

MUSICAL HERITAGE of BAKIRÇAY BASIN

1922-2022

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RURITAGE 
Heritage for Rural Regeneration



1.

Until the first quarter of the last century, the data on similarities, differences, and the cultural exchange among Muslim, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish communities living together in the Bakırçay Basin in their daily social lives is quite limited as is in many parts of Anatolia. İbrahim Muti writes about local Greek and Muslim (Turk) communities living together in Dikili, inviting each other to weddings, having fun together, and sirtaki and zeybek dances being played together especially in Bademli, an old Greek village (2005:89). Some testimonies indicate that the holy days were being celebrated in peace and harmony as a result of the coexistence of two communities in the same place. Stratis Balaskas tells that, in Easter times, Greek women of Bergama sang the “Lamentation of the Virgin Mary” not only in Greek but also in Turkish, and that the Muslim women who were moved left flowers in the name of Jesus Christ near the fountain in the *Domuz Alanı* [Pig Area] (1991: 14-15).

As a result of geographical proximity, Ottoman citizenship dating back centuries, and mutual trade, there has been an intense level of interaction between settlements such as Edremit, Ayvalık, and Dikili and the island of Lesbos. This interaction has caused the cultural atmosphere to become similar and common in all aspects on both sides. Solon Lekkas, a musician from Lesbos, expresses the musical dimension of this similarity and partnership in an interview: *“Amanes and old greeting tunes are popular in Lesbos, and of course, “slow zeybek” dances are performed too. You won’t see any of these together elsewhere; this coexistence is unique to here. This is our common tradition; When the people from Asia Minor came to the island, they found these folk songs waiting for them. So, we already had them. You know, Lesbos and Turkey were truly one and the same. There was a constant connection between Lesbos and Ayvalık. You would see the same habits, the same customs and traditions, the same clothing in Lesbos, Ayvalık, and Bergama...”* (Cited Chrissy Mason, 2013:49). Lekkas’ statements point to periods when the two communities were not yet separated and when traumatic processes such as conflict, war, and population exchange had not happened yet because, at that time, Lesbos was almost an extension of the basin. The island, which gained wealth thanks to the trade of products such as olive oil and soap as well as other local products, was both sending and receiving immigrants due to being one of the most important ports of the North Aegean Region. Between 1880 and 1912, while the entrepreneurs who sought to start or expand their businesses, to make investments, and to create a market began to sail to the shores of Asia Minor (Anatolia), people coming from Epirus, Macedonia, Albania, Thrace, and Western Anatolia to the island for work brought their own musical culture with them. Over time, the social stratification and diversity on the island began to reflect in its music. The

upper classes embraced a refined musical culture turning to the west and the orchestras consisting of brass, woodwind, and string instruments became widespread. While western music reaching the island through western dance forms such as waltz and foxtrot has become the favorite of the gentry and the elite; villagers, farmers, and artisans were preferring eastern music: zeybek, greeting tunes (karşılama), sirtos, balls, and hasapiko were performed especially with violin, dulcimer (santur), and clarinet as well as drum and zurna. "Amane"s, usually sung without instrumental accompaniment¹, were a part of the rural culture. The tunes known by names such as "At Havası (Horse Tune)", "Köroğlu'nun Şalvarı (Köroğlu's Shalwar)", "Jandarma (Gendarmerie)", and "Bergama" in the island have been perhaps the most well-known among the common melodies shared by both sides of the sea.

After 1912, when the island administration was transferred to Greece, it became increasingly difficult for the Muslim and Greek populations to live together. The political turmoil resulting from the Ottoman Empire's loss of power and dominance in the Aegean and mass migration due to the war in the Balkans drove the Muslim (Turkish) population living in Greece and other Balkan geographies into Anatolia. In 1922, the Anatolian Greeks began to leave their homeland, where they have lived for almost six centuries. As a result of the population exchange agreement implemented between Turkey and Greece in line with the *Protocol on the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations* dated 30 January 1923, the Greeks living in the Bakırçay Basin and the neighboring settlements left the region to settle in the nearby Aegean islands, especially Lesbos, and the Greek mainland. The Muslim (Turkish) population that was brought from the islands of Lesbos and Crete, as well as from settlements such as Manastır/Bitola (Macedonia), Thessaloniki, Yanya, and Kavala, were settled in the neighborhoods and villages evacuated by the Greeks.

Nikos Dionysopoulos, who started his systematic research on the musical life of Lesbos in 1986 and shared his findings in 1996 in a compilation album accompanied by a booklet titled *Lesbos Aiolis*, states that the island turned its face towards Greece in every sense of the word as a result of the rupture after 1922 but the traces of the music and dance culture of the past have not been erased. According to Dionysopoulos, the immigrants from Asia Minor who settled on the island embraced the dances and tunes, which they considered an integral part of their intangible cultural heritage (1996: 19). Thus, rhythm instruments such as tambourines, goblet drums, and drums, which are widely used in the basin, became the invariable part of the music culture of the Lesbos as a result of this ownership. The drum-zurna ensemble, known as "zygia" in the Greek mainland and mostly identified with the Muslim

¹ Songs and ghazals with Turkish lyrics.

Romani people, continued to be known among the common instruments of the island's culture for a while more. Furthermore, the immigrants brought with them instruments such as the oud, which were not known on the island, and the "tray", which was played by women for entertainment among themselves.

Many musicians who began their musical career in the early 20th century in Lesbos, the island where they were born, and having family roots going back to İzmir and environs refer to the interaction between the island and the Aegean coastal towns. Manolis Pantelelis, born in 1907, talks about islander musicians traveling to the opposite shore to make music. Michalis Moutzourellis, born in 1921, relates that he started music by playing the drum and zurna with his father and turned to the clarinet after the 1940s. Nikos Valesis, born in 1928, relates that he sang "Amanede"s, also known as "sarkia" (song, Turkish: şarkı) or "kleftika", in cafes in Stipsi, and that the listeners wanted to hear these songs and ghazals with Turkish lyrics from him again and again. Nikos Paralıs, born in 1931, also states that he has compiled a wide repertoire specific to Asia Minor from the musicians of the previous generations since the beginning of his music career. Songs that accompany dances such as sirto, ball, slow zeybek, and karşılama (greeting) are at the top of this repertoire. Paralıs accompanied "İzmir style" songs known as "smyrneika" and "Amanede" on oud.²

Wind instruments such as the trumpet, trombone, and tuba, which became a part of Lesbos' local music culture at the end of the 19th century, stand out as the instruments that represent the musical interaction between the island and the Bakırçay Basin. Dionysopoulos reminds us that the Lesbos Island and Western Macedonia were the only two centers in Greece where ensembles called "fysera" that use these instruments have been a part of the local music culture (1996:31). Until the 1950s when bouzouki and other stringed instruments came to the fore, the well-known bands of the island included santur (dulcimer) as well as wind and string instruments. The musical families established ensembles with nicknames back then. Anestis-Kondylis Konstantellis, born in Mytilene in 1924, states that his family, originally from Dikili, Turkey, has been involved in music for a long time and formed an ensemble in the island in those years under the name "Geragotes" playing violin, dulcimer, and the clarinet, as well as cornet, trombone, and tuba. Dionysopoulos considers the addition of clarinet-like instruments to these bands, which were common until the end of the Second World War

²For the details of the musical culture of and parallel musician portraits from the islands of Lemnos, Chios, Samos, and Ikaria, and especially of Lesbos, see. "North Aegean Musical Culture Archive": <http://music-archive.aegean.gr/index.php?lng=ZW5nbGlzaA==>

not only in Lesbos but also in nearby islands such as Chios and Samos, as *“a development originated from Anatolia”* (1996:31). Since the beginning of the last century, the cosmopolitan culture of İzmir and environs has been influential on almost all the neighboring local musical traditions.

