

Instrument Teaching in the Context of Oral Tradition: A Field Study from Bolu, Turkey

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Introduction¹

In almost all industrial and post-industrial societies of the modern age as well as in a majority of developing countries, musical-cultural accumulation is documented via writing, musical notation, and similar audio-visual tools to achieve transmission with minimum information loss. As a consequence of the formation of written culture and widespread use of musical notation, musical works could then be registered on permanent documents to enable transmission not only to the immediately following generations but also to many generations over future centuries. The use of writing and the consequential transmission of music via writing, however, are comparatively new yet noteworthy developments in the long history of humankind.

The earliest traces of using symbols or writing in music can be seen in the musical cultures of “ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, and Greece” (Michels 2001:159).² Nonetheless, “music writing with a notation system” (Rösing 1997:79) and its written transmission is a practice that gained popularity amidst European culture, though it was not so widespread among other global musical cultures. Western notation started with letters and neumes, but it then became more systematized when the ninth-century Dasia Notation gained prominence through the spread of the printing press and then underwent several evolutionary steps up through the sixteenth century. It reached its peak use in the twentieth century, when it was then renewed and reused by New Music composers or abandoned completely by other composers. Still, this traditional European notation system bears remarkable responsibility for the transmission of music culture from one generation to the next.

The traditional European notation system has been employed to register not only the musical background of western cultures, but also a variety of regions’ traditional, artistic, and contemporary musics worldwide.³ Within the context of attempts to transmit the musical cultural

¹ Much of the essay that follows is based on Özata 2007.

² English translations in this article that are from German- or Turkish-language sources have been made by Nesrin Kalyoncu.

³ However, as can be seen in Bela Bartók’s (1881-1945) Turkish Folk Music transcriptions, the application of the traditional European notation system in other music cultures can trigger challenges. For examples, see Bartók and Suchoff 1976.

heritage of humankind to future generations without losing it, “in Amsterdam, Berlin, Bloomington/USA, London, Los Angeles, Paris, and Vienna next to the leading international musical archives the formation of national archives has also been realized” (Simon 1987:139). However, since the Second World War, despite the numerous efforts to register oral notes that were transmitted by the musical creators of several cultures through oral communication, presently only a small portion of musical traditions have been documented, as noted by Simon (*ibid.*).

Oral culture, which varies greatly from written culture, is the way societies create, live, and transmit their cultures through language alone without consulting any literary source but relying instead on social memory. Oral cultural practices were initiated as early as human existence long before the invention of writing; they have left their trace on a great part of human history and persist until the present day via their continuation even after the invention of writing. The global spread and prevalence of written culture has not necessitated humankind to abandon oral culture altogether.

In the societies or social groups where primary oral culture is dominant,⁴ cultural context is transferred to the future through verbal/oral transmission that corresponds to transmitting via human memory alone without using any registering tool. In the formation and sustainment of oral culture, the contributions of people with high levels of attentiveness, perception, permanent memory, cognitive ordering, and interpretation are substantially remarkable. In oral culture, knowledge and experiences are transmitted to future generations by wise elders, and, as noted by Ong and Batuş (Ong 2003:57; Batuş 2004:821), since information is priceless and hard-to-get, there was traditionally a high degree of respect shown towards those who were professional in preserving information, familiar with the past and capable of narrating such tales. In oral transmission of music, too, experienced musicians with strong memories and capacious experience of several social happenings/events play vital roles as resources. The repetitious practices of these musicians enable the integration of music with social memory by keeping the music of society on the agenda with all its liveliness; they also transmit music to future generations by preserving its stylistic essence. Musical products are transmitted in a continuously transformational process by which basic stylistic structure is conserved but a “variant formation” (Elscheková 1998:231) is repeatedly experienced; this process is also shaped by personal creativity.

