

Semâ

and the Movement of the Universe



*Vakt-i Şerifler Hayrola,
Hayırlar Fethola,
Şerler Defola
(Gülbang)*



**THE TURKISH REPUBLIC GOVERNORSHIP OF KONYA
PROVINCIAL DIRECTORATE OF CULTURE AND TOURISM**



SEMÂ came out of the inspiration of the 13th century Muslim scholar, poet, and mystic, Mevlânâ Celaleddin Rumi (1207-1273). SEMÂ represents the true spiritual journey to maturity. It is like a mi'raj an "ascent" to heaven and a "return" to earth. Over the centuries, SEMÂ has become a part of Turkish beliefs, tradition, and history.

SEMÂ is made up of 7 sections; each section having a distinct meaning. From the point-of-view of science, we learn that: "Turning" is a fundamental condition of existence, that is, everything "turns".

A commonality between all things is the "turning" of protons and electrons that are inside the atoms which constitute every last structure of existence - from



the smallest particle up to the farthest star. Just as everything "turns", the human being also "turns" -unconsciously and naturally - with his "turning" (i.e., rotating and revolving) together with the world, with his coming from the ground and his "turning" (i.e., re-turning) to the ground, with the "turning" (i.e., circulation) of the blood that is in his body, with the "turnings" (i.e., rotations) that are present in the atoms that form the human being's structure. However, it is the intelligence (or mind) of the human that makes him superior and different from the other living creatures.

So you see, the "turning" SEMÂZEN also causes his mind - in unison with the SEMÂ - to participate in the common movements (i.e., "turnings") of existence.



SEMÂ is the "turning" of the human being towards hakikat (i.e., truth), elevating his mind with love, abandoning his nefis (i.e., ego); becoming annihilated in Hakk (i.e., God), and returning again to serve all of existence and creation with a new ruh (i.e., soul) on account of love and service, now as a mature person. The SEMÂZEN, by removing his hırka (i.e., black cloak), spiritually makes his way there - he rises to hakikat (i.e., to reality), to the eternal world, with his sikke (i.e., his tall hat which represents the tombstone of his nefis) that is on his head, and his tennure (i.e., his long, white dress-like garment) that is on him.

in this way, the SEMÂZEN is affirming Allah's unity, by outwardly symbolizing the numeral ONE (i.e., the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, elif, which is basically a straight line that both looks like and represents the number "one"), by crossing his arms, and when making SEMÂ, with his arms wide open, he turns his face toward his raised left hand with longing eyes, while his right hand is turned



