



THE ORIGIN OF PARMAK VURMA (TWO-HAND TAPPING) TECHNIQUE OF SAZ¹ (BAĞLAMA) *

Sinan AYYILDIZ**
Erol PARLAK***

Abstract

Parmak vurma (two-hand tapping) technique consists of the fingers of both hands hammering and pulling the frets on the neck to produce sounds. Traditionally, *parmak vurma* technique was frequently used by Yörük-Turkmen communities of Teke region²s to play their *boğaz havası* pieces on the *üçtelli* (three-stringed), a small *saz*. The main tuning system of *parmak vurma* technique is the *bağlama düzeni*. The traditional musical characteristics of *parmak vurma* technique can be understood to look melodic structure of *boğaz havası* songs. In fact, *Boğaz havası* is a vocal music and it often consists of melodic leaps. *Parmak vurma* technique is consistent to play these melodic leaps on *üçtelli*. Over time, the technique gained recognition as local artists migrated to cities. Especially *bağlama* masters who have wider audiences outside the region got interested in this technique and transferred the *parmak vurma* technique to large-size *sazs*. The performance level of the technique became very advanced through academic and musical studies, and its recognition reached national, even international levels. This study is needed to explain the origin of *parmak vurma* technique.

Keywords: Two-hand Tapping, Saz, Yörük, Üçtelli, Bağlama.

1. Introduction

The *two-hand tapping* of *saz* is a traditional technique and it is known as *parmak vurma* technique. According to research that examines *saz* types in terms of traditional performance, *parmak vurma* technique is only used in the performance of *üçtelli bağlama* of South-western Anatolian Yörük Turkmens.

Parlak (2000) states that it is difficult to obtain sound on gut and silk strings using this technique, and adds that *parmak vurma* technique is non-existent on *saz* types that uses non-metallic strings, and that this technique only emerged after the adaptation of metallic strings on *saz*. Thus, an optimistic guess places the first use of *parmak vurma* technique, which doesn't have as old a history as other performance techniques without plectrum (*pençe* (strumming), *tel çekme* (plucking)), with the adaptation of metallic strings for *saz* (Parlak, 2000, p. 175). The fact that *parmak vurma* technique is only known in the Teke region while other performance techniques without plectrum are widespread also supports this argument. However, considering the fact that the technique is adopted, spread and transferred between generations among Yörük Turkmens, it is also not possible to place the emergence of this technique to a very recent date. Another reason for not the widespread adoption of the technique in Anatolia may be the closed and nomadic lifestyle of Yörüks.

2. Yörük Communities of Teke Region

Various definitions of, and opinions about the term Yörük exist. The name is thought to originate from the root *yürü-* (to walk) and is assumed to mean "one that walks, runs to battle, tent folk, nomad that constantly changes location" (Gülten, 2009, p.2). Historical research concerning Yörüks of the area indicate that these communities are Türkmen groups that migrated to Anatolia from Central Asia, that they bear the signs of their previous livestock-based nomadic lifestyle, that these freedom-loving communities prefer higher altitudes for their settlements, and that this is one of the reasons for their selection of the Teke region (Tızlak, 2008; Ergun, 2004).

Yörüks were forced to settle in the Ottoman era due to reasons such as easier control and tax collection, or the Turkification of a newly annexed region (Tızlak, 2008). Changing social conditions following the declaration of the Turkish Republic forced almost all Yörüks to settle. Although they

¹Saz is the primary term used for "bağlama" in colloquial axis.

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³ Instructor, Department of Music, Architecture and Fine Arts Faculty, Istanbul Medipol University.

⁴ Prof., Department of Music Theory, Faculty of Music Sciences and Technology, Ankara Music and Fine Arts University

⁵South-west Anatolia

transitioned to a settled life, Yörüks kept their nomadic musical culture alive. Even today, a few Yörük communities that maintain their nomadic lifestyles can be found (Çelik, 2009, p. 32). Yörüks seasonally migrate between high altitude (and cooler) summer areas that are suitable pastures to feed their livestock, and lower altitude summer areas that contain structures such as barns, etc. that protect their livestock from cold (Armağan, 1997, p.1)

Thus, the most important factors that shape Teke Yörük Turkmen musical culture are migration, livestock and the relationship between humans and the nature.