In oral cultures learning and teaching bear a vital significance that is related to the fact that, although in written culture the acquisition of knowledge is possible via documents, in oral culture the demise of the knowledge bearer also permanently terminates the availability of knowledge. That reality indeed points to one of the weakest aspects of oral culture. Edmonson

⁴ In oral culture research, the cultures that have no linkage to writing or the press and establish communication through spoken language alone are described as “primary oral cultures” (Ong 2003:23; Schlaffer 1986:7). Such spoken language encompasses some use of body language as well, “although gestures mean a lot of things, sign languages are developed to replace speech and even if they are employed by natural born deaf people they are still bound to verbal communication systems” (Ong 2003:19). Additionally, in a majority of modern societies, the fruits of advanced technology—including the telephone, radio, television, and other electronic tools—because of their oral qualities as well as their production and function, themselves turn into spoken language soon after the transmission from script and text, and are described as “secondary oral culture” (Ong 2003:23; Schlaffer 1986:7).

reports that in the course of history only 106 out of thousands of spoken languages were able to survive through literary texts, and most have never used writing at all (cited in Ong 2003:19). In addition to the languages that have vanished in the course of time, a remarkable number of orally produced traditions, myths, stories, and musical works also face the danger of extinction due to the failure of registering. Therefore, in oral culture, teaching and learning act almost like the rings in a chain or, in Behar's words, perform the mission of "*harç*" ("mortar," 2006:13). Thus, in oral culture, transmission and learning-teaching are two remarkably connected dimensions that depend upon and complement one another.

Learning that takes place within the context of oral culture can be evaluated within the scope of social learning. Social learning takes place in daily life unconsciously or consciously through interaction with others. In social learning, other people are taken as models, observed, and their behaviors mimicked. Acknowledged for his social-cognitive learning theory, Bandura specifically emphasizes that learning through observation and learning through imitation are not two divergent concepts that can be used in lieu of each other. According to Bandura, learning through observation is "not merely imitating others' acts but gaining knowledge by cognitively comprehending the events taking place in the world" (cited in Senemoğlu 2002:223) and is achieved through the four basic steps of paying attention, keeping in mind, putting into action, and motivation (Senemoğlu 2002:231).

Learning and teaching music within the framework of oral culture and tradition are perhaps most apparently relevant to vocal types, such as folk songs. However, in oral culture, learning music does not merely comprise verbal elements; it also integrates the instrument-teaching process that has no written method but relies on memory as well as the interrelated forms and behaviors of performance. Music teaching in this type of culture usually takes place through the master-apprentice relationship that is one of the basic exemplifications of social learning. Any individual in the process of learning acquires the necessary qualities to play a certain instrument, sing in certain styles, or learn the profession of musicianship and similar attributes by modeling senior musicians and observing, internalizing, and imitating their practices. As demonstrated by Ong's Yugoslav minstrel sample (2003:77), individuals learn by repeatedly listening for months or even years to the songs in standard pattern. Hebdige's researches on West Africa (2003), Rutledge's studies on Japan (cited in Ong 2003:81), and Krüger's researches on Spain (2001) have provided extensive data on music learning-teaching within the context of oral tradition.⁵

Turkish people are also among the societies that have traditionally taught music via oral tradition, and this practice dates back to the Central Asian period. For instance, Uçan notes "that during the age of pre-Huns, customs played a vital role in music learning and teaching, the prospective *şaman* ["shaman"] was trained by an experienced, wise, and respected senior master" (2000:19). Another example is the traditional Turkish military music *mehter* ("janissary band"), "which used the oral transmission tradition" (Popescu-Judet 1998:67). Teaching via the master-apprentice relationship in oral tradition is typical within Turkish folk music, too, particularly in *aşıklık geleneği* ("minstrel tradition"). Özarlan describes the stages that a

⁵ The creation and transmission of music within the context of oral tradition is a common practice throughout all countries, particularly in connection with "Africa, Oceania, Asia, North American Indians, Latin America, and Eskimos" (Oesch 1987:255).

prospective *aşık* (“minstrel”) has to complete by acquiring knowledge through the traditional method in order to rise from apprenticeship to mastership as “the training process of the minstrel” (2001:107), and he also reports that this was an informal and random training structured mainly upon traditional practices such as observation, admonition, and advice.

