

## An Analysis of Items Based on ‘Cult of Sun-Fire’ in Local Culture and Music in Turkey: Case of Adiyaman Province

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### Abstract

*This study carries out a culture analysis of the items based on the cult of sun-fire in the local culture and music of Adiyaman region. Located in the South East of Turkey, Adiyaman is a city where the communities of two different cultures, Alevi and Sunni, as well as Syrians who belong to the Orthodox Christian denomination predominantly live. Moreover, it is the region where the Syrian Metropolitan resides. Kurdish is one of the most widely used languages in the region as well as Turkish. The primary research was carried out on the concept of “fire” in regional phrases and idioms in order to understand the reflection of the cult of fire on the culture. The second area of research addressed traditional clothing, scenes of folk dances, rituals of jumping over fire accompanied by music in Nowruz (new day/spring festival) celebrations, religious or secular music lyrics and musical-religious rituals of different faiths, and all these accounts were substantiated by images, photographs and musical notes in order to identify in what way the cult of fire is present in the culture. This study reveals that the repercussions of the cult of sun-fire are not only observed in the legends, phrases and expressions in the language, but also in unreligious-secular musical texts, religious-nonreligious musical practices, traditional clothing and scenes of folk dances of Adiyaman region. Doing so, the study analyzes the presence of the cult of fire in tangible and intangible cultural products and substantiates the findings using visual elements.*

**Keywords:** 1. Adiyaman, 2. Cult, 3. Fire, 4. Sun, 5. Culture, 6. Folklore, 7. Music, 8. Turkey

### 1. Introduction

There are various practices of cults based on fire and their derivatives in the socio-cultural structure of the different communities living in Anatolia. We can find Shamanism-related practices in the cults of fire introduced to Anatolia from Central Asia by the Turks. It is no coincidence that the communities that perform these practices include the elements of fire in their subconscious patterns of behavior carried to today by their protocultures in their historical backgrounds. These patterns of behavior present themselves in culture and music practices. Within this context, Boratav makes the following statement:

“The traces of the cult of fire in Anatolia which, on the one hand, reach back to Central Asian shamanistic traditions and, on the other hand, to pre-Turkic Anatolian history, can also be seen in specific rituals and traditions of today’s society. A purifying force is attributed to fire; this is observed in a tradition called *Betlem Bayramı* (Betlem Celebration) also referred to as *Betnem*, *Gavurküfrü* (curse of the infidel) or *Hasır küfrü* (curse of the rush mat). This tradition, until recently, has been performed mostly by children, young girls and women during the Christian Easter. Participants jumped over a big fire started using juniper tree branches or old cushions. This action provided protection from diseases throughout the year. In Balıkesir and Bergama regions, domestic animals used to pass by a fire accompanied by their owners for protection from epidemics. This fire had to be started by two naked men rubbing two pieces of wood against each other and the stove fire which, died down in the meantime, used to be started again using the very same fire.

A similar ritual used to be performed in the region of Taurus Mountains during the purchase of a horse or the construction of a barn. A fire used to be started on the two sides of the door of the barn and the animals used to be led into the barn through the door. It should also be noted that the prohibition of disrespectful conducts or acts such as spitting or urinating on the fire point to the belief in its sanctity” (Boratav, 2012: 34).

Beliefs based on the cult of fire in Anatolia largely stem from Zoroastrianism, an ancient belief in Iran. According to Xemgin, the conviction of Zoroastrianism which reveres the fire is as follows: According to Mazdayasna and Zoroastrian teachings, light and heat are holy, heavenly and divine. Therefore, having faith in fire as the source of these forces is considered one of the basic conditions of their religious structure” (Xemgin, 1995: 174).

