IT IS DIFFICULT to appreciate and understand Sufism fully without an informed exposure to the expressive cultural forms that help define and enhance it. It is this dimension of Islamic mysticism that transports the seeker on the path of spiritual attainment into higher states of consciousness that promise spiritual intoxication (wajd) and a unique and intimate union, even annihilation (fanâ'), in the supreme being. This emotional expression of faith is intensified and externalized in elaborate forms of meditation and esoteric techniques that are part of ritual ceremonies.

Through ritual, many Sufi orders and Sufi-related sects throughout the world of Islam have been able to articulate doctrines and beliefs through artistic traditions such as sung poetry, instrumental music and dance-like movements (samâ' or spiritual concerts) and have utilized meditation patterns that combine corporeal techniques and controlled breathing (dhikr; Turkish, zikr) to induce or conduct trance and ecstatic states.

In Turkey, the Sunni brotherhoods (tarikat) such as the Halveti (Khalwatiyya), Rifai (Rifâ'îyya) and Kadiri (Qâdiriyya) engage in the collective musical dhikr that was the principal Ottoman dervish ceremony. In the true spirit of dhikr (recollection of God), divine names and expression of tawhid (Turkish,
tevhid
) (oneness of God with all existence) are repeated to rhythmic patterns often including rhythmic
breathing, body postures with a variety of motions and hymns ( ilâhi
), songs of mystical love ( gazel
) and
mersiye
(sung poems commemorating the martyrdom of the imam Husayn at Karbala'). This form of
worship meditation in line or circular formation is incomplete without recitation of passages from
the Koran.

Segments of the Kadiri dhikr ritual were recorded in two Istanbul dervish lodges (1980 and
1988) by Kudsi Erguner, a Paris-based musician and Sufi, and issued on CD by the Geneva
Ethnographic Museums's Archives of Popular Music. The ceremony begins with litanies ( awrâd
) that include verses from the Koran and praises to the Prophet Muhammad. This is followed by
a poem of praise sung by singers called zakir
(Arabic, dhakir
) supported by rhythmic accompaniment supplied by disciples to the syllables of the profession
of the faith ( tahlîl
formula). After a gazel
( ghazal
) is sung, the dhikr
proper begins ( Zikr-i Hay
), which is chanted by the dervishes and forms an accompaniment for the zakir
, who performs a poem of praise to the Prophet and then two ilahi
-s (hymns sung to precomposed melodies that were the principal artistic forms produced by Sunni
tarikat
-s in Turkey). A taksim
(solo instrumental improvisation in free rhythm) concludes the this section. Next follows a mersiye
and a
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gazel, and finally an ilâhî punctuated by repetition of the syllable Hü (Him). The ceremony ends with the first and then the last three sura -s of the Koran.

The well-known Whirling Dervishes or Mevlevi order of Dervishes in Turkey incorporate elaborate choreographies (sema) accompanied by sung poetry from the Mathnawi of the founder of the order, Jalal al-Din Rumi (Mevlana), that is set to compositions in the tradition of Ottoman secular art music (based on the makam/mode system) into their devotional ceremonies. The musicians who performed this music were trained professionals and sometimes composers affiliated with the order who did not seek to enter into a state of trance.

Although there are elements of audition (such as that of prayers and invocations), the central core of the ceremony is the âyîn that focuses on the integration of music, poetry and dance and culminates in dhikr triggered by set forms of movement that increase in speed and intensity. The introductory segment of the ritual includes a poem in praise of the prophet known as naat and composed by Itri (1640-1712) that is sung unaccompanied, a taksim generally performed on the important end-blown flute (ney), and a perev (prelude or composed piece for instrumental ensemble in fixed meter that uses a specific melodic mode (makam) and a metric mode (usûl) comprising a "great" cycle of 28 primary beats that are repeated twice. It is at this point that the dervishes walk in procession around the ceremonial space and engage in ritual bowing.

The âyîn proper begins with the sema (whirling dance) performed to music (played on classical Turkish instruments and sung by a chamber chorus) in four sections known as (selâm - s). During the third
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*selâm*

there is an increase in tempo (where a waltz rhythm is used) and a slowing down during the fourth where an air of restraint is once again maintained by the dervishes as they end the dance. The instrumentalists then perform a concluding prelude (*son perev*)

and a concluding composition (*yürük semai*)

followed by an instrumental *taksim*

and recitations from the Koran.

Instruments heard in a recent recording of a complete Mevlevi ceremony (*âyîn* in the *makam*/mode of Ferahnâk Airan) by the Mevlevi Ensemble of Turkey (1995) are

*ney* (end- blown flute),

*kanun* (trapezoidal, plucked zither),

*kemençe* (bowed, pear-shaped lute held vertically on the knees),

*tanbur* (long-necked, plucked lute with frets),

*üd* (short-necked, fretless, plucked lute) and

*kudüm* (a pair of small kettledrums).

The esoteric ceremonies of the rural and more recently urban-based heterodox Alevi (and related village Bektais and Tahtacis) reveal shamanistic survivals of a Central Asian Turkic past, Shi’i tendencies where the imam ‘Ali is almost deified and a filiation with the Bektai order of dervishes. Formerly known as Kizilba, the Alevi were viewed with suspicion and mistrust because of their so-called clandestine activities and inclinations to revolt against the authority of Ottoman Sunni authority. They were stalwart in their support of Shah Ismail of Safavid Persia whose poetry (written under the pen-name Hata‘i) they revered in the past and continue to revere today.

