AHMET KAYA'S POPULARITY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND CONNECTIONS WITH IDENTITY

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Ahmet Kaya is a significant, vital and a critical character in our nearby musical history, although he has a leftist disposition, he has been accepted and liked by a lot of people from countless different social classes of Turkey. However, later than happenings took place in Televised Annual Music Awards Ceremony in 1999; he gained a new identity of his own. All these changes can be seen –or maybe proven, by looking at his variety of listeners. This article would be examining reasons why young people listens Ahmet Kaya. First of all, biography of Ahmet Kaya would be explored briefly.

Short Biography of Ahmet Kaya

In her book, Ferzende Kaya (2004) draws a detailed picture of Ahmet Kaya's life. If a brief compilation from her work should be made; Ahmet Kaya was born in 1957 in Malatya (in Eastern Turkey) with Kurdish originated father and Turkish originated mother. He first started to music with playing *bağlama*[1] when he was in primary school. His family moved to Istanbul when he was fifteen. He was working as street seller and a worker. He started music in a systematic way in '*Halk Bilimleri Derneği*'[2]. This was also a starting point for him to take part in rising leftist movements in 1970s of Turkey. He was first arrested in 1977. After the military coup in 1980, he arrested again and stayed in prison for a while. He made his first album *Ağlama Bebeğim* (Don't Cry My Baby) in 1985 (Kaya 2004).

In February 10, 1999 he was awarded as 'musician of the year' in Televised Annual Music Awards Ceremony and he told about his idea of singing a song in Kurdish Language and making a video for it. However, he was exposed to aggressive behavior by the people attaining the organization. After that night, a campaign against him was started in the press and he went to France in June 1999. In 2000 he died of a heart attack in Paris.

Ahmet Kaya made 18 albums and besides traditional folk songs, most of the songs are composed by him (Kaya 2004:337). These songs have been widely listened in Turkey and he has become a popular figure. In 1994, his album *Şarkılarım Dağlara*[3] has been sold more than half a million and he was in the top list of that year (Kaya 2004:205).

Ahmet Kaya's Music

In order to understand Ahmet Kaya's music better, first of all, we have to understand the genre called *özgün müzik*[4] due to the fact that his music is generally categorized under the branch of *özgün müzik*. Prof. Karahasanoğlu tells a little about *özgün müzik* in her article named Gestures of Filiation and Affiliation in Turkish Popular Music (Karahasanoğlu and Skoog 2009:61) She says; "the artists involved in what would eventually be termed özgün müzik, or "original music," wrote […] overtly political lyrics. The performers of this genre drew less from European sources than their peers who performed Anadolu Rock (Anatolian Rock), and more from Anatolian folk traditions, but artists still felt free to freely adapt and modify traditional styles, for example, combining instruments that would traditionally have been separate. Some of the most well known

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1 Turkish folk lute
2 Folklore Association
3 My songs to mountains
4 Means original music

performers of özgün müzik include Ahmet Kaya, Zülfü Livaneli[5], and the ensemble Grup Yorum[6]. Many of these artists had a strong leftist agenda and, as a consequence, their lives were greatly impacted by the coup of 1980; while some continued to perform, many were silenced".

However, Sinan Gündoğar in his book about protest music in Turkey initializes the concept of *özgün müzik* with Ahmet Kaya moreover he goes one step further and defines *özgün müzik* as a project of Ahmet Kaya and Hasan Hüseyin Demirel[7]. He says; "Ahmet Kaya's music is highly influenced by the (protest) music before 1980. This is because, Ruhi Su's[8] tendency to folk songs and usage of bağlama; Zülfü Livaneli's usage of bağlama and westernized musical infrastructure; and arabesk which is listened by millions of citizens can be accepted as main sources of *özgün müzik*. As a project of Ahmet Kaya and Hasan Hüseyin Demirel, it is the second half of 1980s *özgün müzik* carries the priority of bağlama and it can easily be sensed" (Gündoğar 2004:212-213).

However, İren Özgür[9], in her article about *arabesk*[10], mentions name of Ahmet Kaya among *arabesk* singers and characterizes Ahmet Kaya as *arabesk* performers who have rejected the incorporation of pop (Özgür 2006). Furthermore, Sibel Bozdoğan[11] and Reşat Kasaba[12] define Ahmet Kaya among *arabesk* singers too. They say; *arabesk* continued to produce protest singers, most notably Ahmet Kaya, who defined his music as 'the opposition of emotions'. Kaya appealed most strongly to marginalized youth, the 'lads' excluded from the dominant culture. The media began to talk of his music as 'revolutionary' *arabesk* just as it called new versions 'Islamist' and 'nationalist' *arabesks*. Common to all of them was performance style (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997:221).