2.

The photographs in hand document that, as early as 1927, various musical instruments were played in Bergama bringing together woodwind instruments such as clarinet, trumpet, and tuba (euphonium) with drum and snare. Considering that the Bergama People’s House Marching Band, known as the first band of the district, started its activities in 1936, it is clear that the inhabitants of the basin and local musicians became acquainted with marching band instruments much before this date. Osman Bayatlı and Abdurrahman Yılmaz write that only drum and zurna were played in the Bergama region until 1906-1907, but these instruments were abandoned with an official ban and were replaced by bugle/trumpet (in Turkish, literally, “the pipe”), snare drum, cymbal drum, and clarinet (in Turkish “glarinet” or “gırnata”). Having stated that people used to dance with drums and zurna at weddings in former times, the authors point out that this band began later to be considered as a “half band” (literally: “team”), and what dubbed “full band” consisted of the drum, clarinet, bugle, and snare quartet (1942:7). While Greek musicians living in the basin and its surroundings before the population exchange included instruments such as brasses, violin, and clarinet in their bands, the Turks continued to prefer the drum-zurna ensemble. In this context, Bayatlı and Yılmaz point out that the instruments that were widely used among Greek musicians began to be adopted by Turkish musicians too during the transformation experienced in that period.

Undoubtedly, the main actor who assimilated these new instruments into the musical life of the basin was the Romani musicians. The Romani people are known for their flexibility in adapting the language and cultural traditions of the societies they live with thanks to the relationship they establish through their musical skills in many geographies where they are settled. This flexibility is also observed and exists in Anatolia getting beyond the limits of the basin. Romani musicians were one of the main actors of İzmir’s music and entertainment life before the population exchange and they provided their services to weddings, engagement ceremonies, and other celebrations of all walks of the society from different religious or cultural origins. *“... These entertainments created the occasion for family and friend reunions. Musicians were invited to cheer up the atmosphere and call the invitees to dance. ‘This was the custom in İzmir: Aya Dimitri Neighborhood was close to Çakılıcaşı Cafe, the meeting place of the musicians. If you need musicians for a wedding, you could find them there.’ The procedure was the same*

in the inner towns. The musicians were most likely Gypsies. Gypsies, the first group coming to mind speaking of the marginal communities in Ottoman society, thus found a place in the greater social order. It was customary to do business with Gypsies in Menemen: 'We had a Gypsy neighborhood and Gypsy musicians were living there. They had three or four kinds of instruments. Some played the clarinet, some the violin, and some the oud. Both the Christians and the Turks used to hire them for their celebrations. They spoke excellent Greek.' Various languages spoken in the country were not a problem for the Gypsies" (Georgelin 2008:149). These observations from the beginning of the last century clearly reveal that even in settlements such as Menemen, which can be considered adjacent to the Bakırçay Basin, the Romani people were already playing classical instruments such as the violin and clarinet, and that, as professional musicians, they were in constant contact with different cultures. The rapid transition to instruments such as clarinet and trumpet after the ban on drum and zurna, as discussed by Bayatlı and Yılmaz, makes one think that most musicians were already familiar with these instruments.

Haluk Ökeren was the founder and vice president of Bergama People's House and Ali İhsan Güngül (1930-2016) worked at Bergama Public Education Center for many years making unique contributions to the cultural and artistic life of the district through his facilitatory function. According to Haluk Ökeren's memory as told by Ali İhsan Güngül, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk visited Bergama on 13 April 1934 and Hüseyin Şenletici and his son Hüsnü Şenletici accompanied the "Bergama Bengi" performed by Mehmet Sandık Efe and "Beyin" Ali.³ Hüseyin Şenletici was also among the source persons of the compilation studies carried out by the Ankara State Conservatory in Bergama in 1938 (Elçi 1997: 174).⁴ Songs such as "Güvende Zeybek", "Bergama Bengisi", "Kozakdağlı Havası", "Harmandağlı Zeybek", "Bursa Damları", "Arap Zeybeği", "Gayda", and "Yalabuk Oyun Havası (Dance Tune)" compiled from Şenletici show that Romani people have been among the competent performers of various types of instrumental music and zeybek tunes peculiar to the basin for nearly a century.

The influence of the Romani people in the musical life of the basin is also reflected in the report of the TRT team, which came to Bergama for another compilation trip in 1967: "...Folk instruments such as drum, zurna, and baglama and those who play them are almost non-existent in Bergama and environs. The only zurna and drum that we could see was in the ethnography museum. According to the elderly people's accounts, they were replaced by clarinet, cornet, and other non-folkloric instruments that have been used for fifty years. Weddings and reunions were held with these instruments and the live

³<http://www.berksav.org/2017/ataturkbergamada.asp>

⁴ The Şenletici (Şenlendirici) family is among the Romani musical families whose names are heard outside the borders of the basin thanks to the important figures that emerged for generations.

music needs of the people were met by ninety members of the Bergama Freelance Musicians Society; we also observed this in two village weddings. This well-organized association, which is rich in both tangible and intangible assets, meets the needs of the Bergama region even in the most remote corners” (1967:2). This musician society started a marching band too, but it did not last long.

Indeed, until the 1970s, the only community in the basin that was professionally engaged in and mainly earned their living through music was the Romanies. Enver Ay underlines that these musicians have long been known as the “wedding musicians” of the basin: “... *The instrumentalists were Romanies from Bergama or Soma who were professional musicians. The male ensemble was usually composed of four players playing four different instruments. These instruments were wind instruments, namely clarinet and trumpet, and rhythm section, namely drum and snare drum – the most important instrument being the clarinet. The clarinet was seen as the indispensable part of weddings and the clarinet player was regarded as the ‘most respected musician’. As it is widely known, sometimes there are highly talented musicians among wedding instrumentalists...*” (2019:185). Eyüp Eriş makes a similar observation related to Kınık and environs: “*The bands of the Romanies playing the clarinet, trumpet, and violin in addition to the drum and snare drum at weddings in Kınık are a source of joy and pride in our district. Ferhat on the trumpet, Bekir and İlhan on the clarinet, and Kara Bakla on the snare drum screamed Bakırçay down with their success”* (2009:271).

Today, as in the past, Romani musicians live in the Atmaca neighborhood of Bergama, İsmetpaşa in Dikili, and Karamanlı in Soma. Major coffeehouses (“*kahveler*”) located close to these neighborhoods (Şadırvanlı Kahve of Bergama is the first one that comes to mind) have been the only connection point that has brought musicians together with those who want to organize a wedding or who need music services for years and this is so even today. Musicians come to these venues early in the morning on the day the district’s open market is set up and get gigs for events like weddings, circumcision ceremonies, henna nights, or send-off celebrations held for newly recruited soldiers. Village residents around the basin come down to the center to do their weekly shopping and meet musicians there, too. The widespread use of mobile phones since the second half of the 1990s gave musicians the opportunity to get a gig without being tied to a place, whereas coffeehouses maintain their place in the collective memory of the district as “musicians’ coffeehouses”.

