

# Matrix System: A New Analytical Approach for Adapting the Use of Chords into Performing Techniques of the Bağlama without Plectrum (ICNMC 2016)

Sinan Ayyıldız\*, Ahmet Ozan Baysal\*\*

\*Istanbul Technical University, Dr. Erol Üçer Center for Advanced Studies in Music  
ayyildizsinan@gmail.com

\*\*Istanbul Technical University, Dr. Erol Üçer Center for Advanced Studies in Music  
a\_obaysal@hotmail.com

**Abstract.** In last twenty years, performing techniques of the bağlama without plectrum commonly called as şelpe have come to fore in urban society of Turkey which had been forgotten during the Republic era. After the 1990s, under the influence of changing musical atmosphere, which was happened in Turkish Folk Music understanding, historical şelpe tradition has evolved and dramatically changed in terms of musical use of the bağlama with the synthesis of Westernization and traditionalism trends. With all these evolutions have occurred in the urban bağlama music, one can be approached to the bağlama and şelpe techniques in a context of hybrid theoretical method towards this hybrid and "new" music tradition flourished in the urban. In this new hybrid theoretical method, Western instrumentation techniques such as the guitar's and the piano's, and the traditional theoretical approaches of the bağlama can be combined in one original theoretical method, which belongs urban bağlama music and its şelpe techniques.

Our study interrogates a new instrumentation method for şelpe techniques under the influence of Western music theory, which could follow and reflect the bağlama/şelpe music of today. As a first step, a new possible method is going to be suggested for adapting the chords to use in the şelpe techniques.

**Keywords.** Turkish folk music, şelpe, bağlama, chord

## 1 Introduction

The bağlama is one of the most common lute type instruments in Anatolian/Turkish folk music heritage. Its historical background extends back thousands of years, among pastoral nomadic clans of Central Asia, Persia, and Anatolia. The bağlama had gained its own characteristics generally in rural areas of Anatolia until the establishing of Republic in 1923.

Three traditions have played key roles on improving characteristics of the bağlama. These traditions should not be thought as separate traditions between each other. Many common traits are shared between these traditions. The first one is Ale-

vi/Bektaşî tradition. The bağlama has commonly used and become main instruments of their musical/sacred rituals. The second one is Aşık tradition. It is one of the main bağlama performing and singing tradition of Anatolia. Its instances can mostly be seen in the Eastern and Central Anatolia. The third one is Yörük/Türkmen tradition. This tradition describes a pastoral/nomadic lifestyle and musics of Anatolian Turkic tribes. In all these three music traditions which the bağlama plays an essential role, music is generally belonged to oral tradition. Meanwhile, instrumental music genres are highly developed in Yörük/Türkmen tradition although it is generally belonged to oral tradition.

The bağlama music almost cannot be thought without lyrics and singing in these music traditions. The bağlama can be used with plectrum or without plectrum. Performing techniques of the bağlama are variable depend on the tradition, which it is belonged.

In short the bağlama is almost a part of rural, pastoral-nomadic, and oral traditions of Anatolia.

Until the 1923, these counted traditions and bağlama music had been spread and flourished with these counted features in the most of Balkan territory, Anatolia, Middle East, and Caucasian region. Since the establishing of the Republic; many changes, revolutions, manipulations, hybrids, and extinctions have been seen in the socio-cultural context.

## **2 Matrix System: A New Analytical Approach for Adapting Classical Western Music Harmony into Şelpe**

In all cultural and historical contexts of şelpe traditions, performing ways of şelpe techniques have a kind of irregular homophony, which is derived from performing techniques and performance styles of şelpe.

During the popularizing process of şelpe techniques in the urban centers, professional musicians have started to use şelpe in two main ways:

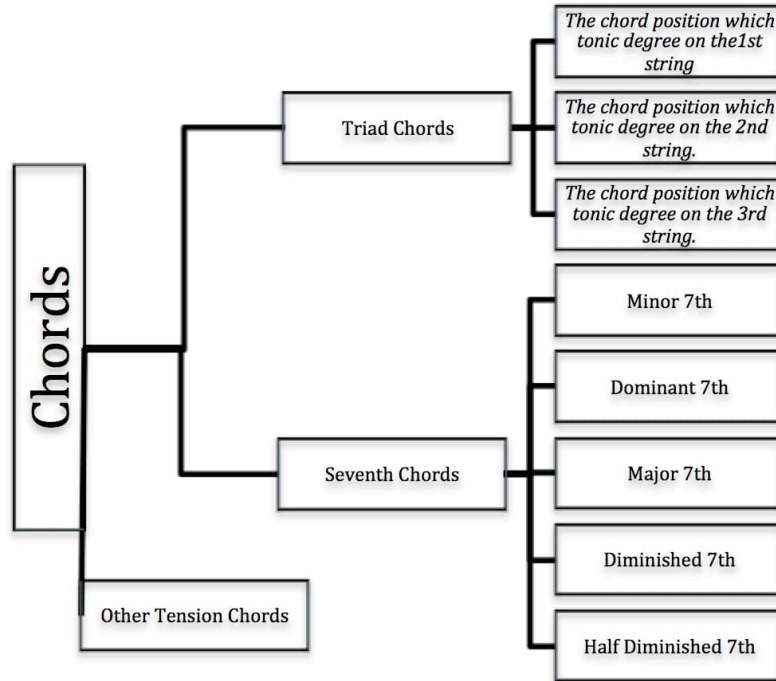
First is to perform şelpe techniques in their traditional ways such as in Alevi and Yörük traditions.

