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Music of Place

Ian O’Sullivan—pictured above in Hawaii.

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SOUNDBOARD



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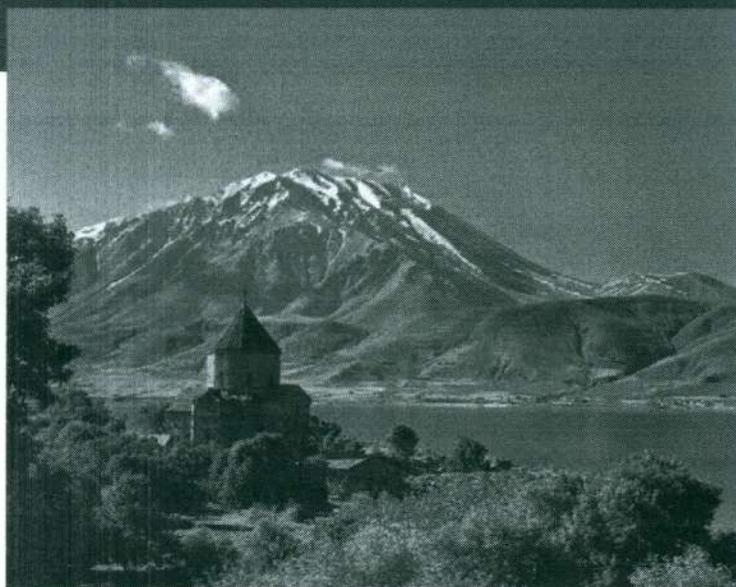
Music of Place Anatolia (Asia Minor)

Bağlama Techniques in the Classical Guitar Literature by Tolgahan Çoğulu

If you have played or listened to Domenico's *Variations on an Anatolian Folk Song*, you might recognize the instrument *bağlama*. The composer of that folk song, Aşık Veysel (1894-1973), was a *bağlama* player and singer. *Bağlama* is an Anatolian (Asia Minor)¹ necked lute, which is plucked with fingers or plectrum. Ancient lutes found in the empires of Asia Minor, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Asian-originated necked lutes are the ancestors of the *bağlama*. The term *bağlama* is derived from the Turkish verb *bağlamak*, which means "to tie." It refers to the frets that are tied around the neck of *bağlama*. Today the number of *bağlama* frets per octave is accepted as seventeen, although this number can vary depending on the regions of Anatolia.² The *bağlama* family has many diverse members that vary in size, each with different names given in various regions of Anatolia. After many changes in string number, the twenty-first century *bağlama* generally has three courses of strings. Some courses of strings are often tripled with an additional string that is one octave lower.



Above: Some members of the *bağlama* family.



Until the late 1970s, there were no academic institutions with classical guitar departments in Turkey. From 1977 onward, conservatories in Istanbul and Ankara started guitar programs and the classical guitar world started to come alive in the region. The classical guitar repertoire in Turkey began to include new pieces that have Western and Anatolian folk music/Ottoman *makam* music characteristics. These pieces are divided into two categories, pieces involving the arrangement of folk melodies and the compositions. The idea of composing/arranging this fusion with an equally-tempered Western instrument is not a phenomenon of the last thirty-five years in Turkey. The history of this synthesis in culture had already begun in the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century and reached its peak after the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923). Thus, this idea covers a period of almost 190 years and its reflection on the classical guitar repertoire was inevitable.

The composers/arrangers of this genre focus mainly on the harmonization approach, use of modal systems, the adaptation of Western music forms, and the utilization of *bağlama* performance techniques. *Bağlama* techniques in the classical guitar literature are categorized as ornaments, tapping techniques, and *tezene* (plectrum) *şelpe* techniques.

¹ Anatolia (Asia Minor) makes up the Asian part of modern day Turkey and has been comprised of many cultures such as Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, Circassian, and Laz.
² The reason that the number of frets per octave is more than twelve is that the Anatolian folk melodies are based on a complex modal system called *makam*. In Ottoman *makam* theory, a whole tone is divided into nine equal parts and each of these parts are called *koma* (microtones).

Ornaments

The characteristic *bağlama* ornaments, *çarpma* (ascending slur), *çekme* (descending slur), and the slur combinations are the most commonly used *bağlama* performance techniques in the classical guitar literature. Because many combinations of these ornaments have been applied to the classical guitar since the Renaissance era, it is difficult to differentiate *bağlama* ornaments from classical guitar ornaments. However, the left-hand horizontal movement ornaments are characteristic of *bağlama* playing and have been applied to the classical guitar.

In *bağlama* playing, it is common to play melodies on the first string. This motion results in a horizontal movement of the left-hand fingers. This feature is very different from guitar melody playing in which vertical movements are much more common. On *bağlama*, the first finger achieves a significant emphasis on this horizontal movement and it is mostly the preferred finger. The other fingers are used in executing ornamental devices.

To get familiar with this horizontal movement, the following exercises could be played (Figure 1 and Figure 2).