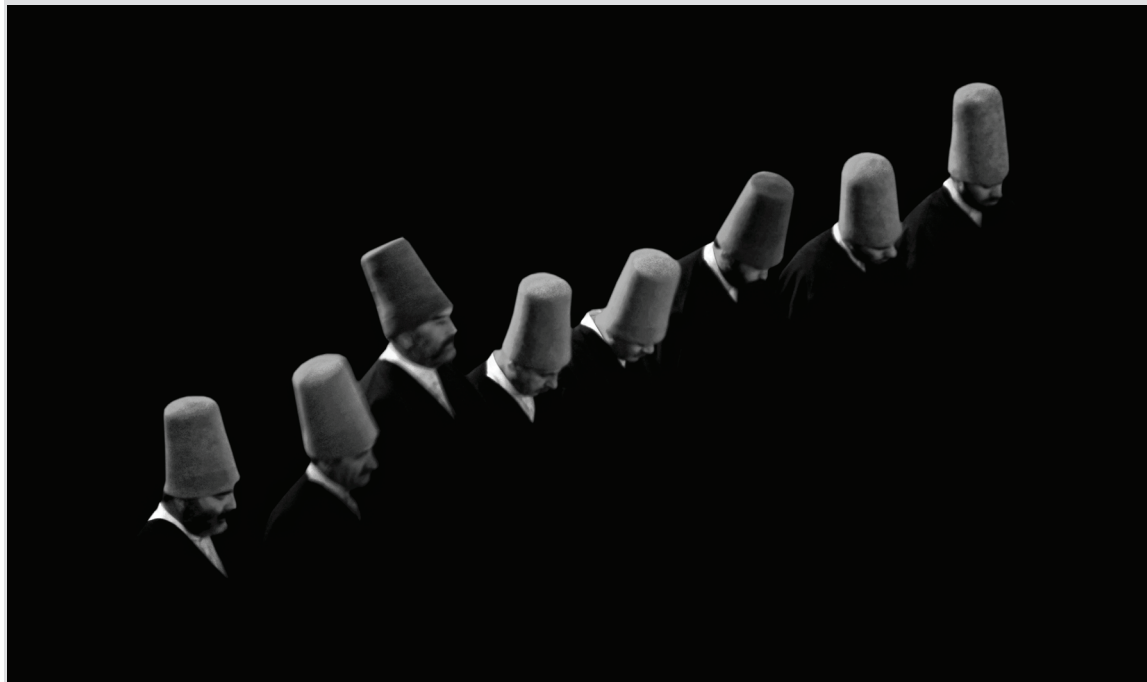
to the sky as if in prayer. The SEMÂZEN is receiving from Hakk (i.e., God) and is spreading it out to the people. By turning from right-to-left around his heart, all people, all of creation, every heart is embraced with affection and love.

The SEMÂ ceremony consists of 7 sections, every section having a distinct meaning:

First Section

It begins with a "na't" (i.e., eulogy) exalting our Prophet Muhammed (sas), who represents divine love. This is called the "Na't-ı Şerif" (i.e., the Sacred Na't or Noble Eulogy). To exalt our prophet is to exalt Allah who created everything, including all of the prophets that came prior to him.





Second Section

After this exaltation, the striking of a kudüm (i.e., drum) is heard. This beating represents the command "Kün!"; (i.e., "Be!") which came from Allah during the creation of the universe. (Yasin 36: 82).

Third Section

A ney taksim (i.e., an improvisation on the reed flute) is heard. It represents the "nefha-yı İlahiyye" (i.e., the Breath of God) which gives life to everything.



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Fourth Section

The Sultan Veled Devri. This is when the SEMÂZENS walk in a circle and give selâms (i.e., greetings) to each other three times. It is accompanied by a peşrev (i.e., a musical prelude). It is the selâm of one ruh (i.e., soul) to another soul which is hidden within form.

The SEMÂ ceremony consists of 4 Selâms. The SEMÂZEN, by removing his black hurka which he is wearing, is symbolic of his rising to hakikat. With his arms still crossed, he represents the Arabic letter elif, and testifies to the Oneness of Allah.

He then obtains permission to enter the SEMÂ by kissing the Şeyh Efendi's hand ...

... and the SEMÂ begins.





The 1st Selâm is the human being's perception of his own service and of his glorious Creator as he rises to hakikat and knowledge.

The 2nd Selâm is the human's being's total amazement in the presence of Allah's power, as he witnesses the grandeur and the order that is in His creation.

The 3rd Selâm is the human's sacrificing his mind to "love" and the transformation of his feeling of obligation and amazement to "love". This is complete surrender. It is union in Allah. It is annihilation in the Beloved! In İslâm, it is called "Fenâfillah" (i.e., to "die before you die" - to disappear into Allah). However, in İslâm, the highest level is the level of service.