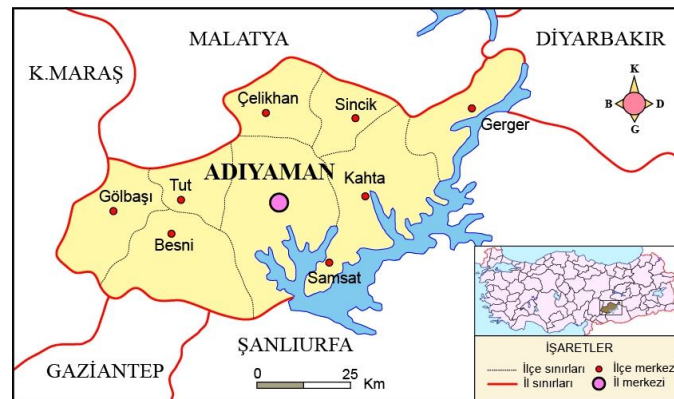
The cult of fire -based Zoroastrianism and deep-rooted Zoroastrianism-derived beliefs has led to a wide range of different practices in Anatolia. We can find these practices in songs, dances, folk instruments, local historical stories, phrases, idioms, symbolic images and musical rituals. In this regard, we can state that many regions have a dense cultural heritage. These cultural accumulations are believed to have emerged as a result of the effect on Anatolian geography of the communities of the Iranian Zoroastrian faith within various political and social factors throughout the historical process. Elements based on the cult of fire are thought to have rooted in the collective memories in line with similar cultural interactions within the traditional way of life.

Adiyaman Region is an important settlement which carries from the depths of history to today the elements of the local cults based on fire. The cult of practices based on fire can be observed both in daily life and traditional rituals which the people of Adiyaman have carried from past to present. This study will focus on elements based on the cult of fire in the local culture and music practices in Adiyaman region. In this context, it is useful to briefly address the region's history and legends based on fire.

## 1.2. Civilizations Living in Adiyaman Region

Adiyaman is a province in Southeastern Anatolia of Turkey. (See, fig.1)

**Figure 1:** [http://cografyaharita.com/turkiye\\_mulki\\_idare\\_haritalari.html](http://cografyaharita.com/turkiye_mulki_idare_haritalari.html)



### 1.2.1. Historical Chronology of Adiyaman Region:

- 40000 B.C - 7000 B.C Paleolithic
- 7000 B.C - 5000 B.C Neolithic
- 5000 B.C - 3000 B.C Chalcolithic
- 3000 B.C - 1200 B.C Hittites
- 1200 B.C - 750 B.C Assyrians
- 750 B.C - 600 B.C Phrygians
- 600 B.C - 334 B.C Persians
- 334 B.C - 69 B.C Macedonians
- 69 B.C - 72 A.D Kingdom of Commagene
- 72-395 Roman Empire
- 395-670 Eastern Roman (Byzantine)
- 670-758 Umayyads
- 758 - 926 Abbasids
- 926- 958 Hamdanids
- 958 –1114 Byzantines

1114 –1204 Ayyubids  
 1204 –1298 Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate  
 1298 –1516 Mamelukes  
 1516 –1923 Ottoman Empire  
 (Governorship of Adiyaman, 2005: 2).

## 2. Items Based on Fire in Culture and Music of Adiyaman Region

### 2.1. Cult of Fire in Phrases and Idioms

Phrases and idioms used in Adiyaman region include many elements of everyday life. In the dialect of the region the word *ateş*, which means *fire*, is pronounced *ataş*. Fire -related phrases and idioms used by the people of Adiyaman are listed below.

**Ataş almaya gelmek [to come to pick up fire]:** “*Acelen ne?... Hızlı hareket etmek, gidilen yerde beklememek*” [What is the hurry?... To move quickly, not to linger or wait for too long in the destination after arrived] (Yağınlı, 2011: 82).

**Ataşı ataşına [fire to fire]:** “*Sıcağı sıcağına, hemen, o an*” [while the iron is hot, in the heat of the moment, almost immediately] (Person of Source, the author of the article: Mehmet Sadık Doğan).

**Ataş parçası [a piece of fire]:** “*Becerikli, çabuk iş gören*” [skillful, capable, and practical] (Person of Source, the author of the article: Conversation with Mehmet Sadık Doğan, 2016, Adiyaman).

**Caf caf yanmak:** “*İçten içe, hararetle yanmak*”. [In back translation: To burn up inside, to burn incessantly] It also means “to envy” in some usages (Yağınlı, 2011: 84).

