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Music and migration: Kurds in Berlin

Dieter Christensen*

Abstract Based on fieldwork in Northern Kurdistan - the Turkish provinces of Siirt and Hakkari in 1958 and 1965 - and among Kurdish migrants in Berlin/Germany in 2005-2008, this essay explores the transformations and losses of music-related expressive behavior in the process of trans-national migration.

Keywords Kurds, migration, Berlin, music.

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Dieter Christensen

What is the role of music and related aspects of expressive behavior[1] in processes of migration? How does music affect these processes? How does migration affect the properties of music, the performance patterns, the meanings of music? Migration is understood here as a social process that affects the community from which the migrants depart, the community which receives the migrants, and the people who are moving from one place to another, as individuals or as a group, for whatever reason. This essay deals primarily with Kurds who have moved to Germany from the Turkish Republic. Kurdistan, their homeland in Western Asia but not a State, extends over parts of the Turkish Republic, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as these States are currently known. My present study draws on fieldwork conducted in 1958 and 1965 in the South-Eastern Turkish provinces of Siirt (Kurd. Sêrt), Şırnak (Kurd. Şirnex), and Hakkari (Kurd. Hekarî/Çolamerg);[2] on work throughout the 1960s with Kurds then residing in Berlin; and on fieldwork among Kurdish migrants in Berlin during 2005-2008.

Who are 'the Kurds'? There is no unanimity either among scholars or Kurds themselves. For Turkey, Martin van Bruinessen includes 'all native speakers of dialects belonging to the Iranian languages Kurmanji or Zaza, as well as those Turkish speaking persons who still (or again) consider themselves as Kurds' (van Bruinessen, 1989: 613). This definition can be extended, *mutatis mutandis*, to Kurds in and from Syria, Iraq and Iran, and to speakers of the related Iranian languages Sorani/Mukriyani, Hawrami, etc. These dialects and languages are often not mutually understood. What complicates matters further is that in Iraq and Iran, modified versions of Arabic script are used, whereas in Turkey and Syria, it is a modified Latin script – where not banned by the government. Diversity extends also to religion – in addition to various schools of Islam, Alevi (by many considered apart from Islam), Yezidi, Ahl-i Haqq, and Christian beliefs separate Kurdish groups, and there are marked distinctions in the ways of life – from urban to sedentary-agricultural to semi nomadic and fully nomadic. In short, 'the Kurds' are anything but a homogeneous people, and it is only through rising nationalism since the late 19th century, the border-crossing media from radio to television in the 20th century, and now increasingly also various forms of migration that ethnic integration is slowly advancing.

Music and the communities from which migrants depart

How does migration affect music – or rather, music-related expressive behaviour – in the communities from which the migrants depart?[3] I shall deal here with those communities in Şırnak and Hakkari with which we became familiar during our fieldwork in 1958 and 1965. At that time, the population of Hakkari and Şırnak was almost 100% Kurdish, and the vast majority were Muslims. There were small pockets of Syrian Christians in Şırnak town and in small villages of Uludere (Kurd. Qilaban) – such as Şiköy – who dressed and spoke Kurdish in addition to Neo-Aramaic (Suryani or Kil-

dani). And there was a miniscule presence of Turks – administrative officers, soldiers, police, *jandarma* (gendarmes), and teachers; and in the Eastern part of Hakkari there were some 'Turks' who had been resettled from Macedonia. The long-time local population consisted of non-tribal peasants in the valleys – the Qilaban (Uludere) valley of Şırnak and the Gevar (Yüksekova) valley of Hakkari, East of the Great Zap river; and of semi-nomadic tribal Kurds elsewhere. The economy was based on subsistence agriculture and subsistence husbandry – mainly sheep, with minimal illegal trade of flocks across the border with Iraq and Iran. Ethnic identities were conceived in narrow local terms – sub-tribal and tribal for the (formerly) nomadic groups, the aşîr, or narrowly regional – village or cluster of villages - for the non-tribal kurmanc. Variants in expressive behaviour – local dialect, dress, music and dance – marked differences among local and descent groups, and an awareness of a larger communality of behaviours set 'us Kurds' apart from 'strangers' such as Turks. Contacts with the outside world, at that time, consisted of compulsory military service for men, usually in Western or Central Anatolia, which also enforced a basic familiarity with the Turkish language which women mostly did not share; very occasional visits to market towns such as Siirt, Diyarbakır or Van; and, since the late 1930s, the occasional opportunity to listen to radio broadcasts[4] in Kurdish of Radio Yerevan in Soviet Armenia, an Iranian station, and a radio station in Baghdad.