The quartet consisting of the drum, clarinet, trumpet, and snare drum is the most preferred and most common ensemble in the basin. Although the characteristics and features of the instruments in these ensembles in the early periods are not known in all details today, preference for wind instruments

is observed to be slightly changed over time. First, the cornet (bugle) and then the trumpet (“pipe”) came to the fore among brass instruments. Two different models of the trumpet (one with pistons or valves) were used. While the rotary (sideway) trumpets – “lighter” models according to the vernacular term – were used until the 1970s, the model having valves on the top became popular in the following years. The clarinets, on the other hand, were popular at all times, be they made out of metal or wood. Trumpet players began to tune their trumpets to B-flat so that they could play more easily with G-clarinets that have been mostly preferred by Romani musicians throughout Turkey.⁵ This is done through a tuning slide on the instrument.

While traditional weddings changed with social preferences and some instruments gained popularity over time, the structure of the quarter has undergone a slight change, too. For example, the custom of “*konak verme*” (“providing an accommodation”), which was about welcoming the guests coming from other places for the wedding at the entrance to the village and placing them in the houses where they will stay, has been abandoned in accordance with the changing conditions. These sorts of changes in customs led to a preference for drum-clarinet duo over trumpet and snare drum, and the snare drum began to lose its function, end thereby its place, in the ensemble. The number of trumpet players decreased as the new generation of musicians turned to the clarinet. While old masters, who has trained unforgettable names such as Ergun Şenlendirici and Nazmi Ürk, passed away, the ensembles with trumpet began to vanish from the basin. It is very sad that the legacy of the performances of these masters is on the verge of disappearing.⁶

The drum-clarinet duo is the most common core instrument ensemble throughout the basin. This duo is part of an established culture, just like the drum-zurna duos that continue to exist in almost every corner of Anatolia. In this context, it is embraced by all societies living in the basin regardless of ethnicity or belief. The star of the duo is undoubtedly the clarinet, known as “*gırnata*” in the basin. The instrument, preserving its respectable place in the “classical” ensemble (“*ince saz takımı*”), consisting of instruments such as violin, qanun, darbuka, and oud, is extremely suitable for performing in open spaces in terms of its volume but low dynamics are also possible for traditional entertainments in taverns and at-home weddings. All these gave “*gırnata*” a privilege in the eye of Romani musicians. As widespread as

⁵ For the place and importance of ‘G-clarinet’ in local music traditions in Turkey, see Kerem Özgür Erdem, *Klarinetin Geçmişten Günümüze Anadolu’da Gelişimi ve İcra Edilişi*, T.C. Dokuz Eylül University, Fine Arts Institute, Master Thesis, Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Onur Nurcan, 2008, pp. 31-33

⁶ Let’s not forget that towards the end of the 1960s, there were different bands playing for weddings with a very similar composition with these ensembles. These were the bands formed by immigrant (as they call themselves “*muhacir*”) communities who had migrated from the Balkans, especially Macedonia and its surroundings, beginning from the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, based on the social need and concern for preserving their culture as it is. These ensembles, hired from outside the basin, were “*tapani*” orchestras, mostly composed of drums, snare drums, clarinets, and two trumpets, living in districts of İzmir such as Mersinli, Çamdibi, and Şemikler and they were mainly playing “Rumelian tunes”.

it is, musical families developed a performance style unique to the basin which passed from father to son or from uncle to nephew. Thus, certain Romani families that have settled in the basin and established kinship relations with neighboring regions became known, recognized, and followed with their distinctive performance style. The masters trained by these families have been sought after and respected by all segments of the communities living in the basin since the 1950s. As stated in the interviews we made, both the musicians and the people living in the basin virtually recognize some performers from their way of blowing and style as soon as they hear it. In this context, having developed a very different performance style from their colleagues living in the Edirne-Çanakkale-Balıkesir-Bursa quadrangle – a region important for its clarinet performance, the [Barkıçay] basin has raised many important names from past to present.⁷ Ahmet Benli, Ferdi Nadas, Mustafa Çalar “of Soma”, İsmail Bergamalı, and members of the Şenlendirici family are among the names that have managed to preserve the intergenerational line up to this day.

Rituals such as circumcision, send-off celebrations for soldiers, camel wrestling, “cop” and javelin games, and particularly traditional weddings, which invite and bring the masses to the public space, are the main occasions in which the quartet and drum-clarinet duo dominate the rhythm of the event. Today, village weddings preserve their traditional flow under the leadership of a “Bayraktar” (flag bearer)⁸ and the drum-clarinet band, which accompanies the dances performed by men in the public sphere, as well as such stages of the wedding as “tray carrying”, “taking the dowry”, “kashkak preparation”, and “taking the bride”, is basically considered a band for “the bridegroom’s house.” If possible, the bride’s family can also hire an ensemble for themselves. The tunes performed by these ensembles accompany different rituals in different contexts throughout the wedding, and the repertoire is similar almost everywhere in the basin. The band, which performs the National Anthem during the “flag hoisting” and “flag unfurling” ceremonies, and the Janissary March and the Izmir March during the wedding procession, resonates like a miniature marching band, especially thanks to the trumpet joining the clarinet and drum. “Köroğlu” tune played during the ceremony of “kashkak preparation” adds harmony to the rhythmic movements of those who prepare the wedding dinner in stone mortars.

⁷The musicians of the basin describe the “gırnata” (clarinet/“gayda”) and trumpet (pipe) style specific to the region with adjectives such as “bombastic” and “high-sounding”.

⁸The flag bearer, chosen unanimously by the “youth unions” in each village, is a trustworthy person responsible for the smooth flow and security of the wedding, the participation of the invited villages, and the fulfillment of all kinds of services to the guests. He is also responsible for the flag of the village, which was hoisted and unfurled with the rendition of the National Anthem and which represents the “honor of the village.” Only the flag-bearer is authorized to carry, hoist, unfurl, and bring the banner back to the village. Flag-bearer is also responsible for meeting the musicians who come to the village, organizing their accommodation, and meeting their various needs and requests.

The traditional dance tunes, which are considered indispensable for weddings, also vary within themselves. Drum-clarinet bands play such zeybek tunes adopted all over the basin as “Bergama Zeybeği” and “Harmandalı”, highly popular fast tunes such as “Çiftetelli” and “Roman Havası”, and, besides all these, “Bergama Horası”⁹ at almost every wedding. However, the repertoire that musicians kept alive for almost a century and transferred to the next generations is not limited to these melodies. Every musician knows by heart the most desired and preferred tunes of the villages where s/he has been in contact for a long time and where s/he went to play a gig at weddings. The repertoire is so diverse that it can range from zeybek tunes specific to certain parts of the basin, especially Kozak, to local tunes such as “Döktürü” and “Mecid” that are played without exception in the villages settled by the Chepni tribes, and to “Armut Ağacı” semah peculiar to Tahtacı tribes. Well-known pieces from Classical Turkish Music or tunes specific to Circassians or Harput originated people settled in the basin also have a place in the repertoire along with some arabesque classics.