**Kızınmak:** “*Isınmak*” [to warm up] (Yağınlı, 2011: 95).

**Kül başıma da daş başıma [Ash to my head, stone to my head]:** “*Vah... Vah... Ocağım söndü, bela beni buldu, mahvoldum*” [What a shame!... I am perished, trouble has befallen me, I am ruined] (Yağınlı, 2004: 43).

**Yakımlı:** “*Cana yakın, kolay anlaşabilinen*” [Amiable, easy-going] (Yağınlı, 2004: 49); in other words, the term means one who endears oneself or one who is sincere.

### 2.2. Cult of Sun and Fire in Traditional Clothing

Symbols and figures of the sun and fire are frequently encountered in the traditional outfit of the people of Adiyaman. These symbols and embroidered figures are the sun, moon, light and reflection of fire. These figurative ties with nature have been established by the people of Adiyaman. The culture of Adiyaman has been interpreted and passed down to today by the medium of clothing throughout history. Clothing used for wedding ceremonies and casual clothing are important elements in shaping local pieces of clothing. Used mostly in folk dances nowadays, traditional clothing still maintains its originality.

Local women's clothing used in folk dances in Adiyaman contains the sun and light motif on *üç etek* or *zıbn* known as *kutnu* fabric. Moreover, *bindallı* (thousand-branched) dresses worn in special ceremonies (night of henna, weddings, religious festivals, family gatherings, etc.) contain the motifs of light, the sun and moon embroidered with bright threads on the collar. Especially red and yellow are preferred in local women's clothing. These are dominant colors which represent fire-sun-light. Figure 2 displays local women's clothing of Adiyaman.



**Figure 2:** Women's Traditional Outdoor Clothing (Duyamaz, 2013: 118).

As can be seen in Figure 3, women's apron called *Bervang* contains items which feature the cult of sun and fire such as the moon, star, sun and light which are all thought to light the dark and illuminate the black background.

This apron is made through a coloring process using madder on a fabric (called by locals “*kahke cloth*”) after different shapes are drawn on it (interview with Şah İsmail Çalışkan dated 04/18/2016, in Adıyaman).



**Figure 3:** Women’s Apron *Bervang*. Photograph: Mehmet Sadık Doğan, 05-04-2016.

Figure 4 demonstrates an example of *bindalli* (thousand-branched) clothing (a dress for the night of henna which takes place before wedding). It has motifs of branches, leaves and flowers on a dark and black background and it is the color of the sun or fire which is thought to light the dark.



**Figure 4:** Women’s dress *Bindalli*: <http://gurlekmilli.com/galeri.aspx?pid=12&cid=0>

Figure 5 illustrates men's and women’s clothing in local folklore containing sun and light shapes or colors. These figures are believed to protect men and women from evil and give them courage (interview with Celal Bilir dated 03.26.2016, Adıyaman).



**Figure 5:** Traditional Men's and Women’s Outdoor Clothing

Bilir, Celal, (Adıyaman: 03.26.2016), Place and Date of Birth: Adıyaman, Place of Residence: Adıyaman, 1956, retired from a public institution, folklore researcher and instructor.



### 3. Fire-Based Items in Folk Dance Scenes in Adiyaman

The choreography arrangements of the traditional folk dances of Adiyaman and regional culture, which date back to thousands of years ago, have won numerous awards worldwide. Tools and materials used in these dances add a great emphasis on narratives. Adiyaman folk dances staged with sickles, gourds and fire-starting objects have a mystical expression. Practices related to fire in Adiyaman region are observed to be performed in two dances, which are *simsimi* and *halay*.

#### 3.1. Cult of Fire in the Scenes of *Simsimi* (*Simsima*)

The word *simsimi* originates from the word *simsim* (the word *sim* means glitter). It is related that someone who wears a bolero (jacket) with silvery fringes performs this dance and as he or she dances around the fire, the silvery fringes shine, which is why this dance is called *simsimi* (interview with Celal Bilir dated 03.26.2016, in Adiyaman).