3. Üçtelli

The variety of instruments that are used in Yörük Turkmen music of the Teke region is astounding. Most of these are unique to Teke Region's Yörük Turkmen music. These are *ikitelli*, *üçtelli* (*bağlama*), *kabak kemane*, *ıklığ*, *kemane*, *çam düdüğü*, *sipsi*, *çoban düdüğü*, *uyguncaklı düdük* and *hegit* (Ayyıldız, 2013). The common feature of these instruments is the fact that they are small and easily portable, in line with the nomadic lifestyle. Instruments such as *zurna*, *davul*, *kaval*, *çığırma* and *delbek* that are played by Turkmens from other regions are also used in the region. Large sazes and instruments called *incesaz* are instruments that were only later introduced in the Teke region's Yörük Türkmen musical culture (Ayyıldız, 2013).

Parlak (2000) states that the small and hand-played *ikitelli* and *üçtelli* were the original instruments of the region: The instruments of this region, which were shaped based on the nomadic lifestyle, are two and three-stringed sazes, and they are usually small in dimensions. These small sazes that are constructed based on the practicalities of a mobile lifestyle incorporate all the subtleties of the rich Yörük culture and the imagination of the Yörük people, despite their small sizes. These sazes are hand-played, and are the original and ancient instruments of the region's Yörüks. Large-size sazes and the concept of plectrum were only recently introduced in the Yörük lifestyle (Parlak, 2000, p. 114).

According to Parlak (2000), *ikitelli* and *üçtelli* are named after the number of rows of strings they have, according to the Asian-Anatolian common traditional nomenclature. The playing style, melodic structure and originality of *üçtelli bağlama* made it the most important instrument, and virtually the symbol of the region (Fig.1).



Figure 1. Üçtelli Bağlama (from Erol Parlak Saz Collection. Photo by Sinan Ayyıldız)

Üçtelli is only played using performance techniques without plectrum playing, and its repertoire contains many genres unique to the region. The most important ones are: *boğaz havasis*, *gurbet havasis*, *teke zortlatması*, *teke zeybeğisi*, etc. The *parmak vurma* technique is also called *döğme* (beating), *damak* (palate), *parmak koyma* (finger placing) in the region, and its use in Yörük Turkmen musical tradition is unique to the *üçtelli* performance. (Parlak, 2000, p. 176). It is not used with *ikitelli*.

4. Boğaz Havası

Boğaz havası are among the most interesting tunes of the region's repertoire, and is a feature of livestock-based lifestyle. They can be performed using instruments or human voice. The first emergence of *boğaz havası* is not clear. It is believed to have originated in ancient times in relation with the Yörük lifestyle, and survived until today. *Boğaz havası* that are performed using human voice are almost extinct, due to the fact that yörüks adopted the settled lifestyle. *Boğaz havası* survive today mainly due to their transference

from human voice to primarily the *saz*, in addition to instruments such as *sipsi*, *kemane* and *kaval* (Parlak, 2000, p. 143).

The term *boğaz çalma* (throat playing) is used rather than *boğaz söyleme* (throat singing) is used in the region for the performance of all *boğaz havasis*, including the ones that are performed using human voice (Ergun, 2004) It is widely believed that the emergence of *boğaz havasis* performed on *üçtelli* and other instruments was based on the imitation of their vocal performance (Parlak, 2000, p.143). Another view is that the *boğaz havasis* emerged based on the imitation of the cuckoo bird³. The act of throat playing is based on a special vocal technique in *türkü* singing (Fig.2). The throat is pressed on the front or sides of the throat. The finger is moved up and down on the throat during the song. Some of the performers place their index and middle fingers on the opposite side of the throat, and similarly move them up and down during the song (Ergun, 2004, p. 33)

There are no pitch jumps over an octave in *boğaz havasis*. The pitch jumps are usually to fifth, fourth, third and second intervals. The vocal performance of *boğaz havasis* undertakes various roles in social life. Throat playing is usually not a part of musical events that are attended by everyone. They are usually performed by two persons who stand at a distance.