3.

Romani women, who have chosen music as a profession, have a unique place in the musical heritage and rituals of the basin. All rituals and entertainments open to women in the countryside were performed under the direction of old Romani women until the time of the bridal salon weddings with orchestras and pianists. Be it Pomak, Circassian, Yörük, or Chepni, the women of these communities have to resort to the services of “dümbelek” players, who can only play tambourine and goblet drum and whose ritualistic performance is limited to henna nights. In other words, the musical performance in all the entertainments held between women in the basin is under the direction of Romani women only. Goblet drummers hired by the bride’s family are responsible for the music during the three-day wedding party and accompany and guide the bride at every stage of these detailed rituals. Yılmaz and Bayatlı, about seventy years ago, wrote: *Goblet drum (“dümbelek”), tambourine, and spoons make a half band. They are played by women*” (1943:7). Yılmaz, in his research on Bergama folklore, also emphasizes that the goblet drum is an “instrument for the bride’s house”: *The bride’s family gathers the invitees in a big house. Instruments played are goblet drum (“dünbek”), tambourine, and, sometimes, classical*

⁹Enver Ay, in his book *Kuzey Ege’den bir Kültür Damlası: Bergama / Kozluca) A Drop of Culture from the North Aegean: Bergama / Kozluca* , writes that the existence of the ‘hora’ dance in Bergama and its surroundings dates back to ancient times and briefly describes this group dance: “...’Hora’ is a dance taken by the local people, who have been living with the Greeks for centuries, from the Greeks. Hora is a dance in which the dancers form a ‘halay’ [Anatolian folk dance] by wrapping their arms around each other in parallel to the ground. It starts slowly and speeds up over time; the person dancing at the beginning of the group waves a handkerchief at her/his hand determining the rhythm and enthusiasm of the dance” (2019: 190-191).

*instruments like a violin” (1941:61).¹⁰ Enver Ay, in his book *Kuzey Ege’den bir Kültür Damlası: Bergama / Kozluca (A Drop of Culture from the North Aegean: Bergama / Kozluca)*, sharing his observations and memories of Kozluca village, states that female musicians who provide music services at traditional weddings in the basin are called “çengi” in the region: *The collective noun “çengi” was used for female musicians playing for women. Çengis consisted of two women, one of whom playing a goblet drum and the other a tambourine with metal jingles surrounding the instrument. At weddings, female çengis used to sing while accompanying themselves with these instruments. For this reason, the musicians with a nice voice and delivery were preferred, even if their price was a little higher” (Ay 2019: 185-186).**

These musicians were highly respected by the community as agents of solidarity among women. They completely dominated the flow of the wedding ceremony, familiarized very well the traditions and customs of each village they went to, knew by heart who wants to play in which village and to which tune, and acted as matchmakers for those who are looking for a bride for their son. The basin has raised many famous goblet drummers from past to present: “... *Fahriye and Suzan¹¹ were among the famous goblet drum and tambourine players of our region” (Eriş 2009:271). One must add their fellow musicians whose names have been forgotten long ago and who belonged to famous and mostly related Romani families living in town centers such as Soma, Bergama, and Dikili (and, in a particular period, Kınık). Therefore, it can be fairly said that goblet drumming is a form of craft that is passed down among the Romani communities living in the basin just as the case in the drum, clarinet, and trumpet players. Continuing this profession learned from previous generations, goblet drummers (dümbekçiler) keep in their memory every tune of the repertoire specific to the basin. In this context, goblet drummers are the only carriers of women’s melodies and tunes. That’s why, within the scope of compilation studies carried out since the end of the 1930s, their names are frequently mentioned among the names that the researchers visiting the basin approached as source persons. The melodies and tunes “Meyhaneler”, “Aşdıcağım Kav Kav Dağ Olsun”, “Uzun Kavak Senden Uzun Yok”, “Entarisi Mavili”, and “Gırma’dan Martin Geliyor” recorded with bendir accompaniment by the team that had visited Bergama during the 1938 compilation trip of Ankara State Conservatory were taken from Gülsüm Gencer (Elçi 1997: 173-175). Fethiye Çalar and Remziye Dongül performed the tunes with the given titles “Gelin Kına Türküsü (henna song)”, “Gelin Ata Bindirme Türküsü”, “Kadı / Türkülü Oyun Havası (dance tune and song)”, “Dere Geliyor Dere”, “Türkülü Oyun Havası”, “Sabahın Seher Vaktinde / Kına Yakma Türküsü (henna*

¹⁰There is not any reference to a goblet drummer playing the violin or any other instrument in the basin. The people we interviewed mentioned a particular goblet drummer, who is also a violinist, living in Ulukent Neighborhood of Menemen.

¹¹ Şenlendirici

song)", and "Dağ Köylerinin Türkülü Oyun Havası (dance tune and song from the mountain villages)" recorded with goblet drum, tambourine, and vocal by the TRT team in Bergama during the compilation tour in 1967 (TRT 1967:6). Nihat Kaya's *Soma Türkü ve Zeybekleri (Folk Songs and Zeybeks of Soma)*, a compilation book published in 2008, includes, under the category of "female dances", scores of tunes such as "Bağyüzü'nün Çamları", "Denize Kalbur Gitti", "Elleri Kınalı", "Eşmem Ben - Dere Geliyor Dere", and "Öveçli'nin Çamları" taken from well-known goblet drummers of the region such as Suzan Pulat and Nermin Kayalar.

Although there are some differences in the details, the place and function of female musicians are clear in the stereotypical flow of traditional village weddings that last for three days in the basin. Goblet drummers are responsible for meeting the musical demands of the invitees including the bride's family the first day called "Dibek/Dübek (stone mortar) Day" by the older generations, the second day when the henna night is held, and the third day when the bride leaves her family's house and the "Gelin Alma/Gelin İndirme (taking the bride)" ceremony is held. The wedding begins when the musicians begin to arrive in the village in the late afternoon of the first day of the wedding. Goblet drummers perform a short gig first at the bride's house and then at the bridegroom's house (if the bride and groom are from the same village). These short concerts before the rituals and entertainments are known as "nöbet çalma (playing in turns)" in the basin (Yılmaz 2010:40). After the dinner, it's time for the bride and her friends to have fun among themselves. At this stage, also known as "Girls' Dance or Making the Bride Dance", the bride dances first with her single friends and then, if she wills, with newly married women in the presence of the female guests and under the supervision of her sister-in-law. The second day of the wedding is a scene for various ceremonies. In most villages, this is the day when the dowry is brought from the bride's house to the groom's house.¹² The duty of the goblet drummers at this stage is to meet the guests from the bride's family and the convoy that brings the dowry at the door on behalf of the bride's house. The ceremony, known as "Kardeş Çıkma/Kardeş Kavuşma (sisters' reunion)", in which the bride, kind of, bids farewell to her brideswomen and which is a symbolic transition from girlhood to womanhood, is also performed with the accompaniment of female musicians.¹³ Enver Ay describes the role of musicians in these ceremonies with these words: "*...The sister's reunion ceremony is also performed during the entertainment held by girls at the wedding. The dance stops and girls who are going to be "sisters" stand up. At one end of the line, the bride and her sister-in-law wait standing. The*

¹² Ceremonies for taking the dowry can also take place before the wedding. In such cases, only drum and clarinet duo accompanies the ceremony.

