi and Alevi semah rituals,

which are at the center of the study. In these rituals, some elements mediate the state of ecstasy. The most important of these elements are melody, lyrics -music- and kinetic movements.

The sema ceremonies, which are shaped by Mevlânâ's teachings, can be considered as a state of ecstasy in which melody, lyrics and rhythmic movements are together. In the sema ceremony, where a state of ecstasy is experienced from beginning to end, a person's miraculousness, his return to servitude is told through music and dynamic movements. Especially the third salute of the liturgy is an episode in which ecstasy reaches its peak. In this section, there are mode and usul transition. Since there is no information in this salute about whether the mode transitions contribute to ecstasy, it does not seem possible to reach a clear conclusion when considered from an ethical perspective. However, we can say that performing in high pitches and gradually increasing the tempo in this part contribute to ecstasy. Apart from all these, the ney and kudüm performed in the ceremony can also be shown among the elements that mediate the ecstasy.

This is also the case in semah, which is a combination of melody, lyrics and rhythmic movements in Alevi cem erkans. In other words, it is possible to express semah ceremonies as a state of ecstasy just like sema ceremonies. In this framework, the semah symbolizes the ecstatic moment when a person is stripped of everything external and disappears in the Truth. In fact, the purpose of cem erkans is to experience the first semah performed at the Assembly of Kırklar by witnessing this enthusiastic moment. In this context, the semah, which takes place as a part of the cem erkans, is generally performed in two or three parts accompanied by music and kinetic elements. In this sense, the fact that the semahs are performed in two parts, namely the welcoming and the swaying, or in three parts, namely the welcoming, execution and swaying, is an indication that the semahs are intended for ecstasy. In the semah ceremony, with the performance of the parts of welcoming and the swaying or welcoming, execution and swaying accompanied by music and rhythmic movements, the return of the person to servitude is described. Especially the last part, expressed as swaying, draws attention as a part where the ecstasy reaches its peak.

As a result, we can say that music -song and lyrics- and rhythmic movements mediate the state of ecstasy and ecstasy that the state of spiritual navigation experienced with ecstasy in the practices performed in Mevlevi sema ceremonies and Alevi semah ceremonies. In fact, we can express the aforementioned rituals themselves, namely sema and semah, as a state of ecstasy. Apart from all these, both the sema and the semah bring people closer to God; we can conclude that it also contributes positively to the body and psychology.

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