The 4th Selâm, therefore, is the human's completion of his spiritual journey. It is his return to service to his duty that is in creation as one who is resigned to his destiny. The Şeyh Efendi (i.e., the spiritual leader and guide) and the Semâzenbaşî (i.e., the head of the SEMÂZENS) take part in the "turning" of this Selâm. At this point, the SEMÂZEN is in a state of joy having had faith in the Prophets, the Books (i.e., the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel and the Kur'an), the angels, and Allah. As it says in the Kur'an, "Âmene'r Resûlü", that is, "The Messenger has believed ..". (Bakara 2:285) In a state of bliss, he perceives the reasons of creation and the Divine commands. He has conquered his conceit and his ego. He has followed the commands of our Prophet (sas) - "Die before you die" and in the final verses of Fecr: "O soul that is confident and assured! Return to your Lord, He being pleased with you and you being pleased with Him! Come into my very own community of servants! Come into Paradise with them!" (89: 27-30) The SEMÂZEN has been drowned in his bliss.





The Sixth Section of the SEMÂ ceremony continues with the reciting of Bakara: "The East and the West belong to Allah. To whatever direction you turn, the Face of Allah is there. Because Allah is Limitless and Wise." (2:115)

The Seventh Section of the SEMÂ ceremony comes to an end with a prayer for the safety of our government and a recitation of the Fatiha (i.e., the opening chapter of the Kur'an) for the souls of all believers, martyrs, and all the Prophets. After the SEMÂ ceremony, the Dedes (i.e., spiritual elders) and the Dervishes, so as not to speak with anyone, withdraw silently to their hücre (i.e., private "cells") for tefekkür (i.e., contemplation).



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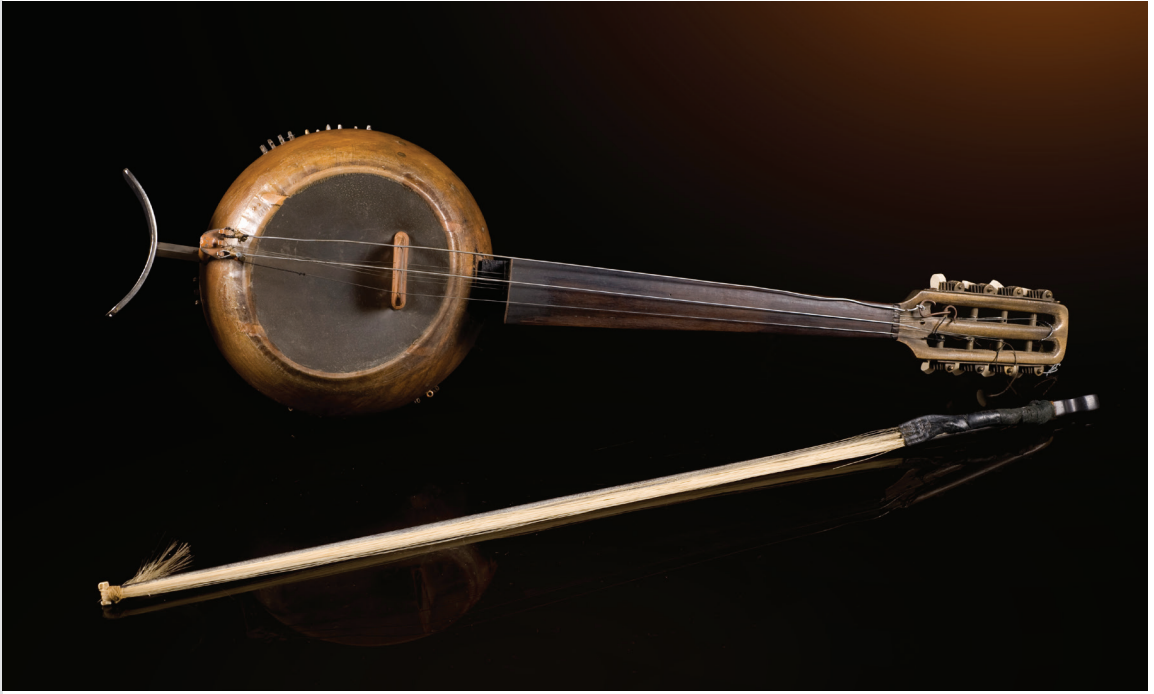
*Aşk Olsun,
Aşkımız Cemâl Olsun,
Cemâliniz Nûr Olsun,
Nûrunuz Ayn Olsun...*