Among the Göyan, village dwellers of Eastern Şırnak province, and the semi-nomadic Ertoşî of Western Hakkari, the main occasion for public[5] performances of music and dance were weddings that usually brought together participants from the same village or tribe with those from neighbouring settlements or related tribes. The main activity was dancing, in two distinct ways: as line dances where the dancers themselves would sing; or as line dances accompanied by drum and oboe (*dehol û zorne*) playing, without singing, where the instrumentalists were not members of the tribe or residents of the village but were professional musicians *mitirb*,[7] engaged for the occasion from a small town such as Cizre (Kurd. Cizîra Botan). The singing in the singing dances, so called here to distinguish them from dances to instrumental music, would follow an antiphonal pattern: two choruses of two or three men each would alternate, or so would women choruses; or two or three women would "answer" two or three men, in each case the singers being part of the line of dancers (Christensen, 1963 and 2002). There were distinct movement patterns, and a complex terminology for the singing dances, emphasizing arm and shoulder movements and positions *yamilla ya sivik* and *yamilla ya giran* (with a light or a heavy shoulder) or the imitation of animal movements as in *siwarkî* (horse riding). Musically, dance songs are characterised by short phrases repeated by the alternating singers, and a narrow melodic range (Christensen, 1963).

Figure 1 - Singing dance of Ertoşî women at a wedding, 1958.

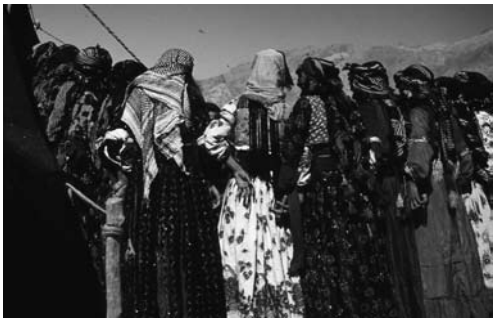
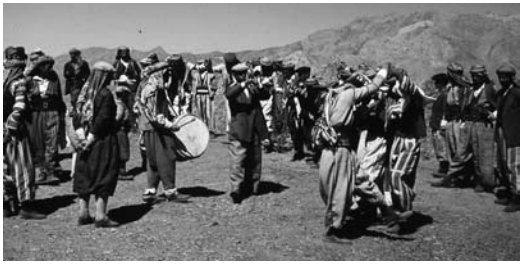


Figure 2 - Singing dance siwarkî. Herink, Gevar 1965.

Figure 3 - Ertoşî woman inher finery at a wedding, 1958.

Figure 4 - Ertoşî men dressed for the wedding, 1958.

Figure 5 - Dance with dehol û zorne at an Ertoşî wedding, 1958.



The other noteworthy display of public expressive behaviour was the singing and telling of narratives dealing with love (*hejî kirinî*) or war (şêr, mêrxweş, mêrxas) in the guest room or tent of the 'owner of the wedding' or of the head of the village or tribe. Performers would be either male members of the group who were recognised for having the skill and gift to tell stories well. However, they would not have professional status, and would not use musical instruments. Alternatively, the same mitirb who provided the dance music and who would accompany their singing with a drum or with a string instrument would then 'tell' for a male audience, with females listening from an adjoining room or through a curtain in the tent.

Figure 6 - Mitirb singer from Cizre with his three-stringed bowed spike lute *riçak* in the guest part of the tent of an Ertoşî chief, 1965.

In the villages East of the Great Zap river, in particular, in the Gevar valley, the predominant social structure placed large landowners over a dependent peasantry. While the celebration of weddings called for singing dances similar to those of Western Hakkari, there were no mitirb to play *dehol û zorne*; however there were local peasants to play for dances on the double clarinet *dûzele*, and wedding hosts and landlords could call on local or regionally known bards – *dengbêj* or *lawjebêj* – to 'tell' epics, again without the use of instruments.