Another area that has received comprehensive analysis is traditional Turkish art music (also known as Ottoman/Turkish classical music). Behar, a celebrated researcher in this area, points out that teaching of this music style was based on *meşk* (“practice” or “exercise”), and it was only after the sixteenth century that this practice could be documented. Behar describes the term *meşk*, which is reminiscent of calligraphy, as (2006:16):

müziğin yazıya dökülmediği, notaya alınmadığı ve yazılı kağıttan öğrenilip icra edilmediği, icad edilmiş bazı nota yazılarının ise kullanılmayıp dışlandığı bir müzik dünyasının eğitim yöntemidir.

the teaching method of a music tradition where music is not penned, noted, learned, or played from a written document, and where some notes are not used or even discarded completely.

It is possible to learn the music pieces by taking private lessons from music masters, listening, observing, and imitating their singing and playing practices. *Meşk* is also more than a teaching method, as noted by Behar (2006:10):

Dört buçuk yüzyıllık Osmanlı/Türk musiki geleneğinde meşk sayısız müzisyen kuşakları tarafından bir öğretim yöntemi olarak benimsenmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda ses ve saz eserleri repertuarının da yüzyıllar boyu kuşaktan kuşağa intikalini sağlamıştır.

In the four and a half centuries of Ottoman/Turkish musical tradition *meşk* has not only been adopted as a teaching method by a good number of musicians, but has also enabled the transmission of vocal and instrumental repertory to the next generations for centuries ahead.

Parallel to the rest of the world, the replacement of oral culture with written culture has also affected music teaching in Turkey, particularly after the beginning of the twentieth century. In modern Turkey, formal music education is provided in public schools, music schools, and private music schools under a plan within the framework of written culture. Yet in different regions of the country, informal teaching and learning of music is still practiced in a variety of forms among local people. The traditional music genres that constitute a remarkable share of national music culture are learned and taught via oral tradition amidst amateur music bands or traditional musicians within a master-apprentice relationship and interaction. This essay aims to analyze the way instruments are taught by means of such oral tradition in the Turkish city of Bolu and the surrounding province’s central villages.

Research Method

The working group for this field study consists of instrument trainers and learners performing oral traditions in Bolu and the nearby villages. Bolu is located in the western Black Sea Region of Turkey and is situated between the two largest cities of Turkey, İstanbul and Ankara; Bolu has vivid connections with these metropolises. According to the year 2000 General Census results, the total population of Bolu province is 270,657. 26.8% of this population dwells in the city of Bolu itself and 51% in the villages (Ulusoy 2003:2). Ulusoy explains that population in the Bolu villages is being pushed to cities because of unfavorable living conditions in the outskirts.

In the city of Bolu—as is true for many other cities as well—customs and traditions, authentic garments, rituals, traditional music and dances, and many other unique features have now been assigned a role of little importance within the modern way of life. Bolu's folkloric culture has been reshaped with its own dynamics parallel to the changes in external conditions, though attempts have been made to preserve it by some local institutions such as the Cultural Center and Public Education Center. Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, founded in 1992, has also played a role in reshaping the urban socio-economic structure of the city as well as its socio-cultural dimensions.

One of the leading restrictions on current research has been the fact that the above-mentioned working group lacked an inventory or any kind of registration. In such cases, at the onset of research, it is generally impossible to locate the working group. Accordingly, we employed a snowball or chain sampling methodology since it was possible to reach the trainers only by passing through several stages. The first step was to make contact with traditional musicians in central Bolu and the surrounding districts and with Public Education Centers. These interviews revealed that musicians teaching in the traditional style were mostly residents in and around the city of Bolu, and we were able to contact two individuals practicing oral traditional instrument teaching. Guided by these two trainers, we had by January 2006 gradually formed a working group consisting of 15 trainers and 14 learners. The 14 trainers whose teaching methods can be placed within the context of primary oral culture are the main focus of the present article.