¹³ These ceremonies, where the bride and brideswomen – a particular form of spiritual sisterhood – come together for the last time, can also be held on Sundays, the last day of the wedding. See, Eriş (1996:126) and Yılmaz (2010:50).

young girl, who will be the 'sister', approaches the bride slowly singing a tune and accompanied by the çengi, then she presents her gift, usually money, to the bride... Afterwards, they dance with the bride and the ceremony ends" (2019:189-190). The most important and last ceremony of the second day is the "Henna Night". In most of the cultural studies and surveys on the basin, the henna ceremony is described in detail in the sections covering wedding customs and traditions. During this ceremony, goblet drummers accompany the bride by singing a special melody, also known as the "henna tune." In the middle of the area where the henna ceremony is held, henna is applied to the hands of the bride, and she is located in the center of the circle once she turns three times accompanied by the goblet drums.¹⁴ Filiz Peker describes the place of female musicians in the henna ceremonies and what was traditionally called "sepi" (sprinkling): *"...The last custom in henna was the "sepi". In "sepi", the bride waits between two sisters-in-law and all the young girls line up behind them forming a large circle. This ring rotates accompanied by the tune played by the musicians and the sisters-in-law sprinkle rosewater around..." (1991:107).* Before and after henna, goblet drummers must play the dance tune requests made by guests. On the last day of the wedding, gifts, also called "dürü", are taken from the groom's house to the bride's house accompanied by male instrumentalists (Eriş 1996: 26). When the bride's family wants to send a gift, goblet drummers come in representing the family (Yılmaz 2010:48). The convoy that will go from the bride's house to the groom's house for the event called "making the groom dance" or "Groom's Dance" is also accompanied by the goblet drummers. On the way back, the bride dances for the last time in her house with her friends and relatives accompanied by the musicians; after that, final ceremonies that symbolize the bride's departure from her family's house begin such as styling the "Bride's Hair" ("Gelin Başı") and the "Bridal Belt Ceremony". At these moments when the bride is decorated, she makes her final preparations, and the convoy from the groom's house gathers in front of the bride's house to take the bride, the goblet drummers' performance becomes especially touching. While the bride is leaving the house, she walks to the outer door in the company of the goblet drummers who provide musical accompaniment also for those coming to take the bride from her house.

The tunes played by the goblet drummers during the traditional wedding feast that lasts three days both invite the guests to dance and signal the beginning and end of certain stages of the ritual. In this context, the tunes played are like landmarks that clearly define the beginning and end of the ritualistic stages. Abdurrahman Yılmaz, in his research on the traditional weddings of the Kozak region,

¹⁴ The henna ceremony held in the presence of the guests is a symbolic one. A small community of relatives, bridewomen, etc. applies henna on the bride's hands and feet once the guests leave. Musicians do not participate in this ceremony. For details see, Eriş (1997:145) and Yılmaz (2010:47).

observes that the repertoire of female musicians can be grouped into three different categories (2010: 64-65). These are “Single Tune”, “Double Tune”, and “Harmandalı/Kozak” tunes.¹⁵ Apart from these tunes, Roman tunes and “çiftetelli” dances fall under the category of “fast tunes”, which can be danced freely and do not require a certain figure pattern. On the other hand, the tune “Hey Gaziler”, performed during the bride’s departure from her father’s house, and the “Henna Tune”, indispensable for henna ceremonies,¹⁶ are examples of melodies that mark the various stages of the ceremony, rather than being dance tunes.

4.

Another element that has a unique place in the historical musical life of the basin is marching bands. Especially the people of Bergama, due to the fact that military units such as the 58th Infantry Regiment and the 29th artillery regiment are deployed close to the district, has always been very familiar with military bands and marching band music since early times.¹⁷ However, soon enough, civil bands followed suit. The People’s House Marching Band, which can be regarded as the first example of these, started its activities on 10 July 1936, two years after the Bergama People’s House had officially become active on 22 February 1934. This band had a role in the celebration of the first festival held the following year and was invited to İzmir to play on 9 September 1937 during the celebrations for the anniversary of the liberation of İzmir. The activities of this marching band are summarized as follows in the brochure published by the Bergama People’s House in 1939 under the title of “Activities of the Art Branch”: *“1- In order to reach the high ideal of spreading the musical culture, especially our national music, to the country, a band consisting of twenty persons continues to operate successfully. 2-The band gave a concert. 3- They played appropriate tunes on the commemorative nights held for our prominent people. 4-They play our national anthem regularly at flag hoisting and unfurling ceremonies. 5-They played appropriate tunes in engagements, weddings, meetings, and ceremonies. 6- They accomplished their*

¹⁵Examples of ‘Single Tune’, a relatively fast dance that can be performed by an odd or even number of persons, include tunes such as ‘Entarisi Mavili’, ‘Ey Yüceler’, ‘Sepetçioğlu’, and ‘Haydi Yârim’. ‘Double Tunes’, danced always by an even number of persons, include tunes such as ‘Al Basmadan Donu var’, ‘Karanfil Yalakları’, and ‘Meyhaneler’. These dances are performed at a slower pace than single tunes. In the last category, there are tunes such as ‘Harmandalı for Girls’, ‘Karyolamın Demiri’, ‘Çaktım Çaktım’, ‘Bağyüzünün Çamları’, ‘Edremit Güvende’, ‘İnce Mehmet’ etc.

¹⁶ This tune, which can be sung at different stages of the ritual apart from the henna ceremony, has an important place in the collective memory of Bergama and environs. It is included in Osman Bayatlı and Abdurrahman Yılmaz’s work titled ‘Bergama’da Milli Oyunlar (National Dances in Bergama)’ published in 1943, under the name ‘Tune for Making the Bride Cry’. The book says the following about this melody: “This tune is played with a goblet drum and tambourine while the bride is being taken [from her house]. While it is being played, the bride mounts a horse or gets in a car. This is a sad and mournful tune. Like the tune’s mood, the family is also sad. While the tune is played, the bride cries - everyone cries. Now, there is a heavy feeling of emptiness and loneliness descending on the bride’s home. All the pleasure and joy is taken over by the groom’s side and flowed into his home...” (1943:27).

¹⁷Refik Güngör, in his memories on the 1950s, writes about this familiarity: “...In the past, these national days were more impactful thanks to the presence and intense participation of the soldiers from the barracks of the ARTILLERY and INFANTRY regiments in our district... On the Victory Days (30 August), people were cheering to the parade of the special escort of honor, the tanks, and artillery carriages and this brought the love between the people and the army to the highest level.” (2010: 189).

duty and obtained very good results in the Bergama Festival, Izmir Fair, and on 9 September (liberation of Izmir). 7-A marching band, orchestra, and jazz section were established with the music branch ordinance issued for regulating the activities of the music branch.” The same brochure also provides the total number of concerts given by the band until that date, the events it participated in, and the number of people who had attended these events. The People’s House marching band continued to exist until 1951 when the activities of People’s Houses were stopped throughout the country.