This dance is also called by locals "War and Peace," which narrates the story of a feud and then reconciliation between two families around a started fire. Figures accompanied by drums and flutes take place around the fire. Although the purpose of the fire is thought to provide ambient lighting and heating during the night, dance figures performed around the fire are thought to be more associated with the respect had for it. The music used in this scene has an enthusiastic and a supporting character in terms of its structure and expression. Figure 6 and Figure 7 present the musical notes and visual of the *Simsimi* (*Simsima*) dance performed in the region, respectively.

#### **SIMSIMA**

Region: Adiyaman

Person of Source: Anonymous

Notated: Mehmet Sadık Doğan



Figure 6: (Temel, 2005: 123).



Figure 7: Adiyaman *Simsimi* Dance (The dance scene performed around the burning charcoal burner). The photo was taken from Celal Bilir's private archives.

#### 3.2. The Cult of Fire in *Halay* Scenes

From folkloric aspects, Adiyaman region is considered to be in "Halay zone." *Halay* includes dramatic dances performed in weddings in Adiyaman for thousands of years. Some of these dances are referred to as *üçayak* (three

legs), *düz* (flat), *goftan* and *iki ayak* (two legs). Having reached the present day, the most important structural figure in these dances is an old woman<sup>i</sup> dancing and carrying the fire started in a charcoal burner or some such object around *halay*. The purpose of this scene is for the smoke to come out of the fire and fume odoriferous incense around. In some practices, harmful grass, dried onion or garlic crust is burned during the dance performance. This is believed to be a precaution against the evil eye.

#### 4. The Cult of Fire in Nowruz Celebrations in Adiyaman Region

The spring festival is called “*Sultan Navrızı*”<sup>ii</sup> (Nowruz of the Sultan) or “*Sehre*”<sup>iii</sup> which is celebrated at the center of Adiyaman on March 21 according to the Gregorian calendar. Two separate areas of the city are used for this celebration. The first and most populous one is the green area referred to as “*Nakıbn Havızı*” located north of the Former State Hospital close to Montenegro. It is an open space with a small pool. The second one is located on the south of the today Ataturk city stadium. It is where “Seven Brothers” (see. the Legend of Seven Strong Men) visiting location is. Preparations start one week before the day of the celebration. Orders are placed for the ingredients of the food which will be cooked. Young people climb mountains to collect “*Navruz Çiçeği*” (the Flower of Nowruz) which is the harbinger of spring. They carefully line up those flowers between the sticks they had already split into two and bring them over. Some sell them, some others eat them and some others offer them around. According to the belief, if one does not go out during “*Sultan Navrız*,” one contracts “*Bö*” (some kind of disease) (Yağınlı, 2004: 166-167).

Just like in Nowruz celebrations in Anatolia, the tradition of starting a fire and jumping over it can also be seen in these celebrations in villages and such settlements outside the center of Adiyaman (Figure 8). A big fire is started at the center of the village square and various folk dances are performed accompanied by shawm-and-drum and enthusiastic melodies. Among these dances, *Sımsımi*, *uçayak* and *düz* are preferred the most. When the fire dies down a little bit, people jump over it.<sup>iv</sup> *Sımsımi* is preferred for a special reason. As stated above, the dance of *sımsımi* is a performance which presents, in a folkloric and dramatic manner, the cult of fire which has been in the collective memory. We, therefore, believe that it is not a coincidence that this dance performed around the fire during Nowruz, which is an activity representing the revival of nature, is an act of emphasis on the cult of fire.



**Figure 8.** A scene from Nowruz Celebrations in Adiyaman, Adiyaman Democracy Park, March, 21, 2015.  
<http://www.golbasiguncel.com/haber/1761/Adiyamanda-nevruz-coskusu.html>

#### 5. The Cult of Fire in Secular and Religious Music Ritual and Texts

Being at the crossroads of different geographies and having hosted many civilizations for thousands of years, Adiyaman province has a long history of musical accumulation. The diversity of topics covered in the songs of Adiyaman region has developed in parallel with the way people feel and think and reached the present day. The social position, climate and earthbound living conditions of Adiyaman have thoroughly influenced its music, and the neighboring provinces have had their share of this.