Research data related to this field study have been compiled through empirical methods. In order to detect the basic characteristics of the teaching process, 15 lessons were personally attended, observed, and video recorded. Additionally, narrative face-to-face interviews were conducted with trainers and learners. The data obtained have been analyzed via a qualitative content analysis method and the qualities of the process with respect to trainer, learner, setting, teaching frequency, objectives, taught instruments, taught musical genres, and employed learning-teaching methods were all described. The frequency of some findings has also been quantitatively displayed.

Results

Trainer

In Bolu, the practitioners of instrument teaching within the oral tradition mostly reside in villages.⁶ Four trainers live in Bolu itself, but three trainers dwell in Bahçeköy village nine kilometers away from Bolu; one trainer resides in Çaygökpınar village eleven kilometers away; one trainer lives in Demirciler village seven kilometers away; two trainers inhabit Ovadüzü village four kilometers away; and three trainers reside in Yenigeçitveren village seven kilometers away. These villages are basically situated near the D-100 Highway and have the transportation means—though not direct and periodic—to reach the city of Bolu.

The instrument trainers identified during our research process are all men. Gender-based roles widespread in Turkish society are clearly visible in this traditional teaching process as well. The age of the trainers—as seen in Figure 1—varies between 26 and 70. Around one third of trainers are above 50, but most of them are near 30.

Fig. 1: Information about Instrument Trainers

Trainer Name	Age	Residential Area	Profession	Instrument
Cevat BÜYÜKKIRLI	56	Bolu	Retired Class Teacher	<i>Kabak Kemane</i>
Yılmaz ERDOĞAN	45		Musician	<i>Bağlama</i>
Engin TOKUŞ	36		Self-employed	<i>Darbuka</i>
Yılmaz ARAÇ	32		Musician	<i>Davul</i>
Selahattin YAMAN	70	Bahçeköy	Musician	Violin
İmdat DEMİRKOL	27		Musician	Clarinet
Tuncay ADA	27		Musician	<i>Darbuka</i>
Mustafa KUŞ	40	Çaygökpınar	Worker	<i>Bağlama</i>
Tahsin CAN	59	Demirciler	Farmer	<i>Bağlama</i>
Tahsin ARAÇ	56	Ovadüzü	Musician	Violin
Ahmet ARAÇ	26		Musician	<i>Darbuka</i>
Nail TOKUŞ	39	Yenigeçitveren	Musician	Violin
Yetiş TOKUŞ	35		Musician	<i>Davul</i>
Hacı TOKUŞ	33		Musician	Violin

Most of the trainers are professional musicians and some are blood relatives. They have learned the profession not within a formal education system but through a traditional master-apprentice relationship. These musicians play in local celebrations such as weddings, engagements, or circumcision feasts, and they usually work in the city center. Aside from this general profile, one of the trainers is a farmer, one is a worker, one is self-employed, and one is a

⁶ 128 villages are registered under Bolu Central District (Bolu Valiliği 2006).

retired school teacher. The last trainer is the only one who acquired his profession (teacher) through a formal educational process.



Fig. 2: Violin trainer and learner from *Ovadüzü* village. Photo by Cemal Özata.

The monthly incomes of instrument trainers vary between 250-1000 Turkish lira. None of them has additional income beyond what is earned through his profession. They charge no fee for their music/instrument teaching either, which clearly indicates their commitment to transmitting this tradition to future generations.

There is diversity in the educational levels of the instrument trainers: half of them are primary education graduates; only one of the trainers is a secondary education graduate; two of the trainers failed to complete their primary and secondary education; and four trainers are illiterate with no educational background at all. In addition, none of the trainers can read any musical notes, including those used by the traditional European notation system. These features make it impossible for the sampling group to practice their music/instrument teaching within the methods of written culture.