Second is to adapt şelpe techniques into different folk music and the other music genres. Especially adapting şelpe techniques into some of Western art music genres after 2005 it begins to create new experiments and hearings. Şelpe's original irregular homophony starts to evolve functional harmony hearings. Because, adaptation of Western music genres needs chords, arpeggios, pedals etc. Şelpe performers have started to imitate harmony with all three sub-kinds of şelpe techniques. Furthermore, with exploring of the way of performing arpeggios, chords and harmony with şelpe techniques in the context of more Westernized polyphony techniques; these are started to use in the album and group music arrangements as a musical background. Additionally, with the last mentioned sequence, these types of controlled and functional harmony items in the şelpe techniques have started to be used in both solo şelpe music and chamber music of the şelpe bağlama.

We would like to suggest some important steps in the direction of şelpe's harmonic use:

First is to describe all charts of the chord positions on the fingerboard. Here is the classification way of the chords from common practice of Western music theory as it can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Classification of the Chords.



Because of having three strings on the bağlama, we handle seventh chords as three degreed chords rather than four degreed. These three degrees are tonic, third and of course seventh degree. We will handle to other tension chords in our following studies with their positional charts such as ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth. We are going to use the rules of tension charts in the jazz theory for reducing chord degrees to only three.

The second step is to describe and create a symbolization system, which demonstrates the types, the fingerboard positions, and the names of the chords. With this understanding, our suggestion is to develop a matrix system as it can be seen in figure 1.

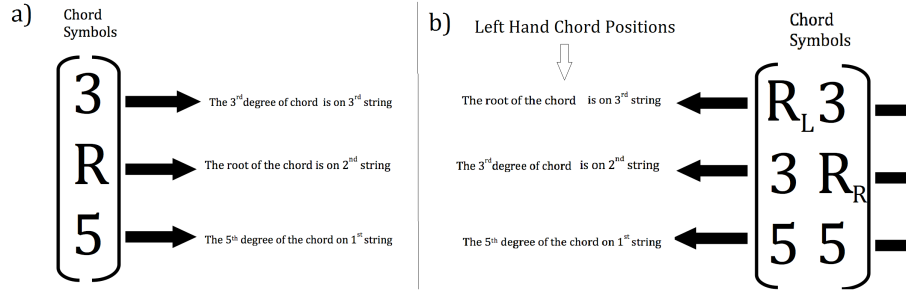


Figure1. Matrix Symbolization System

- a) Matrix for Pençe and Tel Çekme Techniques  
b) Matrix for Parmak Vurma Technique

In the Matrix Symbolization System, each number of any chord degrees and names of the notes demonstrate the special positions of the chords separately. In other words, one matrix symbol shows only one chord position on the fingerboard. One of the main purposes of the matrix symbol is to gain a practical learning and performing of the chord positions during the accompaniments. As in Fig. 1, the symbols of the chords are written on the top of the each matrix. Inside of the matrix, numbers are shown the degrees of any chords. The letter "R" is symbolized the root positions of the chord.

The third step is to show the use of different techniques of the chords such as arpeggios with three types of şelpe techniques, which these ways of use can also be demonstrated with matrix system. All learned positions of the chords on the bağlama's fingerboard can be performed via different figures of the pençe techniques. Arpeggios of the chords are being used with tel çekme technique on the same chord positions, which we used during the pençe technique on the fingerboard via matrix system as it is shown in figure 2.