This was the situation in the 1950s and 1960s, out of which the first Kurdish labour migrants reached Germany, initially in chain migrations like that started by a young Ertoşî man who had come to Berlin to continue his technical education. Two brothers followed him to take up industrial employment, soon brought their families, and thus created a nucleus for additional migrants from their region. They brought with them a knowledge of Hakkari expressive culture but not enough mass – enough people who shared it – to replicate performance events of their environment of origin.

With the political unrest in Turkey since the early 1970s, the rise of the militant Kurdish independence movement PKK Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Worker's Party), and the destruction of Kurdish villages in Northern Iraq, pressures mounted on the Kurdish population of Eastern Anatolia to either assimilate to the Turkish majority, or to migrate. In Şırnak and Hakkari provinces, villages in a broad swath along the border with Iraq were razed by the Turkish military, and their population expelled.[8] A ban on the summer migration to high mountain pastures, essential to the subsistence husbandry of the Ertoşî and other semi-nomadic tribes of the area, forced people from their land. Families took refuge in the larger cities familiar to them from earlier market visits (Van, Diyarbakir), but many moved on to the big cities of Central Anatolia and Western Anatolia (such as Ankara and Izmir) or even to Istanbul where, dispersed among other urban dwellers, they had to seek new sources of income to survive, and usually lost the support of a social group sizable enough

to maintain and practice their tribal or local expressive culture. Many then moved on to the 'promising lands of Europe' – and in particular, Germany.[9] To sum up, in the case of the farming and sheep-raising communities of Siirt and Western Hakkari discussed so far, the departure of individual migrants or small groups of migrants for Germany had no impact on local musical and dance practices because they did not involve specialists or professional musicians[10] – those were engaged 'from the outside' when needed. Also, they did not involve complex musical instruments. The physical objects required for performances were only those that the migrants could take away with them – the reed flute that shepherds played for their own entertainment was not part of public performances as defined above, and the reed clarinet used for dances in Eastern Hakkari was a simple instrument easily replaced from readily available materials. The dramatic effect on the local expressive culture came not as loss from migration but from the violent destruction of Kurdish communities and their economic bases, that is, from forced relocation and dispersal. Where displaced populations congregated in substantial numbers, usually in urban settings,[11] they adapted to and adopted from the new environment while constructing a modified Gevdan identity. Video clips on YouTube of Gevdan weddings show women dancing in glittery colorful dresses, men in urban Western suits moving in close line formation similar to traditional Gevdan ways or in a loose circle, but always to the sounds of a synthesizer imitating oboe and drum, or supporting an amplified solo singer who is not one of the dancers.[12]

Music and the receiving community

The 'receiving community' into which migrant Kurds entered is that of 'the Germans', and in our case more specifically that of Berlin. Later arrivals, and the following generations, would of course have the benefit of existing Kurdish circles to help them with their adjustment. In German public awareness Kurds first appeared when the Saxonian writer Karl May (1842-1912) published in 1892 his adventure novel, *Durch's wilde Kurdistan* (Through Wild Kurdistan). In the book, written for young people, Kara ben Nemsi (Karl son of the German) depicts his fictitious hosts as courageous and noble characters.[13] Karl May's writings have remained popular and affected the expectations of Germans when Kurds eventually arrived in Germany in recognisable numbers.

Kurds have appeared in Germany since the 19th Century, initially usually as educated individuals of urban origin, and as temporary visitors rather than as migrants with the intent or necessity to remain in Germany for the duration. After World War II, universities in the German Democratic Republic as well as in the German Federal Republic began to attract Kurdish students from Syria, Iraq and Iran, and to a lesser extent from Turkey. Those were not migrants in the sense that they came with the intention to settle permanently in Germany, though many of them eventually did; but while they came individually to the university of their choice, they did form student associations based on their ethnicity as Kurds for mutual support and also to pursue political aspirations – regardless of their country of origin. These associations organised social gatherings where Kurdish dances in colorful Kurdish costumes manifested Kurdish

identity. Photos from early performances show male and female dancers alternating in line dances, not an accepted performance practice in Kurdistan at the time. Since there were then hardly any female Kurdish students in Germany, the female dancers had to be German friends of the Kurdish men - and the gender-mixed line-dance constituted an adaptation of domestic practices to the migration environment.