In brief, Ahmet Kaya's music stays at the interception point of *özgün müzik* and *arabesk* plus it took its roots from Turkish folk music. His listeners are generally young people (Özgür 2006), his albums were among best sellers (Kaya 2004) and even nine years after his death, his unreleased albums and albums made for memory of him are still in the market.

Methodology

It is a fact that, one of the major problems with such studies is related to reliability and validity. Furthermore, insufficient reliable and valid data may cause entirely different results than the actual one. Auerbach & Silverstein, in their book tell about reliability and validity as; "Reliability and validity are important criteria for evaluating quantitative research because they are intended to assure the reader that the measuring scales are objective. Objectivity is difficult to define precisely; generations of philosophers have devoted their lives to the task with no end to their labors in sight. For our purposes, however, the definition is straightforward: Objectivity simply means the absence of subjectivity. If our measuring scales are objective then we are studying the phenomenon as it really is, excluding our subjective biases about what we would like it to be... What is the connection between objectivity, reliability, and validity? We begin considering this question by defining reliability. The way to determine whether a scale is reliable is to administer it twice. If the numerical score you get from the second administration of the scale is the same, or

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5 Turkish singer and he is one of the most important protest and folk music singers in Turkey
6 A leftist protest music group in Turkey.
7 A leftist poet in Turkey.
8 Turkish singer and he is one of the most important protest and folk music singers in Turkey
9 Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, UK
10 Means Arabic style. It is used to refer to a specific genre in Turkish music.
11 Lecturer at the GSD and at Bilgi University
12 Adjunct Professor in University of Washington

almost the same, as the numerical score you got from the first administration, then the measure is reliable. Conversely, if the numerical scores on the first and second administrations are wildly different, then the scale is not reliable…The reliability of a scale is a necessary condition for the scale to be objective. […] However, the reliability of a scale is not a sufficient condition for the scale to be objective. […] For a scale to be objective it must not only be reliable, it must also be valid. A scale is defined as valid if it measures what it claims to measure. Thus, a scale of satisfaction with fatherhood is valid if it measures how satisfied fathers really are, as distinct from how satisfied they say they are. To accomplish the study, measurable and reliable is needed; and then a technique is designed with the intention of collecting measurable and comparative data from the field. Ahmet Kaya's listeners listening habits can easily be understood only by what do they listen and in order to do that, popular mp3 download sites in Turkey is examined, one of them is selected and necessary "fieldwork" is conducted" (2003:78-79).

According to a statistics conducted by TUIK (Turkish Statistics Association); in 2009, 59.4 % of people in Turkey aged between 16 to 24 and 45.1 % of people aged between 25 to 34 uses internet. Additionally, in year 2009 the 56.3% of internet users of Turkey use internet to download game, music and film. (TUİK 2009) Depending on this statistics, mp3 download data can be taken as a data source and measurement criterion.

Mp3-Sharing Sites

The term 'mp3-sharing site' refers to a web site which people share links of files contain songs or music albums. Because most of shared files are in mp3 format, these sites are called 'mp3-sharing site'. It is not easy to access to this kinds of web sites in US or Europe compared to Turkey. For the reason that most of mp3 sharing sites are located in abroad from Turkey and broadcast in Turkish, local authorities of mentioned countries do not interfere these web sites. This fact makes Turkey a paradise of mp3 sharing.

There are innumerous numbers of mp3 sharing sites broadcasting in Turkish. They can easily be found by a search on Google. However, we confront another problem here that which site(s) we should take into consideration? To be exact, which sites are mostly used in Turkey? This problem is solved by getting statistics from Alexa the Web Information Company. They explain how they collect data as; "Alexa's traffic rankings are based on the usage patterns of Alexa Toolbar users and data collected from other, diverse sources over a rolling 3 month period. A site's ranking is based on a combined measure of reach and page views. Reach is determined by the number of unique Alexa users who visit a site on a given day. Page views are the total number of Alexa user URL requests for a site" (Alexa 2009: web).

And in their blog (Alexa Blog 2007), the details of 'diverse sources' are explained as "cookies (small text files stored on your computer when you enter to a web site), log-in (they track login records of visitors), crawlers (crawler is a computer program that browses the World Wide Web in a methodical, automated manner), and raw logs (logs or some embedded JavaScript bug on your page that logs the visits with a 3rd party service) etc." This fact can be interpreted as, (I don't discuss is it ethical or not) Alexa Company records nearly every movement that internet users do on the internet. As a result, Alexa statistics can be used as an indicator of visitors to a web site.