(Mevlevî Selâmı)





The Instruments Used in the Mevlevi Music



The REBAB

Its body consists of a halved coconut shell with either thin leather or the membrane of a cattle's heart stretched across the opening. Protruding from the body is a rather cylindrical neck with wooden tuning pegs at one end. It has a foot stand, or holder, made of wood or metal. The strings hold the bridge in place over the stretched skin of the body. The sound of the rebab is produced by moving the bow hairs over the strings. The strings are also made of hairs.

It produces touching emotional tones.



The NEY

The Ney is made up of a special type of yellow-colored reed consisting of tough fibers and nine naturally joined segments. It grows abundant in warm moist climates. The choicest varieties are to be found growing along the Nile, Asi and Ceyhan Rivers. What is usually the case is that in a reed bed of a thousand reeds, perhaps only one single reed is suitable for producing the Ney. Any dye-stuff or wax is not used in Ney production with a mind to preserving its natural attributes. A Ney can remain in service for well up to 200-300 years with even a gradual increase in playability provided that it is well protected and properly maintained. A Ney's color may darken in the course of time, and if this is the case, it is considered more precious.

The Ney is the symbol of the "Perfect Man" who has matured by passing through many phases of purification. The Ney, discolored, hollowed out and bored through with holes, pines for its reed bed. While pining, it mournfully wails its innermost secrets to all mankind. These secrets are divine revelations about the love. For this reason, the Ney is deemed.



The KUDÛM

Made of beaten copper, the kudûm consists of two drums, each 28- 30 cm in diameter and 16-18 cm in height. Tanned leather or camel leather thinned to a thickness of 1-2 mm are stretched over each drum with the help of ropes. The kudûm is tuned by tightening or loosening the ropes. The accented right-handed drum taps are called "tek", and the weaker left-handed taps are "dum". The auxiliary taps into which rhythms are subdivided are called "velvele".

The kudûm is played with two wooden sticks called "zahme". These are made of hard and heavy wood and are roughly 24-28cm in length. A person who plays kudûm is called a "kudûmzen". The smaller drum of the kudûm is called "nakkare", and the bigger one is "kos"; and the two are used in Mehter Music (the band music of the Ottoman military).

The Mevlevi Sufis called the kudûm "kudûm-i serif" (the sacred kudûm), thus regarding the kudûm as sacred, as the Ney was regarded as sacred.

In a poem attributed to Mevlana, the Ney and the Kudûm are mentioned as such:
"The reed is dry, the drumstick's dry, and the leather stretched over the dry copper drum is dry, So from where does this Friend's call come?"





The BENDIR and DAIRE

Usually made from walnut wood, the frame is 30-60 cm in diameter and 6-8 cm wide. The skin, less than 1 mm thick, is stretched across it. Usually camel, cattle, goat and sheep leathers are preferred.

Like the other instruments in Tekke Music, the bendir is assigned a sacred status with the name "bendir-i serif", or "mahzar-i serif" (the sacred bendir, or mahzar, respectively). The bendir is to be played with the hands, with one hand holding it from below. It is held above waist level, and never placed on the knee or between the legs. It is played with the fingers, palm and backside of the free hand, which strike, the skin at varying angles and with varying strength. The result is such that the skin is either struck or brushed. The free hand can be accompanied by the fingers of the hand holding the instrument.

Those who play bendir are called "bendirzen", while those who play the def are "defzen".



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The HALILE

The discs of this percussive instrument, resembling pot covers, are played by either clashing the two discs head-on, or by sliding them across each other. The discs are pierced at their centers where leather handles are tied. It is possible to produce high or low pitched sounds which are either staccato or sustained.

The cymbals used in Mevlevi Music, smaller than those used in Mehter Music, are known as "halile". Halile players are called "halilezen".