Similar developments took place also elsewhere in Europe, and an international Kurdish Students Society in Europe (KSSE) was founded 1956. With Germany as their central headquarters, the KSSE ran up to 16 chapters and had eventually about 3000 almost exclusively male members from all parts of Kurdistan, including the Kurdish students in Berlin who were already present during the 1960s. It is significant for the subsequent wave of Kurdish labour migrants – and later also political refugees – that the student organisation from early on became involved in the issues of maintaining and propagating Kurdish culture, recognition of the Kurdish people as distinct from the majority populations in their respective States of origin, and more broadly, Kurdish nationalism.[14] Their origins from different parts of Kurdistan required mediation among differences in expressive behaviour – language, Kurdish dress, music and dance – in favor of what could be presented as 'common Kurdish.' With their public meetings in Berlin and elsewhere, they prepared the way in which associations of migrant workers and refugees, as well as Kurdish professional organisations would later present themselves to the general public.

With the mid-1960s, labor migration from West Asia, and particularly from Turkey, began to bring substantial numbers of 'guest workers' to several countries of Western Europe, including Germany. The majority of these came to Germany from Turkey, prevailingly from Central and Eastern Anatolia where economic conditions were poor. They arrived as Turkish citizens, with Turkish passports (Borgk, 2003). According to Kemalist ideology and policy, there were no Kurds in Turkey – the Turkish Republic did not recognize a Kurdish ethnicity and penalised those who claimed otherwise. *Gastarbeiter* from Turkey had to hold a temporary work permit from the German authorities, and a valid Turkish passport to be renewed periodically by Turkish consulates in Germany. German authorities did not keep statistics on ethnicity and did not recognise Kurds as a minority in Turkey. Also, many of these labour migrants from Turkey who were ethnic Kurds were reticent to reveal their Kurdish identity for fear of Turkish reprisals – not only the cancellation of their Turkish passport which would compromise the extension of their German labour permit, but also punitive action against their relatives in Turkey.

In Berlin, the majority of labour migrants moved initially into boroughs of the city that offered relatively inexpensive housing, in particular, Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Wedding. The massive labour immigration from Turkey since the mid-1960s, mostly single young men, was re-enforced by mostly Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Syria and Iraq, and from the early1970s on by their families and then by the Germany-born next generations. They concentrated on Kreuzberg and Neukölln where some areas became known among Germans as 'Türkenviertel' (Turkish quarter), ignoring the fact that a substantial portion of these 'Turks' were ethnic Kurds, and others were not Turks at all but from Syria or the Iraq.

Weddings

In the early years of labour immigration, from around 1965 to the 1980s, young men would seek their brides from the home country, often among close relatives, and would celebrate the wedding there before bringing their wife to Berlin. As the second migrant generation reached adulthood, weddings in the diaspora became more common, even though the tendency to marry within the extended family or the larger social group and to bring brides from the 'old country' continues, with weddings often celebrated in Turkey rather than in Berlin. However, for the Kurds of Şırnak and Hakkari with which this essay started out, 'old country' means now towns outside of Turkish Kurdistan – towns like Ankara, Izmir, Antalya, or Istanbul – where an assimilation to Turkish urban ways has also modified the Kurdish wedding ritual and its associated forms of expressive behaviour. Song dances, where in the Şırnak and Hakkari of the 1950s and 1960s choruses of two or three dancers alternated in singing the mostly narrative dance songs, often have retained the movement patterns of the dancers, but the singing is now relegated to a single vocalist who just stands apart from the line of dancers, sings into a microphone, and is usually supported by an electronic keyboard, or replaced by a synthesizer altogether. Alternatively, in line dances that were formerly accompanied by drum and oboe, the place of these instruments is more often than not taken by a synthesizer, though live dehol û zorne, when available, is still preferred. This is true for Kurdish weddings held in urban Turkey as well those celebrated as in Berlin.

Video 1 - Kurdish wedding in Berlin, 2005.
(Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPXaGnUxFGY).