I made a search on the Google with keywords *mp3 albüm paylaşım* (mp3 album sharing) and I have found a number of sites. Then I checked their Alexa ranks and the table below are created;

Site	World	Turkey
www.bizimmp3indir.com	215,135	4,297
www.asimp3.net	423,461	8,549
www.yenialbum.com	109,283	2,720
www.cayburg.net	28,531	447
www.bidilektut.com	1,006,920	16,042
www.dostezgiler.com	11,054,523	< 20,000
www. dozaciwanan.com	281,795	11,489
www. hepsibeles.net	125,557	2,030
www.metalium.org	79,837	1,177

Table 1. Mp3 sharing sites and their visiting rank[13]

The column named 'world' indicates that the site is which the most visited site in the world and the column named 'Turkey' indicates that the site is which the most visited site in Turkey. As a result, www.cayburg.net is undoubtedly the most visited mp3-sharing site in Turkey and it can be used as our main data source. <http://www.cayburg.net> is a web site built on forum software and its main focus is sharing albums. They have a great range of albums from different genres (both popular and non-popular) listened in Turkey. They have 253,680 members[14]. Before going into the data I am collected, I want to explain some key points about the subculture mp3 sharing sites.

'Rep' Power

In mp3 sharing sites, once someone shares an album, the others write messages saying "thank you". This is called *rep vermek* (giving *rep*)[15]. Concept of *rep* is important since it indicates how many people downloaded this download and this fact is accepted as the power of download. In the site that will be examined for this study does not display the download link until the member 'gives *rep*' and they have a separate button to 'thank'. This constraint is important, because we can keep list of which user downloaded what album by looking at *reps* under a certain download link.

In this study, links to Ahmet Kaya's albums are investigated in detail and users 'giving *rep*' are determined first. Then non-active ones are eliminated and active one's listening habits are determined by following their 'rep's to other artists.

This method has a disadvantage as well. The listening frequency cannot be accessed; just the names of artists they listen can be reached. Namely, only the point we are capable of know is that they download the album but the information about how many times they listen to the album cannot be reached. However, advantages of the method are more than disadvantages. First of all, this method gives real and the actual listening habit, that is to say, it is more than asking people what they listen; it in fact illustrates which artists do they listen. Secondly, it is a time consuming method of data collecting and this fact is also important aspect for a researcher.

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13 Statistics are taken in November 12, 2009
14 Statistics are taken in November 12, 2009
15 *Rep* is short form of reply.

Observations

Thirty samples are selected among Ahmet Kaya listeners. Thirty samples are selected since, this is because of the fact that we need at least 30 samples for normal distribution sampling theory. (Wilburn 1984) That is to say, thirty can be considered as a minimum size of a maximum time consuming sampling. During sampling, highly attentive users are selected. Users who have more than fifty messages are selected and this rate can be accepted an enough amount to illustrate that selected user is attentive. Users and what genres do they listen is displayed on the table below as percentages;

