

## **Heavy Metal in a Muslim Context: The Rise of the Turkish Metal Underground**

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(Draft – please do not quote)

*Today, local heavy metal scenes can be found throughout the Middle East as in almost any other region of the world. Though still marginal in terms of numbers and public attention, the metal scene in the region, particularly in urban centres in Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel, has developed its own infrastructures consisting of bands, magazines, independent labels, distributors, festivals, and bars. The emergence of local metal scenes has taken place within a wider context of globalization. Particularly, the advent of the internet and the evolution of technological means to convert sounds and images into digital data files that can be easily send along a world wide data highway, significantly facilitated the global availability of metal music and culture.*

*The following pages provide an insight into the emergence of rock and metal culture in Turkey. After a brief introduction into the development of Anatolian rock music in the late 1960s and 1970s, the paper will shed light on the rise of the Turkish metal underground after the military coup d'état of 1980. Due to economic and political hardship, the dissemination of metal music and culture depended very much on informal networks (tape trading, street sellers, fanzines, distros). The Turkish public, however, perceived the invasion of the public sphere by young rockers and metalheads as a potential threat to prevalent concepts of morality.*

Key Words: Turkey, Islam, Anatolian Rock, moral panic

“(…) The pull of Islam seems to be strong enough, even outside the Middle East, to preclude metal from getting a foothold among Moslem youth.”<sup>1</sup> Or so assumed American sociologist Deena Weinstein in her book of fifteen years ago, *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology*, about the relation between metal and Islam. In all fairness to Weinstein, since the time of her research enormous changes by way of technical and communication innovations have aided in the spread of heavy metal music and culture all over the globe. Nevertheless, it must be questioned why particularly Islam is supposed to serve as a force that somehow precludes youth from entering heavy metal. However, Weinstein ignored the fact that as far back as the mid-1960s at least Turkey has had an indigenous rock tradition.

### 1. Anadolu Rock

The advent of rock music in Turkey dates back to the mid 1960s and coincides with the emergence of rock music and the hippie movement in North America and Western Europe. At the time, internationally-popular bands such as the Rolling Stones, Yes, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, or Deep Purple began to influence the sound of Turkish musicians. Under this influence and based upon the effects of Kemalist music reforms, Turkey saw the development of an indigenous rock tradition that is generally denoted by the term “*Anadolu Rock*” (Anatolian rock).

Turkey attained its independence in 1923, after a long period of war and foreign occupation had caused the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. Under the presidency of Mustafa Kemal, who was later bestowed the honorary title “*Atatürk*” (Father of the Turks), the country’s new political elite initiated a revolution from above, bringing a radical rupture with the past. The Kemalist model of modernity aimed at eradicating the old Ottoman order and building a new one, free from the traditionalist spirit of the past.

In the course of building a modern, Europe-oriented nation state, the Kemalist government enacted a bundle of wide-ranging reforms. Besides abolishing the Sultanate (1 November 1922), replacing the Arabic alphabet in favour of the Latin alphabet (1 November 1928), removing the constitutional provision which designated Islam as the state religion (9 April 1928), and granting equal civil rights to male and female citizens (17 February 1926) – including the right for women to vote and hold office (5 December 1935) -, the reformers initiated a modernisation of Turkish music.

The idea of incorporating music into the process of modernisation and nation building was based upon the ideological concepts of Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), one of the intellectual fathers of Turkish nationalism. In his most influential work *The Principles of Turkism (Türkçülüğün Esasları)* of 1923, he advocated for inventing a unique form of Turkish national music that would strengthen Turkish national identity and place Turkish music on the same “civilisational” level with European music traditions.<sup>2</sup>

Gökalp’s idea was driven by the distinction he made between the concepts of culture and civilisation. Accordingly, Anatolian folk music (*halk müziği*) represented the essence of Turkish culture, while European classical music with its elaborate harmonic techniques symbolised the pinnacle of modern civilisation. Consequently, a modernisation of Turkish music could only be achieved by adopting European music standards. With this in mind, he proposed a synthesis of Anatolian and European music traditions.