Newroz[15]

In the 1970s, Kurdish labour migrants began to form associations, clubs, social circles for mutual support along the lines of the respective country of origin, and in some cases, a region within a country. The larger ones also associated with the long-established and increasingly politicized student organization KSSE (renamed Kurdistan Students Society in Europe) to benefit from the experiences and social skills of the students.[16] In the process, the workers' associations became politicised themselves, which also meant, infused with the trans-regional nationalism that had marked the student organization from early on, a pan-Kurdish nationalism that was vented through, and used as a tool in the domain of expressive behaviour: public performances of Kurdish music and dance in Kurdish dress.

By the first decade of the 21st Century, Kurdish associations had proliferated in Berlin and had gained recognition by German authorities.[17] Among their activities was the sponsoring of public performances open to anyone: occasional concerts of prominent Kurdish artists such as Şivan Perwer and Ciwan Haco, and the regular celebration of the Iranian New Year, Newroz, which is the Spring equinox.[18] The celebration of Newroz (or Noruz) had been unknown in Şırnak and Hakkari in the 1950s/1960s. By 1980, it was commonly recognised as a Kurdish national holiday and symbol of Kur-

dish identity by Kurdish immigrants in Berlin regardless of their country of origin,[19] no doubt in consequence of efforts of the KSSE to break down regional distinctions among Kurdish communities. Nevertheless, Newroz celebrations in Berlin in which I participated in 2005-2008 had much in common while differing in some regards. I have selected three events to discuss aspects of expressive behavior.

Newroz at Komkar, March 2008

Komkar (Komala Kargeren, lit. Association of Workers) is an umbrella organization for smaller clubs etc. of Kurdish migrants mostly from Turkey. It organizes cultural events to maintain and propagate Kurdish culture, sponsors folk dance, music and theater groups, offers German language courses, and generally lobbies for Kurdistan. Komkar has its own offices in Neukölln, near Kottbusser Tor, in the heart of Turkish Berlin, but this year Newroz will be celebrated in a rented hall near Hermannplatz, also in Neukölln, at a social establishment called Kulturwerkstatt ('culture workshop') belonging to the City of Berlin. It has a large hall, a day care center and a restaurant run by Turks.

Rows of fixed chairs face a stage. There are welcome speeches over a microphone – the hall sits perhaps 200 people and is well attended. Then comes a female singer with Alevi songs, some in Kurmanci (Northern Kurdish), others in Zazaki, accompanied by a bağlama player. After more speeches there are folkloristic skits – a woman with a baby in her arms sings lullabies in Arabic until she is loudly reminded to sing in Kurdish – big applause. A group of young girls line-dances to the sounds of the synthesizer. My companion explains: 'they have no boys.' Finally a well-known local Kurdish entertainer, Dimoqrat Taha, sings into the microphone to the accompaniment of the increasingly noisy synthesizer and then leads the general line dance around the audience. Throughout, small children are playing happily with each other in an unselfconscious way, and well accepted by the adults.

Video 2 - Newroz in Komkar, 2008
(Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDbOjbB2aD0).

Newroz with the Syrian Kurds

On March 19, 2005, the Gemeinde der Kurden aus Syrien in Berlin/Brandenburg (Community of Kurds from Syria in Berlin/Brandenburg) celebrates Newroz (Roja Pîrozkirina Newrozê) in the Saal Tempelhof, a hall in an industrial area rented for the purpose. The event starts at 5:30 pm. The hall can accommodate around 150 people, tickets are eight euros for adults, children under twelve are free. A large podium is set up against the center of one wall, with a keyboard and large speakers. Tables and benches for the audience face the podium. A large Kurdish flag with the golden sun in the center adorns the wall behind the podium. The Kurdish national colours green/yellow/red are used everywhere in the decoration.

The celebration begins with what is considered the national anthem, *Ey Reqîp*, sung on the podium by a small chorus of eight women and men, with microphone and keyboard accompaniment. Then there is a recitation of poems of nationalist content. A speech by association president Alî Sofî (in business suit) appeals to Kurdistan's future, her children and martyrs. This is followed by a reading of congratulatory messages from other organisations, including political parties such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party Iraq and the KDP Iran. A middle-aged woman in a red Western dress introduces the folkloristic troupe Tirej – eight men in gray *şal û şepik*[20] and checkered neck shawl, gray or red, brown kummerbund and red/green/yellow ribbons tied to their shoulders. The troupe enters in a crouching, creeping manner, with a flute playing, then proceeds to line dancing with *tenbur* and overwhelming keyboard accompaniment, dances where men are pairing off, and at the end, forms a pyramid of men raising a Kurdish flag. A recitation appeals to unity of Kurdish unity, with shouts of *yek yek yek* (one one one).