Learner

In Bolu, 14 traditional trainers are engaged in helping 40 children and youngsters to gain musical instrument playing ability within the context of oral tradition. Most of the learners are either family members of trainers or relatives or neighbors. Youngsters try to learn playing a musical instrument or performing music from their fathers, elder brothers, or other senior relatives; hence, they act as a bridge that transmits the accumulation of musical culture and its practices into the future.

Most of the 14 students chosen and observed as the sample group are males like the trainers themselves; only two learners are female. Both of the girls live in the city of Bolu itself and thus help to show the cultural difference between rural and urban settings. The age range of the sampled students is 7-18. Only two students are still of childhood age while the rest are in the stages of puberty, corresponding to ages 11-18. Almost all learners are at the primary education level and two are high school students. It has also been detected that, despite being of school age, one of the learners—due to socio-economic reasons—is not attending school.



Fig. 3: *Darbuka* trainer and learner from Bahçeköy village. Photo by Cemal Özata.

Learning-Teaching Setting

In Bolu, a high number of trainers reported that they had no difficulty in finding a setting and believed that the characteristics of any specialized kind of setting were not effective in the learning-teaching process. The most frequently used settings are houses and open areas such as yards, village squares, or fields. In addition to such places where the trainer and learner establish direct communication, other places where wedding and circumcision ceremonies are held are also used to learn through observation. Weddings provide an especially favorable setting for students to watch and learn. It is usually the trainer who determines the educational setting and students' preferences are mostly ignored. The main determinants in the choice of setting are usually related to weather conditions and a desire for silence and isolation so as not to disturb others.

When the trainers were asked to list the characteristics of their ideal teaching setting, most expressed their desire to teach in peaceful, sound-isolated places without others nearby. Additionally, some trainers expressed their preference to teach in a naturally beautiful and clean setting that motivated students to practice; such an ideal would seem to be related to desires connected with one's inner expectations and feelings of beauty.

Teaching Frequency

One of the differentiating factors between traditional and formal educational instrument teaching is the absence of a definite schedule or plan. In Bolu the frequency of lessons varies with respect to each trainer and is determined by several factors. Half of the trainers teach during their own free time and students' free time, while the rest try following a regular schedule. These trainers attempt to practice with their apprentices at least twice per week. Additionally, all but three trainers stated that they feel no discomfort regarding the current frequency of lessons, yet they also believed in the necessity of practicing together each day.

During interviews, trainers were asked to list the factors that determined the frequency of lessons. The most common responses obtained were: (a) school time of students; (b) free time of both the trainer and student; (c) time intervals that prevent forgetting previously learned knowledge; (d) trainer's work; and (e) trainer's other pursuits.

Learning-Teaching Objectives

In Bolu, instrument teaching in the oral tradition is basically shaped by a single objective: to gain a profession. Since a majority of people maintaining such teaching traditions are musicians, passing on this profession matters just as much as continuing the family bloodline. In addition to gaining a profession, the other objectives listed by trainers are as follows: spreading instrument playing, popularizing the playing of the instrument, and preserving the master-apprentice relationship. Parallel to their trainers, most learners stated that they aim to professionalize their instrument playing. It has been noted that in the city center few children play music out of sheer fun and curiosity.



Fig. 4 and 5: Violin trainer and learner from Bahçeköy village. Photos by Cemal Özata.

The Instruments That Are Taught

The violin comes first among the instruments that are taught. One noteworthy point in the playing and teaching of the violin is that, as opposed to common practice, it is not played by leaning the instrument on the neck. Instead, masters and apprentices play the violin by placing it on their knees like a *Byzantine lyra* or *kemane* (“kamancheh”) while sitting (see Figures 2 and 4). When standing, they hold the violin as they would a *Karadeniz kemençesi* (“kemenche of the eastern Black Sea Region in Turkey”) without leaning or placing the instrument over the body.



Fig. 6: *Bağlama* trainer and learner from Demirciler village. Photo by Cemal Özata.