To realise this aim meant to break with previous music traditions. As a result, the old Ottoman music institutions were either reformed or closed and new music institutions modelled on European music conservatories began to be established. Parallel to the institutional reforms, the Turkish state decided to invite foreign composers to lecture at its newly-established music

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academies and to send talented musicians abroad in order to study at European music conservatories. Briefly speaking, the Kemalist “music revolution,” though it did not succeed in eliminating Ottoman music traditions, initiated musical innovation and heterogeneity. The introduction of European classical instruments, the adoption of the European octave system in addition to the Anatolian 24 or 17-tone system, the new possibilities of polyphonic music, and the advent of new forms of musical performance such as opera, orchestra, or different kinds of music ensembles gave creative impetus to the Turkey’s musical landscape and finally paved the way for the emergence of rock music.

Today, we can speak of the four fathers of Anatolian rock music, namely Erkin Koray (b. 1941), Cem Karaca (1945-2004), Barış Manço (1943-1999), and the band Moğollar (f. 1967). All of them started their careers in Istanbul in the mid-1960s. They were the sons of Turkish middle class families and belonged to the first generation of musicians that had been affected by Kemalist musical and educational reforms from their childhood days. Not only did they receive their education from some of the country’s most prestigious international high schools,<sup>3</sup> but they grew up in an environment that favoured European classical music over Anatolian music. Within school and family they were socialised into European classical and American rock music. In the case of Erkin Koray and Cem Karaca, both became familiar with Anatolian music not before they had already started their musical careers.

*Anadolu Rock* embodies the synthesis of modern rock and Anatolian folk music. Electric guitars and bass, drums and rock beats meet Anatolian melodies and instruments such as *bağlama* (a fretless string instrument) or *ney* (reed-pipe). Early after the advent of pop and rock music, Turkish musicians began experimenting - in particular with the new technical possibilities of modern music. Modelled on the technical facilities of the electric guitar, they created the *elektro saz* (or *elektro bağlama*), thus reflecting a general tendency of amplifying musical instruments. The lyrics of the Anatolian rock scene were predominantly in Turkish, although a number of musicians recorded songs in English and French as well. For the inexperienced listener, many of the early tracks of Turkish rock music may sound quite traditional. This might be attributed to an untrained ear, but it is also due to the fact that rock influences remained in the background still.

The Turkish music revolution was not only a musical revolution. That is to say, Turkish musicians did not solely appropriate the sonic, but also the visual representations of rock music. As a result, Turkey saw long-haired men with “wild” beards, jeans, and leather jackets appear on stage for the very first time. Their deviant appearance and behaviour was perceived by many as a provocation and threat to moral values.

## **2. Turkish Metal**

In the streets of Istanbul, young metalheads became visible for the first time in the mid 1980s. Their presence caused manifold controversies among the Turkish public. Due to their deviant appearance and behaviour, they were mostly perceived as an epitome of moral subversiveness: long hair, odd beards, black clothes, and the habit of drinking lots of beer came as a challenge to traditional notions of morality. Countless media reports depicted metal as a threat to Turkey's national and religious identity. Although most of these reports - including accounts on Satanism, suicide pacts, and perverted sexual practices - were highly imaginative, metalheads were indeed violating particularly Islamic traditions: Having extra-martial relationships, considering the drinking of alcohol as an integral part of their life style, and deliberately seeking distance from religious practices in everyday life (e.g. daily prayers, attending religious ceremonies, wearing the headscarf, fasting during Ramadan, etc.) are indicators that Muslimness is not a relevant category for most of them. Indeed, they regard themselves mostly in a secular tradition that needs to be defended in the wake of Islamic revivalism. In that sense, their often anti-religious and anti-traditionalist attitudes fit well into Turkey's Kemalist world view.