"If we take the Southeastern Anatolia as a whole, we can state that lyrical, pastoral, didactic, ceremonial and professional (trades) folk songs constitute the majority (Atılğan, 1997: 45). This is also observed in Adiyaman folk songs.

Adıyaman folk songs portray Euphrates, the unique beauty of Mount Nimrod, Mesopotamian folklore, everyday life, earthbound living conditions, passion, homesickness, separation, longing and natural phenomena, and narrate the stories of henna and some such ceremonies (Doğan, 2012: 20).

The diversity of the topics covered in the region demonstrates the power of expression in the songs. Folk songs composed and sung in religious-secular areas of life are unique both in terms of their lyrics and musical structure. The following section will focus on in what way the cult of fire takes part in the lyrics of religious and non-religious folk songs.

### 5.1. The Cult of Fire in Religious and Non-Religious Folk Song Lyrics

We come across a few folk songs about fire in religious and non-religious local musical texts in Adıyaman region. The meaning and usage in the structure of these folk songs are unique to the region. The names, notes and contents related to the elements of fire are listed in Figures 9, 10, 11 and 12.

#### 5.1.1. This Age

**Region:** Adıyaman

**Person of Source:** Bilal Ercan

**Notated:** Sabri Sabuncu

Saz

Gü len dam Gü len dam av şar ge li ni

Ki na lar be len miş kar dan e li ni Bir da ha gö rey dim me lek yü zü nü

Dev ra na dev ra na bak bu dev ra na Bu dev ran bu dev ran za lim bu dev ran

Ta şı maz yü kü mü bir ga rip ker van Ha rap et ti be ni ey le di vi ran

**Figure 9:** (Temel, 2005: 57)

#### Original Turkish Lyrics

Gül deste gül deste yârim gül deste  
 İçerim yanıyor çiğirim hasta  
 Bu devran bu devran zalım bu devran  
 Diyemem derdimi düşmana dostu  
 Devrana devrana, bak bu devrana  
 Taşmaz yükümü garip bir kervan  
 Harap etti beni eyledi viran



### Translation

A bundle of roses, my love is a bundle of roses  
 I burn on the inside, my lungs are sick  
 This age, this age, it is a cruel age  
 I cannot say my pain neither to a friend nor to a foe  
 Age, age, look at that age  
 No poor caravan carries my load  
 I am ruined, I am down and out

Figure 9 above shows the musical notes, lyrics and their translation. The meaning attributed to “burning on the inside” by the phrase in the folk song “*içerim yanıyor, ciğerim hasta*” [I burn on the inside, my lungs are sick] is the pain of love. Here, the phrase “burning on the inside” expresses pain, sorrow and the desire for the lover.

### 6.1.2. Were you here yesterday? (Demoiselle Crane)

**Region:** Mınyık/ Adıyaman

**Person of Source:** Aşık Hasan Hüseyin

**Notated by:** Muzaffer Sarısözen (1973)

#### DÜN MÜ BURDAYDIN

Yöre : Adıyaman - Mınyık  
 Kimden Alındığı : Aşık Hasan Hüseyin

Derleyen : Muzaffer Sarısözen  
 Notaya Alan : Muzaffer Sarısözen

♩ = 88

17. Saz

Dün mü bur da yı dın bu gün mü gel dın  
 Öt me ga rip ga rip si ne mi del dın  
 Öt me ga rip ga rip si ne mi del dın  
 E şim de nay rıl dım  
 ben bur da kal dım Ya dav cı lar vur muş  
 tel li dur na mı tel li dur na mı

S. Sabuncu

Figure 10 (Temel, 2005: 68).

### Original Turkish Lyrics

Aşk sevdası geldi kaynadım coştum  
 Yüksekten uçarken engine düştüm  
 Eşimden ayrıldım ben burda şaşım  
 Yad avcılar vurmuş telli turnamı

### Translation

I am boiled and rejoiced by the passion of love  
 Flying high, I flew down  
 Dumbfounded now for I left my wife,  
 Strange huntsman shot my crane  
 (Temel, 2005: 68).