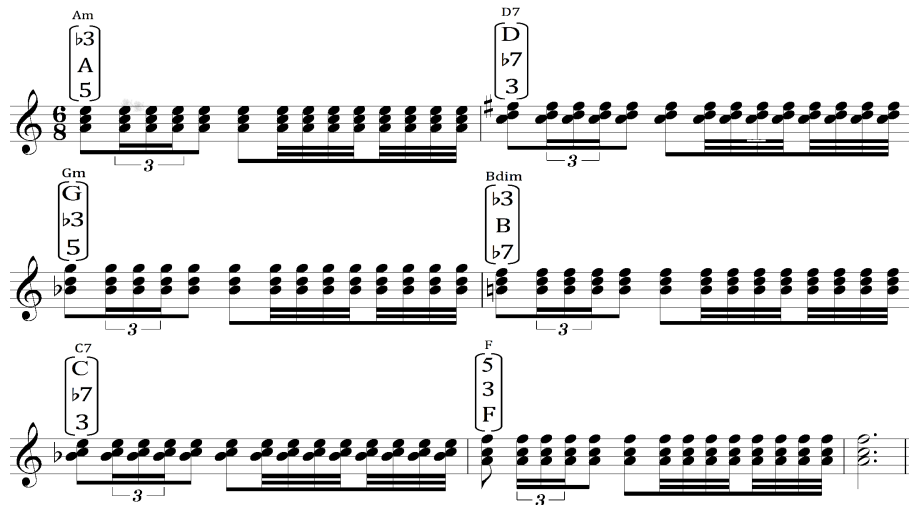


Figure 2. Demonstration of Chords with Matrix System of Pençe Technique.

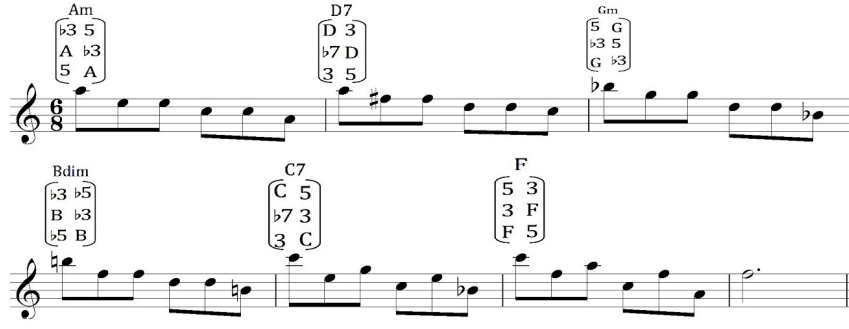


Figure 3. Demonstration of Chords with Matrix System of Parmak Vurma Technique.

In the parmak vurma technique, performers can perform arpeggios of the chords very fast and dynamically. Performers use two hands on the fingerboard rather than to use one hand as in tel çekme and pençe techniques. It means there are two different chord positions on the fingerboard can be demonstrated via matrix.



Fig. 4. Matrix of A Major 9 with Parmak Vurma Technique.

With the matrix symbolizations of the pençe and tel çekme techniques, only left hand positions were demonstrated. However, due to the use of two hands on the fingerboard with the parmak vurma techniques, both right and left hand positions are going to be demonstrated on the matrix system.

In figure 3 it can be seen one described chord and its two different positions on the fingerboard. In a further step, two different chords for both right and left hands can be put with their different positions. Thus, these different chords can be attributed together as one chord and its tensions.

Furthermore, as in figure 4, left hand may use an a-major seventh chord position and right hand may use E-major chord position simultaneously. During the arpeggios of this parmak vurma performance, an arpeggio performance of A-major 9 emerges.

As a final step, proceeding from this basic theory that we mentioned such as chord positions on the bağlama and matrix system, the instances of arpeggios in all şelpe techniques will be diversified until to reach the level of creating mold patterns for chord arpeggios. These mold patterns should be associated with mold patterns of scales, which are going to be belonged to our following studies.

### 3 Conclusion

Historically, one cannot encounter a written music theory and written systematical educational method in the traditions of the bağlama music due to these cultures belong an oral tradition. Further, we believe that the most of Anatolian folk music instruments still do not have an adequate educational and instrumentation method.

If we examine this situation for bağlama, we encounter same insufficiency in the context of systematic instrumentation methodology. This is the first token described for traditional bağlama music. Furthermore, bağlama music still evolves and diversifies such as şelpe's development in the urban cultural centers for thirty years. Whereas, there are only two educational methods for şelpe, which are described notation systems and which are told the techniques with lots of examples from repertory.

In developed şelpe music of the urban cultural centers have many innovative use of şelpe techniques such as harmonic use, which was told in the previous chapters. Our aim with the matrix system is to create new systematic theoretical paths especially to supply easier pedagogical learn of polyphonic şelpe use via innovative ways. This mentioned developed şelpe music is forcing us and giving routes to create its theory. We hope this suggested theory, which will be revealed under this circumstances, will led şelpe music in the contexts of performance and composition studies.

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