



## TURKISH POP MUSIC IMAGES.

### The Music and Its Communication Design: Record Covers, Photos & Posters & Ads in Magazines, Cinema Posters, Music Performances in Films & Clips 1960s - early 1980s

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This article gives a preliminary insight into a research project on Turkish pop music images, more precisely on Turkish pop music of the 1960s up to the early 1980s, also called Anadolu Pop or Anatolian Rock, and its visualization. The current project members are Cornelia Lund (fluctuating images, Berlin), Holger Lund (University of Cooperative Education Baden-Württemberg, Ravensburg), Mona Mahall (HafenCity Universität, Hamburg), Asli Serbest (University of the Arts, Bremen), and Banu Çiçek Tülü (Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg/ Humboldt-Universität Berlin); furthermore, the project is supported by Lukas Yves Jakel and Johannes Kuhn (Berlin/Munich), and Vanessa Brotzmann, Iris Ott and Katinka Sacher (media design students, University of Cooperative Education Baden-Württemberg, Ravensburg).

We would like to introduce our topic by presenting a *trouvaille*, which we owe Ercan Demirel from Ironhand Records: The visual side is realized here with dance in film by a high school band from the Kadıköy Anadolu Lisesi, presenting their version of the Turkish folk song *Fidayda* (TRT, N.N., 1979). This TV-video already provides a multi-faceted hybrid combining: rurality/urbanity, East/West, folk/rock, acoustic/electric, tradition/modernity - all this by musically mixing a traditional *Türkü* tune, *Fidayda*, with modern Western electric instruments and electronic sound effects like distortion, and by combining an Anatolian dance style and rural costumes with Western modern dance and an element of socialist popular dance. You won't easily find a comparable audiovisual combination in any other country at the time.

The fundament for the TV-video is the *lisesi* (high school) music group culture. While Western education in schools still banned pop music, because it was said to degenerate youth, Turkey encouraged pop music in education from scratch, including teen girl bands, children bands and even baby bands. Comprehending pop music in education was supported with very popular, nationwide contests like the Hürriyet Golden Microphone contest (1965-68), aiming also at High School Bands, and the Milliyet Inter-High School Music Contest (1967-2000).

The fact is: Pop music in Turkey in the 60s and 70s differs from pop music in other countries and had, in certain parts of the society, a much better status in Turkey than in the Western world. Yet, it also differs from other non-Western hybrid pop music



because of the strong Turkish element in it. Joobin Bekhrad (2014) states: “[...] on the hard rock, psych, and folk songs of the era, this strong Turkish element and flavour is also prevalent, taking the numbers beyond the simple adaptation and translation of Western music for Eastern audiences.”

Hence, our basic questions would be: is there a different visual communication for this kind of music, too? If so, how does it look like and is there something special about it? And how is it related to the music? Can one get a better understanding of the music through its visual communication as part of the pop context?

During the 60s and 70s, Turkish pop musicians had a tough job: besides making music, they had to promote their music by acting in Yeşilçam films, playing their music in films or in TV shows, acting in photo novels or as fashion models, posing for promotional photos used for record sleeves, ads, and music magazines. All this to create Turkish Pop Music Images, not only as a visual counterpart to the music, but rather as an integral part of what pop music historian Diedrich Diederichsen (2014) calls “pop music”: a multi-media phenomenon, unfolded in different media for purposes of communication and experience.

Yet this is not the whole picture: pop music had to sidestep the severe restrictions on TRT, made by its board. Thus, to reach a mass audience, Pop music in Turkey simply had to go visual on other media channels than the official TRT channel (cf. Spicer 2018, p. 32f; Baysal 2018, p. 215). Kornelia Binicewicz (2017) states: “In the 60s and 70s, the Turkish music business was deeply tied with cinema,” and she continues (2018): “Turkish cinema and music became interdependent.” Indeed, some feature films resemble a showcase for numerous musicians, for example *Çizmeli Kedi* (Barış Prodüksiyon, Kunt Film & Uskan, A., 1976) with its long list of acting and performing musicians. So, the massive visual output of Turkish pop music is somehow essential and vital to it, enabling it to connect to and communicate with its audience.

Outside Western pop music, Turkey had one of the biggest and strongest independent music industries with a stable market of its own, with about estimated 100 Turkish record companies in the 1970s (cf. Greve, 2003, p. 77; Ergun, 2018, p. 84), and millions of Turkish records sold. This industry also produced several music magazines, starting with *Caz* and *Swing* in the 1940s, continuing with *Caz Ekspres* in the late 1950s, *Melodi* and *Diskotek* in the 1960s, and, most prominently, in the 1970s with *Hey* as the only non-Western weekly pop music magazine. *Hey* appeared for over two decades, featuring, at least in the 1970s, many more Turkish than Western artists.