Other frequently taught instruments are a Turkish folk music instrument, the *bağlama*⁷ (see Figure 5), and a percussion instrument, the *darbuka* (“goblet drum,” see Figure 3). On the other hand, the *davul* (“double-headed drum,” see Figure 6), *kabak kemane*,⁸ and clarinet—despite its long history in Bolu music culture—are less commonly taught instruments. The instruments are usually taught without an accompanying instrument; however, in some violin teaching the *darbuka* is used as an accompanying instrument, and in turn the violin has been observed as an accompanying instrument for *darbuka* instruction as well.

⁷ The *bağlama* is the most common stringed instrument used for folk music in Turkey. This instrument has a deep round back, like the Western lute and the Middle-Eastern oud, but a much longer neck.

⁸ The *kabak kemane* is a bowed Turkish folk music instrument without frets, like the *Azerbaijani kamancheh*.

The Music Genres That Are Taught

The musical pieces practiced during the instrument-teaching process are generally assigned by the trainer, with the trainer's own repertoire serving as the main source of the music being taught. In the learning process, pieces that represent the various genres of Turkish musical culture are taught. The most widespread type is Turkish folk music, within which anonymous folk songs, composed folk songs, and instrumental dance music are the most popular choices. The trained apprentices are usually taught dance music forms, which consist of popular songs for weddings and similar occasions, but the teaching of free-measured, free-rhythm, improvised, and slow-paced folk songs (*uzun hava*) receives less emphasis. The teaching is not restricted to the unique works of Bolu folk music; songs from different regions of Turkey are also favored. In addition to folk music, Arabesque music and traditional Turkish art music pieces are also taught.

The mentioned vocal forms are—regardless of minor deviations—taught instrumentally, and there is no song teaching accompanying the instrument. During the teaching process, there are common variations reflecting the oral context: the melodic and rhythmic structures of pieces go through minor changes and can be performed with different accents, additions, and ornaments in each performance.

Learning-Teaching Methods

In Bolu, instrument teaching within the context of oral tradition is, parallel to the formal educational instrument-teaching processes, conducted through personal lessons with teacher-student interaction at the core. In some cases a third person playing an accompanying instrument is integrated, yet this practice is so uncommon that it has no measurable effect on general tendencies.



Fig. 7 and 8: Clarinet (Bahçeköy) and *davul* (Bolu) learners at the beginning stage. Photos by Cemal Özata.

Three main approaches are widespread in the instrument-teaching process. These approaches can be described as follows:

a) *Co-practicing on a single instrument*: This method is particularly popular when teaching beginners, with the trainer and student performing the targeted skills together. For instance, when instruction is focused on playing the *bağlama*, the child may practice holding the instrument and performing movements with the plectrum in the right hand while the master simultaneously creates sounds by beating on frets with his left hand (see Figure 5). After sufficient practice, the roles are reversed. Similarly, children who start to learn to play the *davul* learn basic beats by playing concurrently with their masters who hold the child's hand in their palms (see Figure 6). With such learning types, there is intense body communication.

b) *Presentation-performance*: This approach can be performed by playing one or two instruments. The trainer first presents the required skill himself and then guides the learner to do the same. Presentation-performance is basically implemented in part-to-whole stages. Learning-teaching activity is alternated until the learner performs the musical behavior at a desired level. In such a form of practice, the student is continuously observing and listening, and an active chain of perceiving, memorizing, and performing is foregrounded (see Figures 2 and 4).

c) *Playing concurrently*: Another common learning style involves objective skills being gained through the concurrent practice and performance by trainer and learner. This approach is generally conducted with students who have already gained the basic skills of instrument holding and sound production techniques and have therefore advanced to a certain stage. The most salient features of this learning type are listening, observing, and mimicking the trainer (see Figure 3).

We also identified several smaller-scale learning-teaching methods: presentation-performance, simultaneous performance, narration, listening, observing, mimicking, and repeating. Presentation-performance and repetition occupy a central position in all courses. It is noteworthy that most of the trainers gave brief verbal explanations but also benefited greatly from making efficient use of body language. During the learning-teaching process, no auxiliary teaching material is used and the whole process relies on memorization.