No	User	City	Sex	Pop	Rock	Arabesk	Özgün	THM	TSM	Ethnic	Other
1	berat4963	-	Male	0,00	0,00	0,00	**60,00**	10,00	0,00	30,00	0,00
2	karadogan79	Çanakkale	Male	40,00	0,00	6,67	0,00	**46,67**	6,67	0,00	0,00
3	kurtova1071	İstanbul	-	21,43	4,76	2,38	11,90	**26,19**	14,29	0,00	19,05
4	EŞREF	Diyarbakır	Male	20,00	3,33	6,67	3,33	28,33	1,67	**35,00**	1,67
5	Sanjap	Muğla	Male	0,00	6,25	0,00	18,75	31,25	0,00	**43,75**	0,00
6	Nesch89	Mardin	Male	42,86	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	7,14	**50,00**	0,00
7	selami sari	Yozgat	Male	3,23	9,68	0,00	22,58	**54,84**	3,23	3,23	3,23
8	Multivizyon	Denizli	Male	**40,91**	0,00	27,27	4,55	22,73	2,27	0,00	2,27
9	Benyaaa	Manisa	Male	23,40	0,00	6,38	2,13	4,26	0,00	**63,83**	0,00
10	narter06	Ankara	-	**32,56**	0,00	25,58	13,95	16,28	0,00	9,30	2,33
11	Karagul	-	-	9,52	0,00	2,38	15,48	**39,29**	1,19	27,38	4,76
12	metrix	Van	Male	21,88	0,00	9,38	15,63	0,00	0,00	**43,75**	9,38
13	ALTINORDU	İzmir	Male	**51,52**	3,03	27,27	12,12	0,00	0,00	0,00	6,06
14	dilayla	İzmir	Female	37,50	8,33	4,17	**41,67**	4,17	0,00	0,00	4,17
15	renklerle	Antep	Male	23,08	0,00	7,69	**30,77**	7,69	7,69	7,69	15,38
16	safsata	-	-	**25,00**	0,00	0,00	8,33	54,17	4,17	0,00	8,33
17	kosak	Malatya	Male	0,00	0,00	**54,55**	0,00	36,36	0,00	0,00	9,09
18	hayalet232	İzmir	Male	**30,99**	19,72	15,49	12,68	7,04	7,04	0,00	7,04
19	zero22	Hatay	Male	**40,00**	10,00	0,00	0,00	**40,00**	10,00	0,00	0,00
20	durmaz	-	-	20,00	0,00	0,00	20,00	**60,00**	0,00	0,00	0,00
21	çirkin kral	Ağrı	Male	**25,84**	4,49	5,62	12,36	24,72	2,25	16,85	7,87
22	ONuR	Eskişehir	Male	38,10	9,52	19,05	4,76	19,05	0,00	9,52	0,00
23	larouxx81	Ankara	Male	36,36	0,00	36,36	18,18	9,09	0,00	0,00	0,00
24	billard	Viana	Male	4,49	0,00	0,00	10,11	3,37	0,00	**80,90**	1,12
25	denizkartal	Ankara	Male	**66,67**	0,00	25,00	0,00	8,33	0,00	0,00	0,00
26	dr.pcx	Ankara	Male	28,30	3,77	15,09	16,98	16,98	0,00	15,09	3,77
27	kaann_cimbom	Nevşehir	Male	**57,14**	10,71	10,71	7,14	10,71	0,00	0,00	3,57
28	SevdaTreni	İstanbul	Male	30,56	1,39	15,28	6,94	36,11	4,17	2,78	2,78
29	golevez	Zonguldak	Male	11,54	7,69	0,00	3,85	**30,77**	7,69	0,00	38,46
30	jelibon	Kırklareli	Male	**55,56**	11,11	11,11	5,56	5,56	0,00	5,56	5,56

Table 2. Listening Habits of Ahmet Kaya Listeners by Genre

When categorizing artists, the need for the work has been considered as well and rarely seen categories has been collected under 'other', first of all. Secondly, a category called 'ethnic' collects genres in an ethnic language –generally it is Kurdish, but in two samples, Circassian and Romani (Gypsy language) songs are branched under ethnic. Furthermore, the category 'ethnic' mostly cover songs in folk and protest genre. There are only a few other genres. However, artists staying at the interception of *özgün* and ethnic are categorized under the branch of *özgün*.

The first and a comprehensible observation is that the assortment of listeners changes in relation to geography. Particularly in western Turkey (excluding big cities) Ahmet Kaya is listened by people listens *arabesk*, pop, folk music etc. However in eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey, most of Ahmet Kaya listeners listens 'ethnic' –mainly Kurdish, music. My claim here is that listening to Ahmet Kaya for youth from Eastern regions of Turkey is a way of expressing their identity.

Music and Identity

Happenings occurred before –or brought about, to exile of Ahmet Kaya caused him to gain a 'Kurdish' identity in addition to his 'protest' individuality. Although he has never sung a Kurdish song and even he can't speak Kurdish language, due to the happenings at televised annual music awards ceremony in February 1999, he has been accepted and protected by pan-Kurds and suddenly he is declared as a 'Kurdish artist' and a 'Kurdish hero'. This actuality had a price too. Turkish media started to propagate against him, and his guilty past was made obvious. His picture of a concert in front of a Kurdistan map is distributed by *Hürriyet*[16], but none of the media would tell about the fact that the court decided that the photograph was not original and the case dropped after his death (Kaya 2004:255). This propaganda suddenly took effect. The court started an inquiry about him and he was obliged to escape France. There, in France, a new process is started for him. He found himself in the midst of pan-Kurds in Europe. After all, besides pan-Kurds, no one was defending him anymore and as a result he radicalized his protest character and approached to pan-Kurdish expressions.

The question of Kurdish identity is difficult to understand. Laber & Whitman in their book explains it as; "Turkish government officials claim that there is no discrimination against Turks of Kurdish background, pointing to Kurds who have served in government or in Parliament. And, in fact, Kurds who think of themselves chiefly as Turks appear to be accepted as such" (1988:7).