Figure 10 above illustrates the musical notes, lyrics and their translation. The expression “boiled and rejoiced” in the above verse archived by TRT is an expression of the cult of fire. Fire is what boils a liquid. The metaphor created by the word “boiling” caused by fire is a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure.

### 6. 1. 3. The Weather is Frosty, Lady Bride (Song for Night of Henna), Turkish Folk Music Repertoire No: 2630

**Region:** Adıyaman

**Person of Source:** Mahmut Çetinkaya

**Compiled and Notated by:** Mehmet Seske (1982)

T R T MÜZİK DAİRESİ YAYINLARI  
T H M REPERTUAR SIRA No: 2630  
İNCELEME TARİHİ : 23.11.1984

YÖRESİ  
ADİYAMAN

KİMDEN ALINDIĞI  
MAHMUT ÇETINKAYA

SÜRESİ :

DERLEYEN  
MEHMET SESKE

DERLEME TARİHİ  
8.7.1982

NOTAYA ALAN  
MEHMET SESKE

HAVALAR AYAZ GELİN HANIM  
( KINA HAVASI )

HA VA LA RA GE YAZ GE LİN KA DA HA Nİ M  
CA ĞI RIN GE LI NİN KA DA HA Nİ M

BU DA BİR MURAZ GELİN HANIM  
ÇEK SİN N DÜ R MÜ RA Z GE LİN BA HA Nİ M

YAZ MA Sİ PEM BE N GE LİN LİK BE VA  
A NA Sİ SİL SİN N GO ZUN YA Sİ Nİ

GİT GÜ LE GÜ LE GÜ LE GE Lİ NO LA SİN  
A Dİ YA MA NE Lİ NE YU VA KU RA SİN

— 1 —  
HAVALAR AYAZ GELİN HANIM  
BUDA BİR MURAZ GELİN HANIM  
YAZMASI PEMBE GELİNLİK BEYAZ  
GİT GÜLE GÜLE GÜLE GELİN OLASIN  
Bağ. ADIYAMAN ELİNE YUVA KURASIN.

— 2 —  
ÇAĞIRIN GELİNİN KARDASINI  
ÇEK SİN OĞUN ATIN BASINI  
ANASI SİL SİN GOZUN YASINI  
Bağlantı.

**Figure 11:** Archive of Turkish Radio Television Repertoire, Number: 2630

#### Original Turkish Lyrics

Havalay ayaz gelin hanım  
Bu da bir muraz gelin hanım  
Yazması pembe, gelinlik beyaz  
Git güle güle, gelin olasın  
Adıyaman eline yuva kurasın

#### Translation

The weather is frosty, lady bride  
This, too, is a wish, lady bride  
Her hand-painted kerchief is pink, bridal robe is white  
Farewell to you, go become a bride  
Go, build a home in Adıyaman

Figure 11 above presents the musical notes, lyrics and their translation. According to folk beliefs, a dried gourd is set on fire in weddings on cold and rainy winter months (usually the day before the wedding). The purpose of this ongoing tradition from the past is to wish that it will not rain during the wedding ceremony, to prevent the occurrence of adverse weather conditions or at least to hope that it will not be “frosty.” One or more dried gourds are brought to the wedding area accompanied by shawm-and-drum.

The gourds are set on fire while people are dancing to and singing folk songs. Various dramatic folk dances are performed around it.<sup>v</sup> The place of the gourd in the folk dances is illustrated by Figure 12 below.



Figure 12: (Duymaz, 2013: 168).

#### 6.1.4. My Heart, I will Burn You in Flames

Region: Adıyaman

Music and Lyrics: Abdurrahman Filik

Notated: Cahit Çiftçi

#### GÖNLÜM SENİ ATEŞLERDE

Söz : Abdurrahman Filik  
Müzik : Abdurrahman Filik

Notaya Alan : Cahit Çiftçi

26-

Saz

Gön lüm se ni a teş ler de ca yır ca yır  
ya ka ca ğim Sen ya nar ken bir kö şe de  
ka der gi bi ba ka ca ğim Sen ya nar ken  
bir kö şe de ka der gi bi ba ka ca ğim  
Saz Sevdan i le aş kın i le  
yan dım yan dım dön düm se le Ka ra sap lı  
han çer i le sağ dan sol dan ya ra ca ğim  
SON

Saz

Figure 13: (Temel, 2005: 85-86).