After the mid-1950s, a new marching band affiliated to Bergama Municipality replaced the previous band. The chief of the band, Avni Bey, was an experienced band player who served as a band sergeant at the Artillery Barracks during his military service. This band, like its predecessor, took part in invitations and celebrations continuing to engage with the public: *“...The building ‘Palas’, with its saloon on the ground floor and, garden in summertime, was a place where engagements, weddings, and other ceremonies were held. The marching band used to play during these events and the couples danced and had a good time”* (Güngör 2010:22). In time, the municipal band began to participate in wedding and circumcision feasts held in villages and towns such as Kozak, Kınık, and Poyracık, in addition to engagement and wedding ceremonies. Eyüp Eriş, in his book *Kınık, Geçmiş Zaman Kayıtları (Kınık, Records from Past)* writes that the “most magnificent” weddings in the town were held with the marching band from Bergama (2009:243). The municipal marching band had the following members in 1964: Nazım Özmeral (trombone and conductor), Mehmet Şevki İzci (alto saxophone), Hikmet Gülşen (clarinet), Cafer Üney (trumpet), İbrahim Calp (tenor saxophone), Selahattin Canlıbaş (trombone), Hüseyin Güneş (trumpet), Sadık Seve (alto saxophone), Hasan Gözetlik (snare drum), Mustafa Yılmaz (drum), Emin Oğuz (cymbal), Fehmi Deniz (sousaphone), and Nuri Süpürgeci (tenor saxophone). Since there was no tenure track allocated exclusively to the band musicians in any municipality other than the city center municipality of Izmir at that time, a significant part of the mentioned musicians was assigned to different units of the municipality in order to ensure the continuity of the marching band. There was a procedure in place to hire the marching band for public services such as celebrations and events. Anyone who wanted to have the band in their wedding had to submit a petition to the municipality and set the date and hour of the wedding considering the engagements of the band. The service of the band, generally known to be hired for the circumcision ceremony and the “taking the bride” stage of weddings, did not last more than two hours. In this way, it was possible for the band to take to more than one gig on the same day and to provide its service to weddings and similar celebrations held in different parts of the basin.

The band's repertoire had a highly eclectic composition. Repertoire could comfortably bring together dance tunes such as tangos and waltzes, examples from zeybek tunes, and the marches such as "İzmir March", "Mehter March", or "Bursa Işıklar March" performed in accompaniment of the wedding procession. Tunes such as "Harmandalı", "Bergama Zeybeği", and "Edremit Güvendesı" were the most requested melodies in the region. At the end of the wedding ceremonies, during the stage of "taking the bride", the marching band was expected to perform a sad tune for "making the bride cry", just as drum-clarinet duos do at village weddings and this one was played by an experienced Romani musician in the band.¹⁸ Bergama Municipality Marching Band members continued to establish "marching band orchestras" dubbed "jazz" in the basin until the early 70s. These small bands, organized to meet the expectations of the modern urban entertainment concept, can also be described as small wedding orchestras formed by the marching band members in groups of three or four. Refik Güngör talks about this practice, which was almost traditional in Bergama for a while: *"The henna nights of weddings are held in winter movie theaters, in the Public Education Hall, or in the prayer hall, or the Synagogue, left by Jews. While the orchestra dubbed 'jazz' is doing its job behind the scenes of the halls, only 'the groom and three or five very close friends of his' are allowed to enter the hall in the last hours of the entertainment to see the ladies' dances. In any case, there was someone from the organizers of the wedding to prevent the other men from coming in"* (2010:73).

These groups, adding accordion and drums to the band wind instruments, made music for a group of almost exclusively female guests at the henna night entertainments held indoors as part of wedding ceremonies. In these celebrations, which can be counted among the early examples of salon weddings, now a settled practice in the basin, the curtains of the stage were kept closed as it is not desirable for the musicians and the female guests to see each other – the "jazz" was performed behind the scenes. Events freely open to the participation of male guests were exceptional; in those years, such celebrations were called "Ball Weddings".

In the 60s and 70s, the basin was quite active in terms of marching band activities. First Soma and then Kınık created their own bands during this period. The coal mines operated by Etibank in Soma since 1939 were transferred to Turkish Coal Enterprises (TKİ) in 1957; then it was connected to the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. Şeref Canku, working in Garp Lignite Enterprises (GLİ),

¹⁸Hikmet Gülşen (clarinet) and Hasan Gözetlik (drums and trumpet) were among the well-known musicians of Bergama in that period with their performances and musical backgrounds.

affiliated to the institution,¹⁹ was also a music teacher at the Soma Apprenticeship School. Canku established the first official marching band of the district in 1957 with the staff he trained here; the band's members were civil servants and workers. The band was participating in official holidays and ceremonies held in Soma and neighboring settlements such as Kırkağaç but it was mainly hired for circumcision ceremonies. Band in Kınık started its activities at a later date, in 1978. Established with the initiatives of the new mayor Hüseyin Çivi and a group of municipal employees after the repeated 1977 local elections, the band included experienced musicians who had just left the Bergama Marching Band at that time. Initially supported by members of the Bergama Band, this marching band began to play with twelve musicians. Now the people of Kınık, who had to invite the Bergama Band for weddings in the past, could be at ease thanks to the new marching band in Kınık. Kınık Municipality Marching Band and Soma G.L.İ. Marching Band continued their activities until the mid-90s. Today, only the marching bands of Dikili and Bergama municipalities are active.

5.

The rapid transformation that took place with the youth movements that affected the whole world since the mid-1960s began to change the way the new generations view the world, the way they socialize, and, hence, their musical taste. In these years, movie theaters were the only stage for young people to give concerts save for the venues belonging to official agencies. Many well-known bands and artists of Turkey visited movie theaters in Bergama and Soma during their tours through Anatolia. In his memoirs, Selahattin Turhal gives names such as Cem Karaca, Barış Manço, and Erol Büyükburç among the musicians who gave concerts at the Kermes Cinema of Bergama in those years. Bands such as Mavi Işıklar (Blue Lights), Silüetler (Silhouettes), and Beyaz Kelebekler (White Butterflies), which won first place in the national Golden Microphone competitions, also visited the district and gave concerts since the mid-60s (Turhal 2010:74). In the same period, the artists and groups invited to the festival events held in Bergama in line with the expectations of the young masses began to diversify. Bands such as Beybonlar Orchestra and LSD Orchestra took the stage as part of the “arrangement²⁰ music festival day” in the 1971 festival celebrations. Saadet Sun, who arranged Anatolian melodies in western forms together with music ensembles who also made music in the genre known as “arrangement”, as well as musicians such as Istanbul Gelişim Orchestra, Erol Büyükburç, Rana - Selçuk Alagöz, Ritm 71, Ersen ve

¹⁹ Şeref Canku was the father of Doğan, Kumru, and Nayman Canku, who would make significant contributions to the country's music, ballet, opera, and literature in the coming years.

²⁰ *Aranjman*/arrangements was the term used for foreign songs covered with Turkish lyrics – tr.