Throughout the 1980s, access to metal music and culture remained highly limited. In the years following the military coup d'état of 1980, neither albums, nor magazines, nor instruments, nor any other kind of metal-related accessories were available on the Turkish market. Import taxes, the devaluation of the Turkish Lira, and a general decrease of purchasing power made western European and American music imports almost unaffordable to Turkish customers. It was not until the mid-1980s that a small number of internationally popular heavy metal albums were licensed to Turkish records companies and sold at more moderate prices. Besides, the national media was still monopolised by the state and rock, let alone metal programmes were extremely rare. This situation did not change until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when a series of political and economic transformations started to gain momentum. As a consequence, Turkish metalheads had to rely on informal networks in order to get hold of albums, merchandise, and information on bands and trends.

### **A. Selling Bootlegs**

In a situation where there was virtually nothing, Turkish rockers and metalheads requested friends and relatives, who travelled abroad, to bring them records, cassettes, VHS videos tapes, t-shirts, and patches. As soon as the mid-1980s, some of them started their own informal businesses by selling bootleg cassettes on the streets and in small shops. The places, where bootleg cassettes were sold became important junctions for the local scenes in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, and a few other cities.

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Not only did they provide access to music and information on the latest record releases, but they were also places to socialize in terms of meeting other people from the scene. Since the scene was still small and the places where metal music was sold were rare, they attracted metalheads from different parts of the city, thereby strengthening the connectivity and coherence of the scene.

One of the first places to sell bootleg cassettes in Istanbul was a secondhand book store in the Moda Cinema Arcade. The store was run by Sadi, the vocalist and bass player of thrash metal band Metalium. Sadi started to sell cassettes by placing a few album covers - like Mötley Crüe's *Shout at the Devil* (1983) - in the shop window. From these few albums, he then prepared bootlegs on demand. Close to the Moda Cinema Arcade was another shopping arcade called "Akmar," which specialised in selling secondhand books to high school and university students. By the late 1980s, a number of former street sellers began to open record shops in Akmar. Among them were Zihni Müzik, Atlantis Music, Hammer Müzik, the Pentagram Metal Shop, and Saadeth. The Pentagram Metal Shop was opened by the members of eponymous thrash metal band "Pentagram" (aka Mezar Kabul) while Saadeth was run by Mazhar Şiringöz of Metalium and Çağlan Tekil of Laneth magazine. Zihni Müzik, Atlantis Music, and Hammer Müzik over time evolved into independent record labels, which still exist today. Enis from Hammer Müzik describes the development from selling bootleg cassettes on the streets to becoming an official record store and independent record label:

Actually, there were no original tapes in the market. There were no licenses, no importers. Nothing! So, for example, Haluk [the founder of Hammer Müzik] bought some LPs or CDs of Sepultura or other bands. He made copies and he sold them. (...) Actually, he started by selling tapes on the streets some 12 years ago [in 1991]. And then more original tapes, more CDs here [in the Hammer Müzik shop in Akmar]. At first, he started selling copies. Then he decided to start a shop and travelled outside Turkey to Greece. He had friends going to the USA, Germany. And he ordered CDs through friends and they brought CDs here and he started selling [them]. Afterwards there was big interest for this kind of music. He got licenses for albums and released them here. . The first original, licensed tape was Slayer's *Hell Awaits*. (...) And after that a lot of CD imports, a lot of productions. And the shop was going well.<sup>4</sup>

**B. Trading Tapes**

The integration of the Turkish scene into the global metal underground took place through the global tape trading network. Before the advent of the Internet, the global metal scene had been relying on postal mail for sending and exchanging demo tapes, flyers, fanzines, and personal information on local bands and scenes around the globe. As Keith Kahn-Harris in *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* has already pointed out, the global metal underground built upon a network with thousands of people participating in it.<sup>5</sup> One particular mode of transmitting music through this network was “tape trading.” The term describes an informal practice of exchanging and distributing recordings at a non-monetary level. Among those who participated in the global tape trading network were individuals, bands, distros, and independent record labels.