Many of these artists were male, and male-dominated pop music history writing tends to overlook an essential fact: “It was women who created the sound of the era in terms of quantity and often quality,” as Kornelia Binicewicz (2017) points out – with outstanding singers like Esin Afşar, Ayla Algan, Melike Demirağ, Nükhet Duru, Esmeray, Hümeýra, Neşe and her sister Gülden Karaböcek, Yasemin Kumral, Ajda and sister Semiramis Pekkan, Şenay, Tülay Özer, just to name a few. Hence, our focus will also be on the female side of Turkish pop music images. Moreover, current Turkish pop music research defines the origins of Anadolu pop more and more as female,

with *Kanto* and its female singers and especially with the 1964 song “Burçak Tarlası” by female singer Tülay German, the first pop-westernized *Türkü*, creating the basic formula for Anadolu pop (cf. Karahasanoğlu & Skoog, 2009, p. 59; Meriç, 2018; Baysal 2018, p. 207).

Over the last years, and with the help of many friends from Turkey, we have been able to establish a collection of original Turkish records (and their sleeves), a collection of original *Hey* magazines, and a collection of digital copies of Turkish films and clips.

There is, according to Selçuk Artut (in: Spicer, 2018, p. 245), no archive culture in Turkey for pop music history. Therefore, the music is not very well known anymore, not even in Turkey. Daniel Spicer (2018, p. 244) recently noted: “Whereas, in the West, rock superstars of that era had been canonized, their musical legacies kept alive by endless hyperbole and mythologizing, Turkish rock pioneers were all but forgotten.” Why is that? According to Ergin Bener (in: Spicer, 2018, p. 230f), the coup “1980 was a disaster – musically, politically, culturally.” “What happened in 1980 was like cutting down all trees in the forest.” So, the coup de-historicized Turkey.

Our multi-media archive serves as fundament and starting point for our future research, but also also for aesthetic transformation: instead of just researching and reproducing the visual and audiovisual material, we want designers and artists to reinterpret it, not with a nostalgic or retromaniac touch, but with a contemporary approach, following, like Kornelia Binicewicz (2016) puts it, constant remixing as “a sort of leitmotif in Turkish culture” and bearing in mind present gender and political issues. This reinterpretation will be a central part of the project and define its outcome in publications and exhibitions. Asli Serbest and Mona Mahall give us an example of such a reinterpretation with their short cut-up video *Boş Sokak. Female Turkish Music Cinema* (2019),<sup>1</sup> based on snippets from music clips extracted from films or from stand-alone music clips.

Let us go one step back: What kind of music is Anadolu pop or Anatolian rock, as it is called as well? Back in 1972, Cahit Berkay (of the Anatolian rock group Moğollar) presented a still useful definition (in: Baysal, 2018, p. 216): “Anadolu Pop is a style that combines Turkish folkloric themes, instruments and poems with the electronic capabilities and the systems of pop music.” It is a hybrid and experimental music, everyone in literature agrees – yet at present under reconsideration, as the title of Ozan Baysal’s recent text – Reconsidering “Anadolu Pop” (2018) – suggests. Under reconsideration not only regarding its female origins and dimensions but also regarding its hybrid character that can be described from three different perspectives:

1. The Westernization of Anatolian music by pop-rock means, resulting in Anadolu pop

This perspective can be traced back to Ziya Gökalp, the leading thinker of Turkism, pushing on a Westernization of Anatolian folk music in the frame of the central republican project of nation building in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Lund, 2013). 1947 Marshall Plan funds were established for Turkey. In line with these economic and political measures a cultural development took place: Westernization in an American

way, which the historian Erik Zürcher sums up as follows (2017, p. 231f): "The 1950s saw the emergence of a modern, American oriented lifestyle among the urban bourgeoisie. Its members embraced consumerism. The Epicenter of this new lifestyle was the hypermodern Hilton Hotel [...] which opened 1955." But we should not forget: The Hilton hotel is one thing, but the ploughing peasants, which photos of the late 1950s show just in front of the Hilton, are part of the same reality. This gives evidence, that a rural-agrarian and an urban society existed directly juxtaposed, creating a sort of rurbanism, a mixture of rurality and urbanity.

## 2. Easternization/Turkification of Western Pop by Anatolian music, resulting in Anadolu pop

This perspective can also be seen as related to Ziya Gökalp, and it remains relevant up to the 60s and 70s anti-imperialistic Left-Nationalism, opposed to all dependence on foreign countries, namely the U.S., with a focus on the culture of Anatolia.