Dadaşlar, Boğaziçi Orchestra, Barış Manço, and Kurtalan Ekpres appeared in the festival programs of the 70s.

In these years, the younger generations had the passion of getting involved with music by coming together, listening, and making new discoveries. Selahattin Turhal, writing on those years, says, *"...our taste in and our desire to learn music was extremely high"* and underlines that young people were taking advantage of every opportunity they could find to listen to music. Radio broadcasts, especially the "Night and Music" show on radio TRT 2 on weekends, were followed carefully although they were broadcast at late hours. Extended- and long-plays that could make their way to the rare shops in the basin were the only way to have the music sought after. Turhal lists the most played songs in his school's music cabinet: Ajda Pekkan's "Boş Sokak", Barış Manço's "Kol Düğmeleri", Cem Karaca's "Resimdeki Gözyaşları", Mary Hopkins' "Those Were the Days", and The Beatles' "Yesterday." Some young people, who used a room in their home or an empty space they see fit to listen to music and practice instruments, were interested also in other art disciplines while collecting records and magazines related to their common interest areas. Muhsin Kıratlı, who was known for his Bergama Municipal Orchestra and the band Çılgınlar ("Madmen"), describes the place where his music-loving young friends were meeting in his study *Bergama'da Pop Müziğin Yakın Tarihi (Recent History of Pop Music in Bergama)*: *"The next generation that came after us was better equipped and educated. They followed social developments and musical innovations very carefully. This group, consisting of Hüsnü Arkan, Halim Yazıcı, Cahit Şeremet, and Zafer Muhlis Uslu, as well as Taci Uslu who passed away recently, were very close friends. They were coming to every place we played with the Çılgınlar and were always chatting with us after the show. Taci and his older brother Naci had converted a brick room still under construction on the second floor of their house into a meeting place after installing doors, glass, and window frames. The wall of this room, containing a saz, records, magazines, and books, were decorated with posters of Cem Karaca, Fikret Kızılok, Âşık Veysel, and Yılmaz Güney. Hüsnü Arkan, a neighbor living in the adjacent house and their high school friend, jumped over the low wall that separates the gardens of the two houses and joined the team; he used to play saz and guitar and sing with the Uslu brothers. The group recorded almost everything they played on an ITT tape deck. There were a lot of people visiting this makeshift rehearsal room: poet Halim Yazıcı, journalist Bilal Çetin, and musician Muhlis Uslu were among the frequenters. The question for them was not just listening to music and discussing; the space was functioning as a kind of thought club and production center. They were leafing through philosophy books, reading poems, discussing the plays staged in the theater course of Public Education Center, and preparing the wall newspaper of their school. In addition, they were rehearsing Orhan*

Kemal's play "72. Koğuş" (Ward 72). They were sixteen, at most seventeen, years old..." Such groups, which created a cultural environment open to novelties according to their own tastes and liking, interacted with the musicians around them and Bergama, as Kıratlı states, produced nationally famous musicians such as Taci Uslu, Erhan Şakar, Muhlis Uslu, and Hüsnü Arkan (also played in the band Ezginin Günlüğü).

The developments not only changed the habits of listening to music but also diversified the possibilities of making music. The inhabitants in the basin, who were already familiar with the drum-clarinet duo, the quartet, the marching band, and the "jazz" orchestra until then, began to meet electrical installations, powered speakers, and electric instruments (guitar, bass guitar, organ, etc.) in line with the developments in the music technologies. With the new roads connecting the district centers to İzmir, Manisa, and Balıkesir, intercity transportation and public transportation facilities became widespread while supply and transportation of this type of equipment ceased to be a difficult task. In those years, music stores such as Çobanoğlu, Sinepauç, Maga, Bonmarşe 99, and BOR, operating in Çankaya and Kemeraltı districts of İzmir, were frequent destinations for musicians and organizers of the basin to supply musical instruments and related equipment.²¹ In the years they started music, the musicians tried to make their own equipment by resorting to carpenters or radio repairmen around and to creatively adapt the instruments and equipment they somehow acquired; in the following years, however, they overcame these challenges. Institutions that started to create their own orchestras in Bergama, such as the Public Education Center and the Municipality, began to purchase such equipment and make it available to musicians. This also allowed the municipality to employ the musicians in the basin, organize regular gigs for the orchestra, and include new actors on the music scene dominated by the Romani musicians.

Although the first orchestras established in Bergama towards the end of the 1960s did not see themselves as wedding orchestras, they soon began to take a place in this market and became associated with certain venues. The bands Çılınlar and Pergamus, which were famous for their high musical quality, lead this movement. Muhsin Kıratlı, in his 2021 study, *Bergama'da Pop Müziğinin Yakın Tarihi* describes the environment in which he and his band Çılınlar played: *"As if we were not a wedding orchestra, we did not play dance tunes until 11:30 PM at weddings and we gave fifteen-minute breaks after playing for forty-five minutes. We had everything on our list, we regularly followed Hey, the weekly*

²¹Lender, Sonakord and Dynakord amplifiers; Framus, Mossima, Eko and Vox guitars and bass guitars; Cümbüş, Şeref and Yamaha drum kits; Binson echo unit; Bauwerk, Tiger, Farfisa, Höfner, G.E.M., and Vox organs; and Atlantic sound systems, Amati saxophones and Tiger trumpets were among the preferred instruments and equipment of the period.

popular music magazine, and rehearsed the first five Turkish and foreign songs that appeared in the Top 10 list. Our self-confidence increased as we performed better and received appreciation from famous bands who visited Bergama for a concert. According to the Moğollar band, we had to continue our career in Istanbul..." These bands, which initially gave concerts in Bergama Palas Hotel, Çamlı Park, and movie theaters as well as performing at wedding parties held in the hall of the Public Education Center, adopted a completely new approach in 1970 when the Municipality's Wedding Hall was opened. Now, the district had a new venue with a stage and this development fueled the musical environment and competition in the district. While newly established bands such as the Anatolian Pop Orchestra continued to play in the Public Education Center Hall, the musicians playing in the municipality hall made their gigs under the name of Bergama Municipality Orchestra. Over time, new bands were added to Muzaffer Özçelik and Friends playing for Public Education Center and Remzi Şen Orchestra playing for Municipal Hall; these new bands were the Oluşum orchestra, the Kardeşler orchestra, the Doğuş orchestra, and the Diriliş orchestra and they were playing without being engaged to any institution or place. In addition to the Public Education Center Hall and the Municipal Wedding Hall, the dinner balls held in the Textile Factory Cafeteria were very popular.

Orchestras, which had their heyday during the 70s, were different in every sense from the band orchestras that were playing for the salon weddings in the past. The groups in Bergama put an end to the practice of playing behind the curtains with their attitudes and determination by radically changing the conservative salon wedding concept that was taken for granted until then. The repertoires were alive with the most actual local and foreign songs. Selahattin Turhal writes that the movement that started in Bergama under the leadership of the band Çılgınlar was a "breakthrough" in the district (2010:74). Many musicians who witnessed that period agree that the attempt to introduce harmonic music to the public, which started with marching bands, actually approached this goal thanks to the orchestras. The diversity of the venues and the visibility of music and musicians in the public sphere increased the demand for these bands. Those bands that have come to the level to accompany important musicians and groups in festival events, began to receive invitations from other towns over time. In addition to settlements within the basin such as Bölcek, Ayazkent, Poyracık, Kınık, Dikili, Bademli, and Soma, the musicians added distant districts such as Altınova, Savaştepe, Gördes, Gaziemir, and Alaçatı to their tour route. For example, the band Çılgınlar took the stage at the İzmir Fair and accompanied Aylin Urgan, one of the famous female voices of the period, in Ayvalık. Members of the Kardeşler Orchestra joined the Fulya Orchestra taking the stage at İzmir İkiçeşmelik Kısmet Wedding Hall

for a while, and then formed several ensembles under the same name and performed at numerous weddings and events in and out of the basin.