In the interviews, trainers stated that they usually based their teaching method selection on student-centered factors (see Figure 9). The primary factor determining the method selected by all trainers is the failure of the student to play properly. Several teachers make their selection with respect to the physical capabilities of the children (such as the ability to hold the instrument or use their hands properly), sensory and cognitive abilities (such as observing, perceiving, and memorizing), and also the overall level of their instrument playing. Only one trainer underscored the complexity of the playing technique.

Fig. 9: Factors Affecting the Teaching Method Choice

Factors	f
Failure of the student to play piece properly	14
Initial level of student	2
Ability of student to hold the instrument properly	2
Ability of student to use hands properly	2
Student's lack of familiarity with the piece	2
Difficulty with the student in being able to follow the trainer	2
Student's lack of familiarity with the instrument	1
Physical difficulties faced by student	1
Complexity of playing techniques	1

Conclusion and Discussion

In the present study, it has been noted that throughout the city of Bolu and the surrounding villages, 14 people are engaged in instrument teaching within the primary oral culture. Instrument teaching is conducted by adult trainers who have no musical literacy but lead their lives as traditional musicians. As exemplified by the Tokuş and Araç families, some of the musicians are from the same family. Likewise, many music learners also have similar backgrounds, often as members of the same families. Therefore, as these students closely observe from a very early age those individuals who are heavily responsible for determining and modeling their social and educational standards, they also have the opportunity to experience the musical atmosphere that permeates their culture. In instrument teaching itself, the prioritized objective is learning-teaching the profession of musicianship, and it is considered possible that this is a reflection of the desire of families to preserve their tradition. In the relevant literature, there are similar findings exemplified by different societies; in the Balkans—Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Greece—and among the Romans of Romania and Valachie (Elscheková 1998:224), or in the tradition of Flamenco teaching (Vounelakos 2009:21), the longevity of the musical tradition is secured by the same families.

A majority of the instrument teachers reside in villages. Although they mostly work in city centers, they are residents of villages and it is believed that this arrangement is related to the restricted socio-economic conditions in villages. Villages are the kind of habitations where written-culture-specific practices and forms of communication are severely limited. Thus, the villages of musicians present favorable settings to preserve and sustain music-teaching practices that are shaped predominantly by oral culture.

In the oral tradition around Bolu, almost all instrument trainers and a great majority of the learners are men. This situation is consistent with the traditionally acknowledged role of women in Islamic culture that places constraints upon the musical activities of women with respect to

certain settings and occasions. We believe—though we have not studied the issue during this particular research—that gender is not a determinant in the teaching of vocal genres. Furthermore, male dominance in the oral traditional teaching of instruments is not unique to Bolu: Simon (1987:137) draws attention to the fact that, in a variety of cultures, musicianship, musical activity, and the playing of certain instruments are all acknowledged to be part of male-specific codes of behavior. Krüger (2001:101) has reported that in oral traditional Flamenco teaching, there is no such gendered attitude as regards *cante* (“song”) and *baile* (“dance”), but on the other hand *toque* (“guitar”) is taught exclusively to boys.

Master trainers coach a total of 40 children and youngsters, almost all of whom are attending formal educational institutions. A majority of the research sample group of 14 students are in the puberty stage. Krüger (2001:101) also reports that in Flamenco culture dance, song, and guitar teaching are more successful during the puberty stage, a time when the human organism is open to faster comprehension and development in various forms and also more easily affected by environmental conditions (Senemoğlu 2002:16). In formal educational processes, this age is considered to be the appropriate time to acquire the required instrumental skills (Gembris 1998:404).

Traditional trainers do not specifically search for a certain setting with predefined qualities appropriate for learning objectives; hence, places already familiar within the participants’ daily lives are also used as teaching settings. In addition, lessons are usually rendered without a plan, and it can reasonably be argued that instrument/music teaching within the context of oral tradition is not regarded as a special event, but as just another daily routine. One of the factors that facilitate the integration of musical performance and teaching activities into daily life is the fact that a good number of instrument trainers are themselves musicians.