Later, there is a dramatization of the fight against oppression: a man with a pistol appears, walks around and aims the pistol at various people who seem to be by chance in the center of the room in front of the podium. Dancing in a line, Tirej surrounds the pistol man, and with gestures forces him to the ground. Victory! Applause!! After more sketches, a tenbur player plays and sings, with synthesizer and drum machine interludes, before communal dancing begins: to the sounds of the synthesizer, men start line dancing, women join. This is interrupted periodically by solo singing: a narrative in şêr style (nobody around me knows what it is about), two strophes only, followed by a dance song with the drum machine. So far, everything is compatible with Hakkari narrative and dance melodies, with 'technology' as superimposed 'modernity.'

Then Xoşnaw, a Kurdish-Syrian singer from Sweden, the featured star of the evening, enters. He sings in a pop-style approaching *arabesk*: a high voice, very 'sweet' (my term), 'soft and feminine' (my Kurdish neighbors' terms). The singer's movements and style of physical presentation are all pop-arabesk. He gets markedly more attention from adults than the preceding presentations. Eventually, interest in Xoşnaw fades, and line dancing starts again, with Xoşnaw singing into a microphone and backed up by the keyboard. This leads to general dancing in the centre space, with the majority of the adults and a few small children participating. At 10:30, the party breaks up, the keyboard is disconnected.

In 2007, the Gemeinde der Kurden aus Syrien celebrates Newroz in a Protestant church in Kreuzberg. There is enough room to dance in front of the rows of seats in a large circle and, occasionally, in an additional line, all moving counter-clockwise; music is again supplied by synthesizer and singers over a microphone and large loudspeakers; the space is draped moderately with Kurdish flags. This time the vast majority of the participants wear Western clothes.

Video 3 - Circle dance to amplified vocal-sinthesizer sounds at the Syrian Newroz in Berlin, 2007 (Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPsoAohEqTc).

Newroz of the Association of Kurdish Physicians in Germany at Charllottenburg Town Hall

Charllottenburg is one of the more affluent boroughs of Berlin. Named after the former Prussian palace in its midst, it is far from the places where to majority of Kurdish migrants live. The Town Hall is a spacey, prestigious building in Gothic style, with an impressive staircase. The celebration takes place on the 2nd floor where the foyer is dressed up with an exhibition of Kurdish items such as *kilims*, copper water cans, old daggers etc. Soft drinks, wine and beer are set up for the reception part, hot and cold food is being arranged – but first comes the serious business: speeches by Kurdish dignitaries and the Charllottenburg Bürgermeister (Mayor) and a Berlin City official in charge of migration matters. The Iraqi Ambassador is present, but the Syrian one, though he had accepted the invitation, is missing, which is remarked upon repeatedly. In conversations later on people say, with a smile, that they hope in the future to see the Turkish Ambassador, as well... The speeches are given in a large lecture hall equipped with a piano. After the speeches, Sherzad Levey plays his own composition "*Variation on a Kurdish Theme*", on the piano; later also Chopin's *Impromptu op. 29* and another composition of his own. He is technically very good, but there is nothing Kurdish that I can perceive in his *Variation*.

After the serious part, comes the 'reception' where people line up to get at the food. The music is set up in the foyer, provided by the music band named 'Can' from Northern Kurdistan: Ozan, Ismail, Hüseyin, Tugay. There is a vocalist who sings in Zazaki and who also plays *saz* (tenbur); an acoustic guitar with electronic pick-up; and a winds player who alternates between a plastic flute and a *balaban*.[21] The fourth name presumably belongs to the one who set up the electronics but who is not actively participating. After considerable time of eating and listening only, a few people begin to dance – men first – and are soon joined by others, both women and men, and the rest of the evening has enthusiastic communal Kurdish dancing in the center.