In the same period, while bands such as Kara Elmas, Doğuş, and Grup Nazar dominated the Soma stage, Kınık created the band Çisentiler. The demand for and interest in the orchestras made the dreams of many young people who wanted to be professional musicians come true. This profession, which has long been thought to be only for Romani musicians – known as the “wedding musicians” of the basin – and seen as the only performers of the drum-clarinet-trumpet ensemble or drum-clarinet duo, sat on a brand new framework in accordance with the expectations of the age. Eyüp Eriş talks on the effect of the change and changing expectations in Kınık, which is located in the east of the basin: *“When weddings began to be held with orchestras in ballrooms, the Romani musicians receded into the background. Young people from other neighborhoods started to start bands. When musical instruments such as drums and guitar came to the fore, the interest among young people increased. Ahmet Çavuş’s son Turgut Alkan attempted to form his first orchestra. They used to make rehearsals in the “saya” [a part of the traditional house] where the tobacco bales were stored. This team had a successful track record with drums, guitar, and other instruments”* (2009:271).

A series of technological developments caused band music and orchestras to begin to lose their importance. The organs, which were previously regarded as the indispensable instruments of any band, reached the functionality to take over the task of a fully equipped orchestra as a result of the rapid transformation of music technology in the early 80s. The musicians immediately realized the potential of the first combo keyboards, which were produced in the 60s according to the Western music standards and approach with only a few rhythmic accompaniments in their memory, and embarked on various experiments with these devices. However, the sound banks of the first models did not contain 8/8 or 9/8 rhythms, which were called “native rhythms”, and this stopped the performers who sought after putting aside the orchestra and going to stage alone. The company that produced the Atak rhythm-box, which was closely following the developments in the market, came to their assistance. Those who could buy this device and start playing for weddings began to proceed and the others tried to play with the pre-recorded oriental rhythms on tapes. With the introduction of models such as the Yamaha PSR-70, the number of “lone wolves” in the basin began to increase and they were dubbed, simply, “the pianists”. With the introduction of the Yamaha 6300, which could store eight different rhythm patterns in its memory, the rhythm boxes were no longer needed. Such models with cartridges as Roland E-20 and E-35, and the others such as GEM VS-1, and VS-2 have been widely used for a while, but the introduction

of the Roland E-86 floppy disk model revolutionized the sector. The pianists of the basin began to hire people from İzmir to prepare any kind of rhythmic accompaniment and orchestration and to load them onto floppy disks. The first representative of this type of musicians, which had been popular with so-called “piano chanteurs” such as Ferdi Özbeğen and Arif Susam in Turkey and Adem Gebzen and Aziz Özen in İzmir, was Ertuğrul Uzunoğulları, a former orchestra musician, in Bergama. The pianists who followed Uzunoğulları were usually seasoned musicians who had orchestra backgrounds like him. Sebahattin İşcen, one of the founders of the leading orchestras of the 70s whom we have interviewed, explained this transition from being an instrument player to being a pianist:²² *“As the 80s came to an end, the orchestra business began to decline and, on the other hand, it became difficult to find an accompaniment musician with whom you could work properly. Orchestras had a tradition, manners, and style from the 60’s until then, but along with many other things in the country, this also started to fall through the floor. Finally, one day, while I was playing for a wedding, I said “No, it doesn’t work like this” and the next day I bought a Yamaha PS-55 organ. This should be in 1986 or 87. I said, ‘I will do this job alone and from now on, I will be controlling everything. Then I thought how could I explain this to the wedding owners²³ who are used to seeing bands on stage. Finally, at a wedding at Public Education Center, I put the organ in the middle, had the curtains pulled a little from left and right, and placed huge speaker cabinets on either side to fill the stage. Just before I started playing, the wedding owner came running up to me. ‘Oh, where are your friends?’ he asked. I said, “I’ll play alone”. When he panicked and asked, ‘How on earth will it be possible,’ I said, ‘You’ll see when it happens’. Anyway, I had a great wedding gig and I never looked back again...”* While the owners of the businesses leaned towards pianists because this was reducing the costs, places such as hotels, restaurants, taverns, cafes, and music halls become places where pianists took regular gigs. Towards the mid-90s, with the increase in the number of private wedding halls, pianists became the constant service providers of these venues.

Pianists were an important part of traditional village weddings from the date they became a part of the musical life of Bakırçay Basin; they were added as a third option to the drum-clarinet duo and goblet drummers who have been the musicians hired since a long time ago. They were also seen as musicians of “bride’s house” because they were in demand for the henna night entertainments of weddings. However, unlike the goblet drummers, they played during entertainments with both male and female guests. When goblet drummers were not invited for any reason, they were responsible for providing music service to the bride’s family. Because they were playing in a fixed position unlike the

²² İzmir Mediterranean Academy, Pla+form Magazine, Issue: 14, 2021.

²³ the families of the bride and groom who organize the wedding – tr.

drum-clarinet duo and the goblet drummers, their function was usually completed on the last day of the wedding when the preparations started for taking the bride from her house. On the other hand, the pianists represented the modern and urban understanding of entertainment, as they created the “salon wedding” atmosphere of the district centers in village weddings.

As the private radio stations began to operate and the mp3 and other compressed music file formats became widespread since the mid-1990s, the musical pieces began to circulate freely and free-of-charge from hand to hand as in all parts of the world. This mode of circulation, which almost completely devalued recorded music, transformed pianists’ profession to a certain extent. Accessing the popular pieces of the time instantly, the residents of the basin began to make requests for these pieces from the pianists at weddings in the original format and a new practice began: playing recorded songs between sessions of live performances. The great interest in the albums prepared directly for wedding entertainments by musicians from outside the basin such as İzmirli Birol and İzmirli Taylan (“Birol of İzmir” and “Taylan of İzmir”) put the piano profession on a whole new trajectory. The repertoire, whose boundaries were relatively clear before and whose variety and sequence were decided by the pianist, gradually began to take shape according to the expectations of the wedding feast and the guests. Thus, pianists were rapidly turned into DJs and technicians. Orchestras and pianists, who occasionally receive support from young Romani musicians for live performances, continue to exist as important components of the modern musical life of the basin.

When we look at today, the main aspects that we have tried to summarize above are still in place to a great extent and continue to carry the musical heritage intertwined with social rituals. However, we can say that most of the details of the rituals are on the verge of vanishing because of economic reasons, the change in social expectations and the understanding of entertainment, allocation of less and less time to them due to the daily rush, and the decreasing interest of the new generations in the various elements of the tradition.