Antoine Remise (2014) turned the perspective of simple Westernization when he wrote:

"In a way, 'Anatolian Rock' was more an easternization of Turkish music trends than the westernization that is usually discussed. The bands and artists started to copy less and less their Anglo-Saxon models and developed their own genre. The audience's response was huge; their amazing and unique [Anatolian] melodies had a fresh energy that touched the hearts and minds of many who wanted to be a part of the bigger modern world whilst enjoying their Turkish identity."

Remise shows that Anatolian rock can be understood in a more complex way, twisting the hierarchy of adopting entity and entity adopted. Yet, Songül Karahasanoğlu and Gabriel Skoog (2009, p. 53) observed already, when writing about Orhan Tekelioğlu's concepts of "West-East" and "East-West" syntheses, "a conceptual shift from a model based on Western music incorporating Turkish styles to one based on Turkish styles incorporating Western music."

## 3. The "in-between perspective" on Anadolu pop

This perspective is related to many of the musicians and to a central part of their audience: the Turkish middle class college youth. Baysal (2018, p. 207) writes: "Many of them attended Western-oriented [...] high schools and/or universities." But they kept a double distance: "from both the Western world and from traditional Anatolia." He continues: "It was being in such an "in-between" state - [...] that made their innovative experimentations possible," (Baysal, 2018, p. 207; cf. also Noyan, 2008, p. 19) taking elements from both, Eastern and Western music, to form something in-between: Anadolu pop, which, according to Baysal (2018, p. 216), was an experimental way of "harmonizing [or at least: trying to harmonize] various fields - including national ideology, local culture, international counterculture, and the modern world."

The three perspectives - Westernization, Easternization and "in-between" - are,

depending on the point of view, very present in the visualization of Anadolu pop and lead to a specific rurbanism, which can be observed on record sleeves and *Hey* magazine photos quite often. Rural outfits are juxtaposed to and mixed with an urban outfit to provide hybrid Anadolu pop outfits.<sup>2</sup> This kind of rurbanism can as well be produced by the combination of a rural landscape and a rural activity with a Western urban outfit, or the rural-urban electrified saz appears as a symbol of rurbanism, as it happens in many cases.

Banu Çiçek Tülü analyses this situation as follows: Turkey's history is marked by migration. Starting from 1950's, there was massive domestic migration from rural areas to big cities, especially Istanbul.

According to the social scientist and urban planner İlhan Tekeli (2009), the Turkish Republic's process of modernization was a "top down" process. The idea of "for the public, despite the public" characterized the authoritarian regime and policy, which aimed at homogenizing country.

The first problem was that the people from rural areas were considered as outsiders in the city while elitism dominated the cultural scene. Consequently, the two hybrid music mixtures, Arabesk and Anadolu rock, became the voice of the "other." The people moving to the big cities created their own living spaces (gecekondu), trying to hold on to their former life. While the migration drastically changed the urban topography, it also brought different cultures together. The newcomers, despite of being all new to the big cities, came with their heterogeneous cultures and this made Arabesk more than a cultural mixture in music. They turned it into a manifestation of their identity as the result of a social chance. This "identity music" tried to urbanize and centralize itself.

Anatolian rock can be described as the protest sound of a younger generation. As society has become politicized during the 60s and 70s, the music was a tool for demanding equality, or a symbol of confrontation to inequity. Thus, it also became the sound of the people from rural areas in urban areas. The popular culture used all possible forms of being Anatolian or rural - as this is a central element of the migrant's identity. This is why we see many musicians with rural elements on their record sleeves, or they are mixing modern and country clothing as a representation of their identity, creating an image of being both, rural and urban. The aim is here to reach the vast group of people who are devastated and disparaged by the modernization.

Kenan Behzat Sharpe (2018, p. 174) points to other elements involved:

"As the politics of the Turkish left became increasingly militant after 1968, [...] activists began heavily emphasizing the [rural] culture of Anatolia. Selda and others began to move from a psychedelic-folk fusion to unambiguous folk revival. Urban activists from Istanbul and Ankara cut their long hair short, tore through the "village novels" of socialist realist writers, and attempted to organize the peasantry. With the *bağlama* in one hand and rifle in the other, they struggled for a completely independent Turkey. Nationalism, highly selective reinterpretation of the Turkish independence movement, and

investment in the historical continuity of “the people” shaped the content and form of revolutionary art in the period.”

Daniel Spicer (2018, p. 78) follows this track: Musicians “were beginning to consider themselves as much revolutionaries as artists.” Spicer (2018, p. 158) remarks about Barış Manço’s album *2023*: the record praises a rural Arcadian brotherhood, a semi-socialist “idealized, rural society.” And about Selda Bağcan’s music he continues: “her interpretations of folk tunes were perceived as protest songs, using timeless resonances to cast an allusive and critical eye over the socio-political situation in modern Turkey.” Here, folk music was used as a legitimated and securing tradition enabling protest. Selda (in: Spicer, 2018, p. 160) said herself: “the people who said they hated my songs did listen to me, in secret, because I do my own country’s folk music, the cultural music, the roots.”