While individuals and bands used to trade only small numbers of demo tapes, record labels usually exchanged higher quantities of their official releases. Since Turkish independent labels mostly had their own mail orders and/or local shops, the trading system gave them the opportunity to avoid costs for international money transfer and to bridge exchange rate disparities. Through tape trading they were able to cheaply purchase records of other companies and, at the same time, spread and promote their own releases in other countries. With regard to Turkey, these aspects were of crucial importance. Apart from record companies, committed individuals set up their own tape trading lists or established their own small distros. Bands also traded among each other, selling their own and other tapes at concerts.

Turkish metalheads began to participate in the global tape trading network in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Güray, who has been the publisher of several underground fanzines in Istanbul (e.g. Yer Altı, I Feel Like Nick Cave, I Feel Like Shit, Mafia), got intensively involved in tape trading in the early 1990s:

Well, I think it was back in 91 or 92. There was Laneth magazine you know.<sup>6</sup> And I think I saw some demo reviews of Turkish bands (...) I wrote them a letter, sent money, and got the demos. I received a couple of flyers of foreign bands then, and I just wondered, if (...) the foreigners would write [back] as well. I just wondered you know. I wondered about more underground acts. So, I just wrote my first letter - I think to Benediction. And there was Gomorrha and a band from Poland. I can't remember the name right now. And I asked them for demos, prices, and infos. And when I got some response, I was shocked, because I didn't expect it. You know, for the first time I got in touch with foreign bands. And I started to buy their demos and later... You know

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when you got a demo back ten years ago you received tons of flyers and lots of addresses. And I started to write to everyone.<sup>7</sup>

The example not only provides a description of how to get involved into the global metal underground back 15 or 20 years ago, but also proves that Turkish metalheads were aware of the latest developments in metal music even without any official marketing. People had started to listen to death metal, although there were no death metal albums officially available in the Turkish market. Güray also provides information on the scope of trans-local connectivity fostered by tape trading:

Well, first of all, it was good to have some stuff from really weird places. You know, in the beginning you just knew that there was metal in Europe and America, but later I received flyers from Panama, from South Africa - Groinchurn.<sup>8</sup> I've been in touch with them. And then: Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia. So, it was really good! I just wanted to have at least one contact per country. So, I tried to write to everyone, to Israel, South Africa, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, everywhere.<sup>9</sup>

Tape trading brought Güray into contact with bands from all around the world. The recordings and contacts that he obtained provided him with sufficient resources to start a number of do-it-yourself projects like the above-named fanzines, a number of compilation tapes, and his own distro. All in all, the tape trading network guaranteed a cheap and easy way of spreading recordings to other parts of the world. Moreover, it helped to create a feeling of community among its participants. Through exchanging tapes, letters, and flyers, people made common experiences, mostly without ever meeting each other personally. Sometimes, however, trading contacts formed the basis for visiting each other or organising concerts. Belgian grindcore legend Agathocles as well as Austrian grindcore band Mastic Scum both came to Istanbul in 1996 on the basis of contacts that had been established through the global tape trading network.

Meanwhile, worldwide dissemination of the Internet and a number of technical innovations facilitated the recording, compression, and transmission of digital audio and video files. Tape trading, although it did not stop to exist, lost much of its importance to electronic communication facilities.

### **C. “A Group of Losers”**

Apart from selling bootlegs and trading tapes, the production of fanzines became another crucial means of informally disseminating metal culture in Turkey. However, metal fanzines did not emerge before the beginning of the 1990s. Up till then, heavy metal was only sporadically

featured in some of the country's youth magazines. Professional rock and metal magazines were absent from the Turkish market. It turned out to be a satirical magazine rather than a music magazine, which prompted the rise of metal music and culture in the late 1980s.

Towards the end of the 1980s, young caricaturist Abdül Kadir Elçioğlu started to create the Grup Perişan comic strips, which appeared in Turkey's most prominent satirical magazine *Gırgır*. *Gırgır* (later renamed to *Hıbrır*) was one of the world's best-selling satirical magazines with a weekly circulation of 300,000 to 400,000 copies. Its enormous prominence, particularly among young readers, was due to an environment which did not provide enough space for political and intellectual outlet. Radio and television were still monopolised by a single state-controlled body, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), and the political climate remained affected by the military coup d'état of 1980. In the late 1980s, satirical magazines were one of the few autonomous voices that featured a combination of politics, sex, art, and social criticism. *Gırgır* followed a declared mission to criticize cultural values, politics, and the "ordinary" way of life.