**Original Turkish Lyrics**

Gönlüm seni ateşlerde  
 Cayır cayır yakacağım  
 Sen yanarken bir kenarda  
 Kader gibi bakacağım

Sevdan ile aşkın ile  
 Yandım yandım döndüm küle  
 Kara saplı hançer ile  
 Sağdan soldan yaracağım  
 (Temel, 2005: 85-86).

**Translation**

My Heart, I will set you ablaze  
 And burn you in flames  
 As you burn in a corner  
 I will watch you like it is fate

I've burned to ashes  
 With your passion, with your love  
 With a black-handled dagger  
 I will pierce right to left

Figure 13 above depicts the musical notes, lyrics and their translation. Setting the heart ablaze willingly and disowning the burning heart bring a different dimension to the metaphor of burning. Especially, the first verse and the chorus of the song emphasize the element of fire.

**6.2. The Cult of Fire in Religious Music Ritual and Texts**

Since ancient times, many groups of people with different beliefs have lived together in Adıyaman region. Today, Sunni, Alevi-Bektashi and Assyrian communities live in the region. The communities of the Sunni sect -Orthodox Islam- do not have religious practices related to the cult of fire. However, the communities of Alevi-Bektashi sect -Heterodox Islam- and Syrian sect -Orthodox Christianity- have various and unique religious practices related to the cult of fire. We will present below in detail the relationship between religious identity and the cult of fire.

**6.2.1. The Cult of Fire in Syrian Local Ritual Music**

In addition to Islamic sects and communities, Assyrian and Armenian communities also live in Adıyaman. The first church was established in 1071 in this region. According to the information received from Mor Grigorios Melki Ürek, the Metropolitan of Adıyaman Assyrian Community, there are many neighboring provinces which are in communion with the Metropolitan in Adıyaman. The Assyrian of Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Elazığ, Malatya, Adana, Mersin, İskenderun and Hatay (Antioch) are in communion with the Adıyaman Assyrian Metropolitan, which is the center of this community. Assyrian families who live in approximately 500 square kilometers go to Adıyaman at certain times of the year to worship and attend ceremonies (Duymaz, 2013:133). As can be seen in Figures 14, 15 and 16, the most commonly practiced ritual in these ceremonies is lighting candles. These ceremonies contain practices of musical figures suited to the religious structures with fire-lit settings and worship practices performed collectively.



**Figure 14.** Adiyaman Assyrian Ancient Metropolitan Church of St Peter Church, Christmas Celebrations, 2015.  
<http://www.Adiyamanmetropolitligi.org/default.asp?Sayfa=Galeri&f=Do%F0um%20Bayram%FD%202015>



**Figure 15.** Adiyaman Assyrian Ancient Metropolitan Church of St Peter Church, the Commemoration Ceremony of the Crucifixion of Jesus and His Burial, 2015.  
<http://www.Adiyamanmetropolitligi.org/default.asp?Sayfa=Galeri&f=Rabbimizin%20Ha%E7a%20Gerili%FEi%20ve%20Mezara%20G%F6m%FCI%FC%FE%FC>



**Figure 16.** Adiyaman Assyrian Ancient Metropolitan Church of St Peter Church, an Overall Image of the Ceremony of Kyomtehd Moran (The Resurrection of Christ), 2015.  
<http://www.Adiyamanmetropolitligi.org/default.asp?Sayfa=Galeri&f=Kyomteh%20dMoranMesih%27in%20Dirili%FEi%202015>



Fire-candle practices are observed in Adıyaman Assyrian community rituals; Christmas Celebrations, the commemoration ceremony of the crucifixion of Jesus and his burial and the ceremony of *Kyomtehd Moran* (resurrection of Christ).