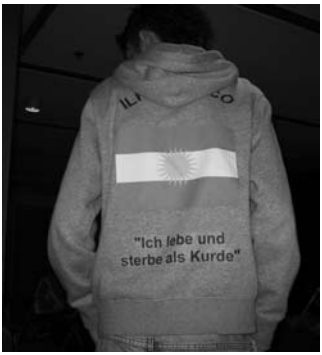
Conclusions

Large Berlin Newroz celebrations organized by various Kurdish associations in which I participated over the years 2005-2008 had the following characteristics in common:

- the spontaneous line dancing of audience members around the entire space, or in a circle in the front space. The line of dancers, gender-mixed and often alternatingly female-male, or with an additional line of women only, would be lead normally by a dancer waving a scarf, and the music would come from a synthesizer, or from a solo singer on the stage, not himself dancing, using a microphone, and backed up by the synthesizer. More rarely there would be a drum-oboe (*dehol û zorne*) team;
- the focus on staged performances of songs by professional Kurdish musicians, with the use of amplification and generally with synthesizers to support vocalists. On occasion, prominent singers – such as Ciwan Haco and Nizamettin Ariç – would accom-

pany themselves on the long-necked lute tenbur. The audience was generally seated in concert-like fashion to face the stage;
- in many cases, performances of folklore dance troupes dressed in 'Kurdish' costumes;
- prominent display of Kurdish national symbols, in particular, the Kurdish flag (red--white-green, with the yellow sun in the center). The colors of the flag were replicated in the costumes of many participants. Alternatively, as in the case of the physicians' association, the display of quasi-folkloric Kurdish objects such as rugs, rural kitchen tools, and historical weapons. Generally, symbols and slogans would project the fight for the recognition of Kurdish identity and independence.

Figure 7 - Young Kurd at a Newroz celebration in Berlin, 2008. The jacket proclaims in German 'I live and die as a Kurd'.



For Kurds in and from Turkey, Newroz is a 'new tradition' introduced by Kurdish intellectuals to maintain and strengthen Kurdish cultural identity and unity across state borders in Kurdistan and in the diaspora.

Expressive behavior in the domain of music and dance emphasizes that Kurds from different regions and settings – rural and urban – share: communal dancing in lines to instrumental music performed by oboe and drum ensembles or their electronic substitutes. Problems with regional differences in dialect[22] that would interfere with the communal performance of singing dances as they are common in Hakkari weddings are avoided by using instrumental sounds, mostly from a synthesizer, or from a synthesizer-backed solo singer who is not himself dancing; if available, the traditional drum-oboe ensemble would perform instead. The practice of choral antiphony in the performance of dances is disappearing.

The process of migration has both diminished and widened the range of musical expressions and the sense of belonging for individual Kurds from Turkey and the following generations: for a narrowly local or tribal identity lost, they are gaining the awareness of a national/ethnic identity in a trans-national, global context.

Notes

[1] An abstract concept of 'music' was not developed in rural Kurdish thinking at the time and areas of our 1958/1965 fieldwork. Instead, notions of 'saying' sound '*deng*' and of dance combined into what is best called 'expressive behavior', which also includes speech, dress and gestures as modes of an individual's or a group's expression of personality or identity. In this essay, 'music' is considered a part of this broader concept, which I call expressive behavior. Migration studies have mostly ignored expressive behavior other than language (see Baily and Collyer, 2006).

[2] In 1958 jointly with Nerthus Christensen and Dr. Wolfgang Rudolph of the Ethnologisches Institut, Freie Universität Berlin, which also sponsored the 'excursion'; and in 1965 with Nerthus Christensen, M.A., with the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the DFG (German Research Foundation), which made the work in Kurdistan possible. Warm thanks also to Dipl.pol. Siamend Hajo of the European Center for Kurdish Studies (Berlin) who greatly facilitated my access to Kurdish circles in Berlin.

[3] The term 'sending community' that is widely used in the sociological literature strikes me as inappropriate, at least in this case, where community intent to 'send' is patently absent.

[4] There was no electricity in the villages of Hakkari, let alone on the summer pastures at that time; the few radio receivers were battery operated, provided that there were fresh batteries available.

[5] 'Public' here refers to enactments that are potentially open to performers and/or audiences beyond any given family; 'private' indicates limitation to a family setting.