With the Grup Perişan, Abdül Kadir Elçioğlu invented a comic strip that was dedicated to rock and heavy metal culture. He himself was a passionate rock and heavy metal listener and, in reference to Metallica, used the pseudonym "Aptülika." "Grup Perişan" means "group of losers" and tells the story of three young men, who share the same flat in Istanbul while studying at university. The narrative structures of Grup Perişan are based upon the protagonists' discrete, stereotypical characters and their interpersonal encounters in everyday life. Soyut, the confused intellectual, Danyal, the naïve and dumpy but likeable guy from the Anatolian countryside, and Mazhar, the easygoing, rebellious rocker are in search for the joys and comforts of life as represented in girls, music, alcohol, sleep, and - in the case of Danyal - food. Their lives take place in an urban setting, mostly on the streets, in bars, concert venues, university corridors, and their shared flat. By all means, Aptülika's favourite character is Mazhar. He embodies all the features of a young, rebellious rocker. Uncompromising in his individual way of life and always on collision course with the surrounding society, he goes through, and gets into, a lot of trouble. The author leaves no doubt as to who is supposed to be the undisputable hero of the story. He endows Mazhar with a cheerful, carefree character that enjoys life to the fullest degree. In this way he shows the ultimate success of a lifestyle determined by individual freedom and self-determination.

The relevance of Aptülika's Grup Perişan lies in a number of aspects. Maybe most striking is how his personal affiliation with Istanbul's rock and heavy metal scene affected the cartoon's narrative. Together with his friends, Aptülika witnessed both the rise of the city's metal underground and the controversial reactions from the Turkish public, including verbal and physical

insults, consternation, and a lack of understanding. His inspiration often directly derived from these personal experiences, which he then transferred into the Grup Perişan strips. In a humorous and frequently ironic way, which aimed to hold up a mirror to society, he captured the zeitgeist of these early years of Turkish heavy metal in Istanbul. His cartoon's proximity to everyday life is also reflected in the frequent appearance of actual events, settings, and persons: Pentagram's drummer Cenk, one of Aptülika's close friends, Istanbul's first rock bar, the *Kemancı* under the bridge, or the Harbiye Open Air Theatre, a frequent venue for heavy metal concerts in the late 1980s and early 1990s, are only a few examples of real-life references in Aptülika's Grup Perişan.

Another aspect of importance is how Aptülika's Grup Perişan contributed to the dissemination of the visual and verbal representations of rock and heavy metal culture among young readers. Not only did Mazhar with his long hair, leather jacket, torn denim trousers, boots, earrings, and Sodom, D.R.I., or skull print t-shirts match the cliché of the true rocker, but Aptülika also added some "hidden" extra information to his drawings. That is, he often filled the background of the cartoon, by way of posters or writings on the wall, with news about bands, up-coming concerts, and record releases. At a certain stage, Aptülika further decided to go beyond the original scope of the comic strip and use the blank margins of the magazine pages for some further drawings and verbal information. In that way, he presented band biographies (including caricatures of each band member), discographies, lyrics, and the latest news on the metal world. Figure 1 shows a whole page from *Hibir* magazine in order to illustrate samples of Aptülika's work. In the magazine margins, he depicted American thrash metal legend Slayer with reference to their *South of Heaven* album (1988), while at the top of the page he portrayed the logo of King Diamond. His illustrations further include visual representations, such as several inverted crosses, human skulls, Slayer's pentagram-logo, and the devil horns sign (see the "bird" at the top of the page). Through Grup Perişan, interested readers became familiar with this kind of metal icons. Over the years, Aptülika portrayed almost the whole rock and metal world, ranging from classic rock band Jethro Tull to black metal pioneers Venom (figure 2).