Figure 1. Simple ornaments with the horizontal movement.



Figure 2. Complex ornaments with the horizontal movement.

One example from the repertoire is Behzat Cem Günenç's *Çay Elinden Öteye* arrangement for three guitars. Günenç used many *çarpmas* in the ascending and descending scales that are played by the first and third guitars (Figure 3).

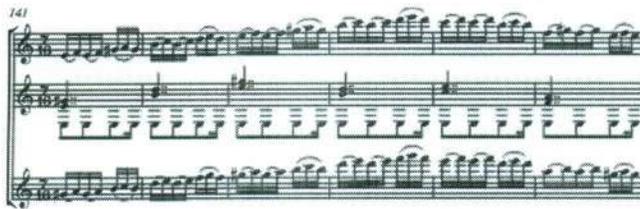


Figure 3. Behzat Cem Günenç's *Çay Elinden Öteye* arrangement, measures 141-146.

The idea that *çarpmas* could be played as cross-string ornaments on any of the two adjacent strings is used by Bekir Küçükay. In *Halay*, the fourth movement of the *Anatolian Suite*, Bekir Küçükay uses *çarpmas* to create minor second intervals sounding in each beat (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Bekir Küçükay, *Anatolian Suite*, Fourth Movement *Halay*, measures 1-6.

In Carlo Domeniconi's variations on Aşık Veysel's *Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım*, cross-string ornaments are used in the third and fifth variations and in the final section. In Figure 5, *çarpma* and *çekme* are used in the ornaments in the second and third measures. These types of ornaments are common in *bağlama* playing.



Figure 5. Carlo Domeniconi's *Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım* arrangement, third variation, measures 1-3.

In Cem Duruöz's *Sarı Gelin* arrangement, *çarpma* and *çekme* techniques are applied to two strings (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Excerpt from Cem Duruöz's *Sarı Gelin* arrangement, measure 8.

In the classical guitar repertoire, many *bağlama* slur combinations, especially trills, are used. For example, in the introduction part of Ricardo Moyano's arrangement of Aşık Veysel's *Kara Toprak* (Black Earth), many *bağlama* slur combinations including long trills, chromatic *çarpmas*, and *çekmes* are employed (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Ricardo Moyano's *Kara Toprak* arrangement, introduction.

Bağlama Techniques ... (continued)

Dotted rhythms with *çarpma* are characteristic of *bağlama* technique. Ertuğ Korkmaz used these kinds of ornaments in his *Yalan Dünya* arrangement. He used both *glissando* and *çarpma* in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Excerpt from Ertuğ Korkmaz's *Yalan Dünya* arrangement.

Tapping Techniques

The traditional tapping style on *bağlama* is like the one-string electric guitar tapping. Starting from the 1980s, finger tapping techniques became widespread in *bağlama* playing and were developed by *bağlama* performers such as Hasret Gültekin, Erdal Erzincan, and Erol Parlak. Today if you go to a *bağlama* concert in Istanbul, you can watch a solo *bağlama* piece played only with fingers (without nails and plectrum), using a combination of polyphonic tapping techniques and strumming patterns.³ Especially in the early twenty-first century, classical guitarists started to be influenced by this development and some integrated these techniques into their arrangements and compositions.

In the contemporary form *bağlama* tapping, the right and the left-hand fingers execute hammer-ons and pull-offs on the fretboard. There are four main types of *bağlama* tapping techniques: hammer-on and pull-off in both right and left hands. The left-hand slurs have two functions. The first one is the completion of the tapping pattern that was started by the right hand. The second function of the left hand is independent playing without the help of a right-hand tapping or plucking.

One example from the repertoire is Hasan Cihat Örtter's *Allı Turnam* arrangement. Örtter used tapping on the fourth string and the tapping style is similar to the monophonic electric guitar tapping (Figure 9).

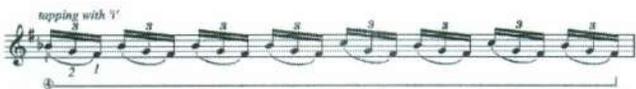


Figure 9. Excerpt from Hasan Cihat Örtter's *Allı Turnam* arrangement.

In Ceyhun Şaklar's composition, *Folk Fantasy*, the piece starts with a melody that uses tapping (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Ceyhun Şaklar's *Folk Fantasy*, measures 1-2.

In 2008, Mustafa Tinç composed *It Takes Two* for two guitars. It is based on a theme and variations form and the last variation is based on tapping techniques. In addition to the tapping hammer-ons and pull-offs, Tinç used a tapping *glissando* in measure 223 (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Mustafa Tinç's *It Takes Two*, measures 221-231.

After I finished my thesis on the adaptation of *bağlama* techniques into the classical guitar, I worked on many polyphonic tapping techniques on the classical guitar. The following example is the introduction of the arrangement of *Kız Bahçende Gül Var Mı*. I used a *scordatura* for this piece and played two finger left- and right-hand tapplings (*i* and *m*) on the fifth and third strings, together with strumming techniques (Figure 12).