Meral Akkent (2018) brings another notion on the table, combining urban gender issues and rurality: “In 1970s urban female performers discovered self-confident statements of rural women in traditional songs and interpreted these songs in their albums. To what extent these wise recommendations of the older women in these songs are in place” is demonstrated by a number of songs. One example is Neşe Karaböcek’s “Demiyom mu?”. In this very old traditional song from Anatolia “an experienced woman clearly tries to encourage a younger one to shape her own life and not to waste time with unreliable men who only consume the vital energy of a woman.” (ibd.).

Summarizing the thoughts of Tülü, Sharpe, Spicer and Akkent, one can come to the following conclusion: the rural and the urban are in a complex, even contradictory way interwoven. The outcome is a rurbanism with the following key elements: a rural-to-urban migration, an urban left-winged nationalism focusing on the rural, an Arcadian, anti-imperialistic, revolutionary ruralism plus a female empowerment. The pop music images produced just show this complexity: they are mixing the rural with the urban, by tying the urban back to the rural as well as by urbanizing the rural.

Like rurbanism there is another central feature of Turkish pop music images on the level of their visual structures, we would like to call it the “flexi-image”.

Nazlı Eda Noyan (2008, p. 11) has researched the Yeşilçam melodrama and its film posters and writes about flexi-film and flexi-poster: “[...], a film and its poster differ in Turkey from region to region in terms of content and marketing techniques [...]”, “the film endings and the posters would [even] differ from district to district in Istanbul [...].” Citing Özgüç, Noyan (ibd.) continues: “As Özgüç notes (1985), “the theatre owners of Anatolian cities warned the producers that they would reject their films unless they had belly dance in them.”” Films were also produced with different endings according to a regional male or female audience (ibd.). This corresponds in music to a sort of flexi-music that Baysal (2018, p. 209) took notion of, when he said “that artists/bands would often experiment with different musical aspects in each of their recordings,” and it corresponds also to flexi-sleeves. For example, the singer Selma İstabullu changes her style and appearance with every sleeve, yet the heavy electronic

Anatolian funk style of the songs is not present in any of the different sleeves.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes even one and the same song gets different sleeves, as one and the same film gets different posters.

A prime example for the flexi-image is Barış Manço's album 2023<sup>4</sup>: we can find here a socialist textual message (the brotherhood), a progressive Turko-futurism in sound (with the newest synthesizers used), then on the record sleeve a Western modernist electric guitar hero, Ottoman fashion with a nationalist touch and a hippie style with long hair, completed with progressive rock graphics. It's highly ambivalent and complex, as Spicer (2018, p. 137) remarks, with all in it: left-winged and right-winged positions, progressive and backward positions.

Why is that so? Maybe it serves a communication that aims at different, heterogeneous target groups, mixed like the audience in the *gazin*os<sup>5</sup>, sending references in every direction to maximize the audience? Or is it to cover musical experiments by visual means, balancing the experiments by pointing to various directions? More research has to be done on this subject. And we would like to invite everyone to support us with material and thoughts - any kind of help is much appreciated.

To stay updated please visit our tri-lingual project website, designed by Vanessa Brotzmann, Iris Ott and Katinka Sacher, media design students, University of Cooperative Education Baden-Württemberg, Ravensburg: <http://turkish-pop-music-images.org>.

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TRT (producer), N.N. (director). (1979). Kadıköy Anadolu Lisesi, *Fidayda*. Turkey. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIbmicvNTVI&t=131s> According to an interview conducted on 18.04.2019 at Istanbul ITU with one of the dancers, Mine Daldal, there have been involved as musicians Aydin Esin (arrangement), Mithat Kiliç (piano), Önder Şahin (drums), Erhan Asker (bass), Göksel N.N. (guitar), Fatih Okan (guitar), and as dancers Mine Tali Daldal, Arzu Ayday, Dilek Altun, Sevtap Arslan, Gaye N.N., choreography by Rana Evcim O'Brien, costume design by Bilun Kefeli.

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**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://vimeo.com/341231294>

<sup>2</sup> For a quick first impression please check the pages from Hey magazine displayed on our project's website: <http://turkish-pop-music-images.org>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. some record sleeves of Selma Istanbulu: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/4140098-Selma-%C4%B0stanbulu>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the record sleeve and the artwork of Barış Manço's 2023: <https://www.discogs.com/release/1758454-2023/images>

<sup>5</sup> Thanks for this hint to Erbatur Çavuşoğlu from Lefter Records. The hint was given in personal conversation, April 2017. For the topic of the gazino see: Lund, C. & Lund, H., 2015.