### 3. Satanic Panics

Since the late 1980s, the growing visibility of metal in urban public spaces has been drawing the interest of the Turkish media. Newspaper journalists and television commentators have been depicting metal as a phenomenon of deviant behaviour and consequently as a threat to Turkey's national and religious identity. The situation exacerbated when a series of teenage suicides and the murder of a young girl on an Istanbul cemetery triggered a panic over metal and Satanism. The Turkish media, emphasising

the commonalities of the events, constructed a coherent scenario of interrelated incidents, though they had nothing to do with each other.

The most serious accusations against metal were raised in connection with the so-called “Ortaköy murder:” Only one month after a devastating earthquake had struck the region of Izmit and Bodrum on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1999, the naked, half-buried body of a young woman was discovered on a cemetery in the Istanbul neighbourhood of Ortaköy. The girl’s head had been reportedly smashed with a stone and her body showed signs of rape. When the newspapers published the story, the police had already arrested two young men and a young woman who unanimously confessed to murdering 21-year-old Şehriban Çoşkunfirat on the night of September 13<sup>th</sup>. When pictures turned up, showing the perpetrators dressed in black and holding the remains of a dissected cat, rumours of necrophilia and satanic rituals dominated the news. Finally, the media coverage triggered a major crackdown on Turkish rock bars, record labels, fanzines, record stores, and individuals who came to have long hair or wear black clothes.

The media coverage on metal and Satanism - whether in connection with the Ortaköy murder or in connection with alleged suicide pacts of several teenagers - repeated the same narrative over and over again. Regardless of the particular events, the line of argument and accusations remained almost identical. In order to illustrate how the Turkish media cemented the image of rock and metal as an epitome of moral subversiveness, I will refer to an early polemic against metal: The first reference to metal and Satanism, which created public concern in Turkey, was by well-known newspaper journalist Engin Ardiç in an article for Sabah newspaper on 14 October 1990. His outspoken and polemic style of criticism made him an intimate enemy of the Turkish scene.

Metaaal!

As if there were not enough “species” in the country [already], yet another one has emerged: metalheads. Calling themselves “children of Satan,” their main features are tattered clothes and iron pieces and shackles [attached] to their backs and heads. Some of them are wearing swastikas and some are cutting themselves with razor blades here and there, ripping themselves left and right and making themselves bleed...

Last Monday, you saw a photo report of our [colleague] Tayyar Işıksaçan on our back page: As much as 2,000 “metalheads” had gathered in the [Harbiye] Open Air Theatre, enjoying themselves [and drinking alcohol].<sup>10</sup> On their foreheads crosses—yes, painted young ladies with the official “sign of the infidels.” (...)

They have symbols. You stretch the index and the little finger of the right hand into the air and yell, bursting out “metaaaaal” from deep inside your throat!

(...) I would like to address another and bigger aspect of degeneration to you, a squalor that is [even] more inconceivable: Satan worshippers have been springing up! Yes, in Turkey!

(...) Each Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup>, they are gathering in order to celebrate a mass with wads of smoke, black cowls, crosses, sharp knives, and a mystic number of magic murmurs. Stark naked chicks. The abbot mixes the blood of the person attending the ritual with his own blood and signs a contract with Satan. After that they copulate like dogs in front of the group!

In any case, there ought to be sexual intercourse between man and woman. They are the servants of Satan: “everything is permitted;” homosexual relationships are fostered. Among them, there are even villains who are molesting small children.

(...) A bloke named A.K. explains their principles in the following way: be antisocial, live only for yourself ... be egoistic, live up to your desires... be strong, evolution proceeds through the perishing of the weak... obliterate all moral values... destroy what is not created by yourself, strike back against everything done to you... spread chaos... do not limit your sexuality to only one gender... live without responsibility... (...) You see, we are unaware of how “westernised” the country is, for heaven’s sake.<sup>11</sup>

Putting what Ardiç contends in a nutshell, it is metal that spawns multifarious forms of deviant behaviour having a subversive impact on the prevailing concepts of morality in Turkish society. The text is replete with evocative images of deviance that are sought to strengthen this argument. With regard to the variety of images used in the text, it appears necessary to form manageable categories. These categories, which are sought to subsume the different images of deviance, I will call “categories of immorality.”