Broughton, Ellingham, and Trillo (1999) explain importance of music for Kurdish society as "Music is integral to Kurdish identity -and there are few places on earth where it has more meaning, as an assertion and expression of a culture. Historically, too, it has a central role in Kurdish society. In a land of mountains and high plateau, lying between the Black Sea, the Iranian Plateau and the steppes of Mesopotamia, music has for centuries been the means of oral transmission of chronicles, epics and lyrical poetry. In a non-country, whose language and literature is suppressed, everything is sung and put to music to be committed to memory, to be passed down" (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo 1999: 378-384).

Concentrated on the data collected from the site (which can be seen on Table 2), in regions except southeastern Turkey (namely Çanakkale, Muğla, Denizli, İzmir, Nevşehir, Kırklareli etc.), Ahmet Kaya listeners are frequently people listening pop, *arabesk*, folk music or protest. As mentioned above, Ahmet Kaya's music can be seen as a kind of *arabesk* and it has countless themes from Turkish Folk Music. As a result, Ahmet Kaya listeners who don't own an identity of

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16 A top selling newspaper in Turkey

'being a Kurd' is just people listening to domestic popular genres. However, in eastern regions of Turkey especially places where Kurds are predominated, Ahmet Kaya's new 'Kurdish identity' affected listening habits of people. In Diyarbakır, Van or Mardin listening habits of Ahmet Kaya listeners are highly correlated with Kurdish singing singers, furthermore most of these singers cannot come to Turkey even today due to their songs political content.

An idea about this statement can be developed and can be said that this fact is not related to identity, this fact is because people in eastern regions mostly speak Kurdish and they want to listen in their own language. Objection here is that in eastern Turkey, not all of people share Kurdish identity regarding they are Kurdish originated or not. For instance, a listener from Ağrı (east Turkey) listens pop more than Kurdish songs. Another example is that a listener from Antep (south-east Turkey) listens *özgün* and pop and one from Malatya (east Turkey) listens *arabesk* and Turkish folk music more than Kurdish songs. On the other hand, a listener from Manisa (western Turkey) listens 63.8 percent[17] and another from Vienna listens 80.9 percent Kurdish. Again this fact can be explained with identity. Because there are not inhibited Kurds in Manisa earlier than twenty years, although it is Turkey, Manisa can be accepted as a Diaspora for Kurdish people. Listening habits of the mentioned listeners shows that he is Kurd and our data shows that he is a strict Kurdish listener than Kurds living in their native town.

In his book about Turks in Germany and their music, Martin Greve says; "The concept of migrating culturally different places occurs in many different edges of daily cultural life. Habits, customs, traditions and little fears about life, which determines whole life and is occurred in a small village in Anatolia, are suddenly obliged to be eliminated and accepted. Performing these unconscious customs and traditions are being nearly inevitable. In immigrant families, during regional customs and traditions, for example songs and folk dances are transferred to next generations, countryman associations' (of Turks in Germany) great events turn into conscious performing. This figurative representation overrides in identity claims and discussions like Turkish or Kurdish nationalism, Islam, especially Alevism. These kinds of social identities mark the articulation process of every form of music and especially making a whole unit with Diaspora's music life. Relating music to these kinds of social identities, no doubt, stays against all kinds of effects and aims rather than music and sees music just as an art". (Greve 2003:204)

The same fact is also acceptable for the Kurds living in Manisa or Vienna. Although, it is a way of socializing for people living in their homeland; it reproduces collective identity for people living abroad from their homeland as well.

Conclusion

In conclusion, music is more than organizing sounds and silences (Smith 1997). It is a way of socialization and a key factor creating a platform to generate identity. This fact is also related with the character of the artist, social acceptances and the way of comprehending the world around. Furthermore, identity creating process does not have to depend on real parameters. These pieces of evidence are proven in Ahmet Kaya case too. For instance, for pan-Kurdish movement music is important factor due to the fact that music has an important

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[17] It is obvious that he is Kurdish originated person living in western Anatolia

role in Kurds daily life. Even though Ahmet Kaya has never sung a Kurdish song, just because of his expressions parallel to the expressions of pan-Kurdish movement, he is announced as a 'Kurdish artist' and a 'Kurdish hero'. This propaganda's natural results are Ahmet Kaya is listened in eastern regions mostly because of his newly gained Kurdish identity while in other regions of Turkey, he is listened just as an *arabesk* or folk music singer.

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