It has also been observed that weddings and circumcision ceremonies are sometimes used to conduct teaching. This practice is common in the musical traditions of Turkish people. Ataman (1992:viii) emphasizes that weddings play a prominent role in the living and spreading of local artistic movements while also providing an instructional influence upon folk music culture more generally. From this perspective, it can be suggested that local musicians of Bolu origin have strong ties with the larger tradition.

In Bolu, the most commonly taught instrument within the context of oral tradition is the violin. The other instruments are the *bağlama* and *darbuka*, the most common popular instruments throughout Turkey. The leading position of the violin as the most taught instrument is expected since in the traditional music culture of Bolu violin-*darbuka/davul*, clarinet-violin-*darbuka/davul*, clarinet-*darbuka/davul*, and other bands of similar composition are widespread; however, it is surprising that the number of clarinet trainers is so small. Additionally, the bow contact and holding position for the violin are taught rather unusually compared to European and other national forms of teaching. Such different forms of use that are prevalent among the Tunceli Çemişgezek (Yönetken 1966:102) and Silifke Tahtacı Türkmen groups (Seyhan cited in Parlak 2000:12) are undoubtedly important considerations here. The relevant literature has no explanation accounting for the emergence of such differences, but we believe that the origin of such usage dates back to the historical/traditional playing styles of Turkish instruments. In the musical culture of Anatolian Turks—and other Turkish communities as well—bow instruments have occupied a major position since the Central Asian period. Known as an ancestral

instrument, the *kopuz* (“Kyrgyz komuz”) is also a bow instrument played like the *kamancheh* (Ögel 1987:7, 237), and during the Anatolian period the *kemane* (“Turkish fiddle”) was played on top of the knee and use of the *kamancheh* or *kemen* (the Nomads’ term for the *kemane*) was also quite widespread (Ögel 1987:298). In light of information obtained from Silifke Tahtacı Türkmen groups, it seems that playing the violin on the knee started when the *dirnak kemane* (the local version of the “Classical Kemenche,” as noted by Çolakoğlu 2010:151) players got acquainted with the *gırbız kemani* (“the red violin,” meaning the western violin) (Parlak 2000:12). Based on this deduction, we assume that the holding and playing style of historical Turkish bow instruments may have reflected that of the modern European violin as well.

In Bolu, Turkish folk music pieces reflecting the oral transmission tradition hold a noteworthy place in teaching, a position that is likely related to the fact that the music learning-teaching process is maintained for the most part in villages. However, thus far no close or direct relationships have been determined between socio-cultural context and the music genres that are taught. In addition to Turkish folk music, other music genres that have found a place in rural culture, via mass media in particular, are also being taught. We assume that the attempt to fill the repertoires of trainees with different music genres is an expected result of musicianship training.

The educational level of trainers does not for the most part rise above primary education; there are even some trainers who are illiterate. Therefore, most trainers have limited acquaintance or no acquaintance at all with the learning-teaching process and practices found in formal education institutions. Nevertheless, the instrument trainers possess a teaching-oriented awareness and successful teaching methods that are unique to themselves. Traditional trainers participate in the teaching process quite actively. The short and compact narrations they employ during lessons are related to their abundant use of active and psycho-motor teaching methods. It can also be asserted that the body communication they share with the learner is, compared to the formal music-teaching processes, much stronger. Aside from memorizing, trainers and learners make use of no other auxiliary teaching materials or helpful notes.

Learning instrumental skills most often takes place through the stages of listening-observing, memorizing, and putting into action phases that are consistent with Bandura’s social-cognitive learning stages. Ong (2003:21) also underscores that listening and repeating are among the leading learning methods of apprentices raised in oral cultures. Consequently, a lack of writing, the foregrounding of memory, and progression through the mouth-to-ear, ear-to-memory, memory-to-performance stages (with slight variations) can all be understood as important components of the oral traditional instrument learning-teaching process that takes place in and around the city of Bolu.⁹

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