In this sense, I will allot the images present in the text to four analytical categories, each of them covering different aspects of immorality. The lines between these categories are, however, fluent. Some images could be ascribed to more than just one category.

#### **A. Religious Subversiveness**

A central argument in Ardiç’s polemic against metal is the putative renunciation of Islam. According to what he says, metalheads ascribe themselves to apostasy and Satanism. He depicts them as “children of Satan,” “Satan worshippers,” and “servants of Satan.” The text culminates in a portrayal of a black mass that ends in signing “a contract with Satan” before

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engaging in a ritual act of sexual intercourse (“after that, they copulate like dogs in front of the group”). The latter represents another form of illicit behaviour, since Islam limits sexuality explicitly to the realm of marriage.

In order to present more “evidence” for the apostate nature of metal music, he refers to photographs of his colleague Tayyar Işıksaçan showing young women with crosses painted onto their foreheads. The “sign of the infidels” upon the skin of young Turkish girls must have come as a shock to the readers, as it implies the girls’ conversion to Christianity. This, however, poses a threat not only to Islam, but also to the country’s national identity, for Sunni Islam is an important element of Turkish nationalism - despite the Kemalist doctrine of laicism.

Moreover, the example points to the ambivalence of anti-Christian symbols in a Muslim context: A cross is a cross, inverted or not. Wherefore wearing, for instance, a Marduk t-shirt makes you a Christian in the eyes of those who are not familiar with metal iconography.

#### **B. Sexual Subversiveness**

The text clearly mentions several forms of sexual subversiveness, namely promiscuity (“they copulate like dogs,” “there ought to be sexual intercourse between man and woman”), homosexuality (“homosexual relationships are fostered”), and child molestation (“molesting small children”). The concept of morality addressed through these images is mainly religious. Concerning sexuality, Islamic sources do condemn two particular practices: anal intercourse and extramarital intercourse. Both practices are sin- and shameful and, at least according to religious sources taken from the hadith/ahadith,<sup>12</sup> to be punished by law.<sup>13</sup> This refers equally to heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Neither men nor women are allowed to engage in anal and/or extramarital sex. Accordingly, religious scholars deduced a general prohibition of homosexuality, since (male) homosexuality supposedly involves both before-mentioned practices. From a religious perspective, any violation of these prohibitions represents a disregard for the divine revelation and is therefore considered subversive.

A second, traditional concept of morality addressed here, is the concept of honour and shame. Very briefly speaking, the idea of honour and shame is based upon the principle of separating the masculine from the feminine in order to ensure the sexual integrity of the female body. Any harm to that is equivalent to a complete loss of social prestige for the whole family. Consequently, metal described by Ardiç as propagating promiscuity must be seen as a threat to traditional social order.

Another aspect implicit to the concept relates to the act of sexual penetration: penetrating is coded male, being penetrated is coded female. While the former is a matter of prestige and virility, the latter is a matter of shame and weakness. The meaning of “homosexual” in this context is “the

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one, who is being penetrated.” Any accusation of homosexuality as done by Ardiç is not only equivalent to a violation of the Divine Will, but also an act of depriving the accused of his manliness. Homosexuality implies weakness, passivity, and a complete loss of social as well as self-respect.

### **C. Political Subversiveness**

From a political perspective, Ardiç blames metalheads of adhering to subversive ideologies such as National Socialism (“some are wearing swastikas”) and Communism (mentioned in a second article by Ardiç published only a couple of days later). With regard to Turkish national history, it was open conflict between the Communist Left and the Fascist Right that led the country into political instability culminating in the coup d’état of 1980.