[6] An incident we observed in June 1965 illuminates the close association of dancing with the wedding. A segment of the nomadic Herki tribe needed to pass over the pastures of the Gewdan, a seminomadic tribe of the Ertoşî confederation, to reach their own grazing grounds further north. After protracted negotiations between the elders of both groups over the number of sheep to be surrendered by the Herki, the matter was settled by a singing contest. Upon the news that fighting and potential blood feud was avoided, men broke out in spontaneous dancing, and one of them called out 'it is like a wedding' (Christensen, 2002: 66-68).

[7] From Arab *mūṭrib*, someone who induces enchantment, a professional musician. Here: a Gypsy.

[8] 'Feraşin is empty', my Kurdish friends in Berlin told me at the time. Feraşin is a fertile district northeast of Beytüşşebab, winter home to semi-nomadic Ertoşî groups.

[9] For details, see Skubsch, 2002 and Ammann, 2001.

[10] This does not apply in other cases. For instance, in the case of the Yezidi in Georgia, a local Yezidi Sheikh complained in 2005 that there were 'no musicians left – they have all gone to Germany'.

[11] According to the website gevdanasireti.sitemynet.com (accessed on 15.10.2009) 125,000 Gevdan lived then in Van, in Western Turkey or abroad, with only 66,000 remaining in Hakkari and Şırnak provinces. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Gevdan wintered in villages northeast of Beytüşşebab, a district town then in Western Hakkari province, and migrated to their summer pastures in the high mountains further northeast. The Gevdan are a tribe of the Ertoşî confederation.

[12] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHneJFdOgpE; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ux0gsdYTm6g, accessed on 15.10.2009.

[13] In fact, Karl May had never seen Kurdistan: his vivid imagination was supported by his reading of 19th Century geographers' reports and travelogues.

[14] Among my Kurdish acquaintances in Berlin during the 1960s were several students who have since assumed prominent roles as politicians in their home countries. See also Sheikhmous, 1989.

[15] Newroz, Nuroj, Newruz (according to differences of dialect and lack of standardized orthography) means literally New Day, and it is the word for the (Iranian incl. Kurdish) New Year.

[16] For details see Sheikhmous, 1989 and Hajo, 2003.

[17] In 2003, the Berliner Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Kurdologie e.V. produced an illustrated brochure, *Das Kurdische Berlin*, which was published by the Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, a branch of the City Government. The brochure lists 27 Kurdish associations in Berlin, among them organizations for Alevi, Yezidi, Zaza speakers, Women, Language and Culture of Central Anatolia, Kurds from Syria, and Kurdish physicians. See Hajo *et al.*, 2003: 82-3.

[18] To enable people to attend this feast at more than one association, and to share musicians that are in short supply, the celebrations are actually spread out over the two weeks around the 21st of March. This underscores and furthers the integration of Kurds in Berlin and their cultural expressions.

[19] In Turkey, celebrating Newruz was banned until 1995 when, ironically, the government claimed it as a Turkish holiday. Public, open-air Newruz celebrations have been held in recent years in prevailingly Kurdish towns like Amed (Diyarbakir), Van, Batman, Şırnak, Hakkari, Tunceli, Mardin. The Kurdish satellite television station Roj TV, based in Denmark, has broadcasted Newroz programs that were watched also in Berlin.

[20] The traditional Kurdish men's dress consisting of long trousers of finely woven striped cloth and a loose jacket of the same material. It is distinct from typical Turkish and Arabic rural clothing.

[21] Balaban is a short, cylindrical oboe with a large double read typical of Armenian music and popular in Armenian adaptations of Kurdish music broadcast by radio Yerevan.

[22] Even within Turkey, Kurmanci and Zazaki speakers cannot easily understand each other; the Sorani of Northern Iraq and the Mukriyani and other dialects of Iran are even more remote so that a non-Kurdish language has to serve as *lingua franca* for every-day communication. In Germany this is usually German, or, among Kurds from different regions of Northern Kurdistan, Turkish. The *lingua franca* solution is obviously not applicable to choral-antiphonal singing, hence the substitution with instrumental sounds. The development of a trans-regional 'high-Kurdish' that could serve as *lingua franca* also in musical contexts is still in its infancy.

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