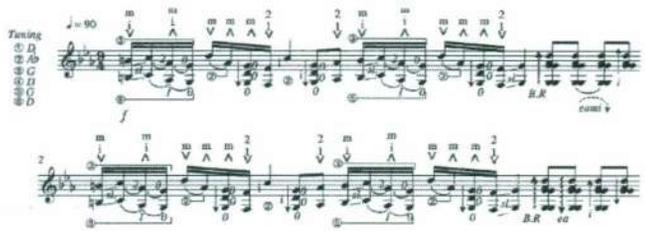


Figure 12. Tolgahan Çoğulu's *Kız Bahçende Gül Var Mı* arrangement, introduction.

Note that there are three different tapping notations in the examples shown above. In the guitar world, there is no standard tapping notation and almost every composer uses his or her own symbols and descriptions.

Tezene (Plectrum) and Şelpe Techniques

When the strumming techniques on the *bağlama* are played with the fingers (without plectrum), these techniques are called *şelpe*—*tezene* (plectrum) techniques that include down/up strokes, continuous strokes, various *rasgueado* patterns and *şelpe* techniques, that have been used by guitarists in their pieces. *Tezene* down and up strokes are commonly used in the repertoire with techniques similar to classical guitar strumming techniques and flamenco

³ Suggested YouTube link: "Erdal Erzincan - Şelpe (Saz Söy)," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dHP0idwLCK>

guitar *rasgueado* patterns. In Ricardo Moyano's arrangement of Aşık Veysel's *Kara Toprak*, Moyano uses down and up strokes on all strings, playing the melody from the bass fifth and sixth strings and using other strings as drones (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Ricardo Moyano's *Kara Toprak* arrangement, measure 71.

In Mutlu Torun's *İzmir Zeybeği* arrangement, the individual up stroke is used. In Figure 14, up strokes are on the last sixteenth notes and they should be played with accents.



Figure 14. Mutlu Torun's *İzmir Zeybeği* arrangement, fifth–seventh beats, measure 3.

Gilbert Biberian uses down and up strokes together with *çarpmas* and *çekmes* in his arrangement of Ali Ekber Çiçek's *Haydar Haydar* (Figure 15).

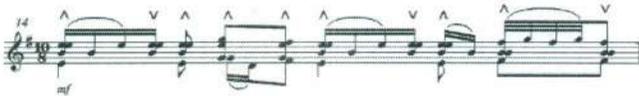


Figure 15. Gilbert Biberian's *Haydar Haydar* arrangement, measure 14.

Bağlama continuous strokes are also found in the repertoire. For example, continuous down and up strokes are executed with continuous flamenco *rasgueados* with *e*, *a*, *m* and *i* fingers on the fifth beat in Kağan Korad and Cihat Aşkın's *Ferahi Zeybeği* arrangement (Figure 16).

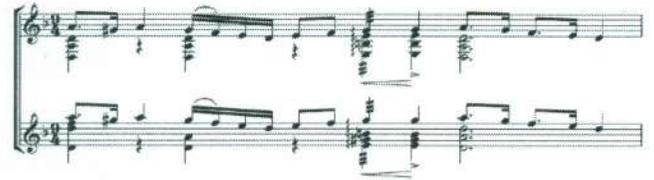


Figure 16. Kağan Korad and Cihat Aşkın's *Ferahi Zeybeği* arrangement, measure 37.

One example for the flamenco-like *rasgueado* is found in Mutlu Torun's *İzmir Zeybeği* arrangement. At the end of the third measure, we see *vurma* and the triplet *rasgueado* with *m* and *i* fingers (Figure 17).

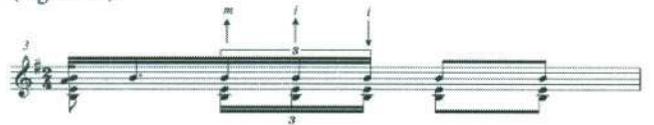


Figure 17. Mutlu Torun's *İzmir Zeybeği* arrangement, eighth and ninth beats, measure 3.

One example of *şelpe* technique in the classical guitar repertoire is found in my arrangement of Erdal Erzincan's *Anadolu* piece. I call this technique "Eami Arpeggiated Up-Stroke." This technique is played with the *e*, *a*, *m*, and *i* fingers along the rosette in a continuous manner. It is a variation of the flamenco *arrastre*. The difference is the continuous *arpeggios* of the fingers. Figure 18 shows the symbol and execution of the technique.



Figure 18. The "Eami Arpeggiated Up-Stroke."

Tolgahan Çoğulu, Ph.D., is an associate professor in guitar at the Istanbul Technical University, Turkish Music Conservatory. He is the inventor of the Adjustable Microtonal Guitar.

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