### 6.2.2. The Cult of Fire in Alevi-Bektashi Ritual Music

The traces of Zoroastrian teachings are widely observed in Anatolia, especially in the religious and daily life practices of Alevis. According to the Zoroastrian teachings, the universe was created out of light, abstinence is inculcated and the guilty is *dara kaldırılır* (complete surrender of oneself to the community one lives in). Religious meetings such as *cem* are held as an Alevi ritual. In the initiation ceremony of Mazdayasna faith, the Zoroaster dresses candidates up with a white shirt and a sash. Zoroastrian clergies spread their ideas through performances consisting of poetry and music. The religious position used to pass on from father to son. While the rituals and practices we pointed above belonged to the Mazdayasna faith, they still continue to be performed today among certain communities in Anatolia (Mustan Dönmez, 2006: 331).

The following verse of Niyazi Arslan Father in the study of *Rençber* on Alevism in Adıyaman has a theme based on the cult of fire:

#### Original Turkish Lyrics

Ateşledi Mervan ölüm fitili  
 Yezit oldu Hüseyin'in katili  
 Duyun Niyazi'yi garip sefili  
 Çöller dertli dertli İmam Hüseyin...  
 (Rençber, 2013: 17)

#### Translation

Marwan lit the fuse of death  
 Yazidi took Hussain's last breath  
 Hear Niyazi, that lonesome wretched  
 Deserts wail, in pain, 'Imam Hussain'...

*Cem* rituals, as can be seen in Figure 17, have been carried out by Alevi-Bektashi community in Adıyaman for hundreds of years. These rituals include practices performed using candlelight accompanied by *Zâkir* (the songster responsible for singing hymns in the dervish lodge). It is understood that various religious and political factors play a role in this practice. The use of candlelight is thought to be for concentration and representation of the ritual of burning *nafs* (desire, self, soul) as well as for ambient illumination.



**Figure 17.** Adıyaman/Gölbaşı Djemevi, (*Cemevi*) Djem (*Cem*) Ceremony with Symbolic Light, 2013.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7FZbTmPrMI>

## Conclusion

This study addressed in what way beliefs based on the cult of fire play a part in Adıyaman culture and music. Nimrod in the legends of King Nimrod, who is the symbol of Adıyaman, has been associated with fire. The Zoroastrianism-based cult of fire of Iranian origin as well as Sabianism, whose followers worship the sun and stars, play a huge role in the root of this association.

Not only can we see the reflection of the cult of fire on beliefs, legends, expressions and phrases of Adıyaman but also on scenes in the folk dances, folkloric clothing, religious and non-religious musical texts and practices. This study aimed to determine especially the cult of fire in music practices and musical texts. Within this context, the scenes and choreography performed in folk dances and the metaphors of fire in the narratives of religious or secular musical texts were found to be worth examining.

It is observed that the supplication and prayer to God are carried out by starting a fire and lighting candles and that this performance takes place in legends and scenes of folk dances and during religious rituals of different communities and musical performances. In the scenes of folk dances, it is observed that gourd and onion skins are set on fire in order to make sure that it will not rain especially during weddings and to avoid evil eye while candles are lit during religious rituals and musical performances.

It is also reported that phrases related to fire in non-religious musical texts are used as a metaphor of love, pain, light and some such concepts. In addition, the cult of fire in religious musical texts in the region is observed to be mostly present in the practices of Alevi and Assyrians, especially in the form of lighting candles at the beginning of rituals.

<sup>i</sup> 'Old lady' figure in the scene is thought to be associated with the expression of respect related to the cult of fire.

<sup>ii</sup> It is the name of a natural flower which grows in the region in March. This flower is also called "Nevroz Çiçeği" (The flower of newroz/ The flower of new year).

<sup>iii</sup> An open space where people have picnic or amuse themselves.

<sup>iv</sup> The findings obtained were quoted from the interview with Hüseyin HANOL dated 03.27.2016.

<sup>v</sup> The findings obtained were quoted from the interview with Mahmut ÇETİNKAYA dated 01.10.2016

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