As outlined above, Ardiç assumes an apostate nature of metal that poses a threat to the country’s religious identity. Religious identity, in that case, is equivalent to national identity. Another verbal attack along the same line is his final résumé that the emergence of metal and Satanism is a result of westernisation (“You see, we are unaware of how ‘westernised’ the country is, for heaven’s sake!”). The Turkish Republic was born from a war of independence, after European imperialist powers had already agreed on a territorial partitioning of Ottoman Anatolia by the end of World War One. Therefore, Turkish nationalism is highly sensible about any kind of foreign interference in the country’s internal affairs. From this perspective, westernisation - seen as a matter of cultural alienation - could breed discord among the population, finally contributing to a weakening and disintegration of the country. Metal, in this sense, is undermining Turkish national identity.

### **D. Social Subversiveness**

The text reveals quite a number of images that can be categorised as socially subversive. It starts with some brief remarks on the metalheads’ clothing. What Ardiç describes (“tattered clothes”), contradicts the prevailing dress codes of Turkish society. The question of what is seen as adequate in terms of clothing is based on principles such as decency, tidiness, and cleanliness.

On another occasion, which is not given here, he denounces Turkish metalheads as “our homemade rich bastards” who are wearing expensive sports shoes. In doing so, he alludes to another sensible issue: the inner-Turkish discourse on social and cultural disparities. Turkish society – on a regional as well as on a local level - is characterised by major economic inequalities. These inequalities define access to social and cultural resources. Particularly at the time when Ardiç wrote his anti-metal polemic, westernisation in the sense of having access to cultural resources from Western Europe and North America was widely limited to a relatively well-

off Turkish middle class. Accordingly, Ardiç implies that metal is an exclusively upper middle class phenomenon. In other words, he draws a line between a allegedly morally-corrupted, westernised elite and a socially-deprived, but morally superior lower class. As a result, the originally social rift obtains the connotation of a moral rift with metal functioning as an indicator for that scenario.

Beyond that, Ardiç claims that metalheads indulge in acts of self-mutilation (“some are cutting themselves with razor blades”) and are committed to the principles of egoism and hedonism. Accordingly, they disregard the well-being of others (“be antisocial,” “evolution proceeds through the perishing of the weak”), seek to maximise their own pleasure (“live up to your desires”), and act solely under the terms of their own interests (“live only for yourself,” “live without responsibilities”). Finally, he imputes them with a nihilist attitude (“spread chaos,” “obliterate all moral values”), thereby completing the picture of social subversiveness.

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### Notes

- 1 D Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: the Music and its Culture*, revised edition, Da Capo Press, London, 2000 [1991], p. 120.
- 2 Z Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, Milli Eğt. Bakanlığı Yay., Ankara, 1996 [1923], p. 88-89.
- 3 Erkin Koray graduated from the German High School, Cem Karaca from the American Robert College, Barış Manço from the French Galatasaray Lisesi, and Moğollar’s Cahit Berkay from the no-less prestigious Kabataş Erkek Lisesi.
- 4 Personal interview, Istanbul, 24 June 2003.
- 5 K Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2007, p. 78-82.
- 6 Laneth was one of Turkey’s very first metal fanzines, which was founded and published by Çağlan Tekil between 1991 and 1994.
- 7 Personal interview, Istanbul, 6 August, 2004.
- 8 Groinchurn is a South African grindcore band from Johannesburg, which formed in the early 1990s and later signed with the German independent label Morbid Records.
- 9 Personal interview, Istanbul, 6 August 2004.
- 10 Ardiç does not explicitly speak about alcohol here, but using the verb “dağıtmak” implies wild partying and drinking.
- 11 Quoted and translated from E Ardiç, ‘Metaaal!’ in *Sabah*, Istanbul, 14 October 1990.

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- 12 The *ahadith* (singular: *hadith*) are traditions reporting on the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. Besides of the Koran they represent the major source of Islamic jurisprudence.
  - 13 A Schmitt, 'Liwat im Fiqh: Männliche Hmosexualität?,' in J N Bell (ed), *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies 4*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2002, p.49-110.

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