Alevi religious musical services are referred to collectively as *cem* or *âyîn*. Their purpose is not only to focus on spiritual exercises that include elements of *zikr*

(without controlled breathing but with some elements of body posturing) and ritual dance (*sema*)
accompanied by sung mystical poetry in the vernacular and the sacred ritual instrument known as 
*balama or saz* (plucked folk lute with frets). They also serve to reinforce social solidarity and correctness of 
behaviour through inculcating the beliefs and doctrines of the sect and saintly figures as well.

Music is performed by individuals recruited from Alevi communities and descended from holy 
lineages of religious leaders known as *dede*. These specialists are viewed with respect and 
known as *zâkir, aik, sazende or gûvende*, depending on regional usage. Many are also known to be poet/minstrels (*
aik*, *ozan*) who perpetuate the tradition of dervish-lodge (*tekke*) poets such as the much loved and admired Yunus Emre (13th century), Nesîmî (14th century), 
Pir Sultan Abdal, Hata’î and Genç Abdal (16th century) and Kul Himmet and Kul Hüseyn (17th 
century). The poetry was composed in the Turkish vernacular and follows the principles of folk 
prosody known as *hece vezne* in which the focus is the number of syllables.

The specialized sacred musical repertoire of Alevi musicians includes *deyi* (songs of mystical 
love), *nefes* (hymns concerning the mystical experience), *düvaz* or *düvâzdeh imâm* 
(hymns in honor of the 12 Alid imams), *mersiye* (laments concerning the martyrdom of the imam Huseyn at Kerbela), *miraclama* (songs about the ascent of the prophet Muhamad to heaven) and *sema* 
(ritual dance that is accompanied by folk lutes and sung poetry). The dances are performed with 
dignity by couples, and choreographies employ circle and line formations as well as 
arrangements where couples face one another, thus synchronizing their movements more 
closely. As the tempo of the music increases, the figures become more complex and intense. 
There are many regional variants of *sema*, but the most widespread and important are the Dance of the Forty (*Kırlar Semah*)
and the Dance of the Cranes (Turnalar Semah)

where the movements of the dance illustrate links to a shamanistic legacy and the transformation of shamans into birds who take flight.

The gathering of the forty saints refers to the moment, after the Prophet's ascension to heaven, when he beheld the manifestation of Divine Reality in Ali. The Alevi believe that this gathering can be viewed as the prototype for their central rite (âyîn-i-cem, görgü cemi), the Rite of Integration. This is a complex ritual occasion in which a variety of tasks are allotted to incumbents bound together by extrafamilial brotherhood (musahiplik)

who undertake a dramatization of unity and integration under the direction of the spiritual leader (dede). The dede interacts formally with his 12 assistants and the body of worshippers as he applies Alevi religious idioms that reinforce links to Sunni Islam, the Bektai order of Dervishes and Shii Islam as well. The âyîn-i-cem can be heard on the JVC CD Turkey. An Esoteric Sufi Ceremony.

Unfortunately for non-specialists, the notes are very vague and give no indication of location, performers, musical genres or poetic forms. The recording was made in Istanbul in 1993, and the ceremony includes in an order typical of a cem:

de yi that reiterates the line of descent of the sect in a historical framework, two düvaz (one based on the poetry of Hatayi, and the other on the poetry of Kul Himmet), prayer formulas, the illâllâh genre that incorporates the tahfil formula into the poem to create an atmosphere of zikr

while sect members create rhythmic intensity by hitting their knees in time to the music and sway their bodies slightly, the Dance of the Forty (Krklar Semah), the Dance of the Cranes (Turnalar Semah)

and prayer formulas.
Similar recordings of the Alevi cem (Alevilikte Cem) have appeared in Turkey and are useful in supplying information regarding the names of genres and the order in which they appear, although the recording mentioned below does not include all of the items mentioned on the cassette cover.

Recordings


2. *Returning. The Music of the Whirling Dervishes*. Recorded in 1995 and performed by the Mevlevi Ensemble, directed by Dogan Ergin with Kani Karaca as featured solo artist (in place of a chorus). Interworld CD-916. The âyîn featured on this recording was composed by Dogan Ergin in the makam/ mode of Ferahnâk Airan. Recordings can be purchased from: Interworld Music Associates, RD3 Box 395A, Brattleboro, VT 05301 or tel. (800) 698-6705.


4. *Turkey. An Esoteric Sufi Ceremony*. CD recorded in Istanbul in 1993 under the supervision of Dr. Tsutomu Oohashi. JVC World Sounds. VICG-5345. Manufactured and distributed by Victor Entertainment, Inc., Tokyo, Japan. The recording is useful as documentation of an event, but the accompanying notes show little or no understanding of the subject matter.

5. *Alevilikte Cem 2*. A commercial cassette (12271) recorded and produced in Istanbul, Turkey,
that presents an entire Alevi cem and identifies the individual genres heard and the zakir (singer and balama player), Adnan Kılıç. Pınar Müzik Üretim ve Yapımçılık Tic. Ltd. (Fax: 513- 5087).