Ergun (2004, pp. 37-38) studied *boğaz havasis* in Yörüks, and stated that *boğaz havasis* are used as a symbol of the tribe, and that there is a single *boğaz havası* that identifies each tribe. Thus, the tune that constitutes the *boğaz havası* of the community is also the identity of that community. Another function of *boğaz havasis* is to provide a means of communication between shepherd girls, and *kaval*-playing shepherd boys (Fig. 2.a). Thus, music is used as a means of courting between genders. The fact that it is considered "shameful" for married women to play *boğaz havasis* supports this argument. Additionally, *boğaz havası* has various functions such as reprimand, obloquy, competition, argument and game in different communities (Ergun, 2004). Yılmaz (2013) recently studied *boğaz havasis* and stated that the vocal performance of *boğaz havasis* is almost extinct, and that she encountered no *boğaz havası* playing women under 55 in her field studies (Fig. 2.b).



a.

b.

Figure 2. a) Yörük girl playing *boğaz havası* (Parlak, 2000 p. 142), b-) Old woman playing *boğaz havası* (Yılmaz, 2013, p. 32)

In addition to their vocal performance, *boğazs* are part of all of the region's instrument performers' repertoires. *Boğaz havasis* that are adapted to instruments exactly preserve the pitch jumps in the vocal variety.

One of the instruments that are most frequently used for *boğaz havasis* is *üçtelli bağlama*. Parlak states the following about *boğaz havasis* that are played on *üçtelli*: "*Boğaz havasis* generally consist of two different structures in succession: a free-rhythm structure (with or without lyrics) and a patterned-rhythm structure (with or without lyrics)" (Parlak, 2000, p. 140). Parlak studied the sound scales in *boğaz havasis* and concluded that the following scale is used in almost all *boğaz havasis* ⁴(Fig.3).

³There are many *boğaz havasis* in the region that concern the cuckoo bird, also known as *dugguk* or *duguk* in the region (Parlak, 2000, p. 143).

⁴This scale has been drawn by assuming A as the tonic note.

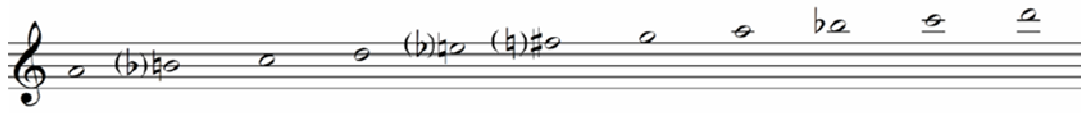


Figure 3. Typical Scale of Boğaz Havası (Parlak, 2000, p.145)

Parlak (2000, p.145) specifies the exceptions as follows: It is usually not possible to find a *boğaz havası* in a scale apart from the one above. However, from time to time, a *hicaz (garip)* transition towards the fourth grade D sound is made in this scale when descending from high pitches to lower pitches in the free sections of the tune. Although rare, the third degree C natural sound is sometimes converted to C sharp.

5. Üçtelli Performers and Performance of Boğaz Havası on Üçtelli

Parmak vurma technique used in the region shows similarities among performers (Fig. 4). Ramazan Güngör from Fethiye (1931-2004), one of the most important *üçtelli* players of the region spent most of his life in the region, and absorbed the Yörük-Türkmen culture. He made his living by making and selling *ikitelli* and *üçtelli*, and his real profession is carpentry. Güngör learned to play *saz (ikitelli, üçtelli)* from the elders in the region, and states that he first benefited from the knowledge of Mehmet Fırtına and İbrahim Emici (Parlak, 2000, p.183)



Figure 4. Performers of *parmak vurma* technique (Parlak,2000,p.175)

As a performer, Ramazan Güngör is a master among masters not only in his region, but also in all of Anatolia because of his advanced technique and fluent playing style. His unique, concise, feeling-laden, enthusiastic expressions always make his strong style felt. He addressed almost all of his region's tunes and almost reconstructed them. Another important characteristic of Güngör, who imparted a brand new soul and interpretation to these pieces, is the fact that he preserved ancient melodies and expression styles in all their purities.

Although Ramazan Güngör played the *üçtelli*, his performance incorporated striking elements of Asian-style *ikitelli* at all times. Characters of his melodies, his playing technique and forms of expressions make him a very important element in the transition between Asia and Anatolia. His exceptional feeling and unique polyphonic interpretation make him the most important example of Yörük Türkmen music that includes a wide spectrum of melodic cultures (from *zeybeks* to *gelin ağlatması*, from *peşrevs* to *boğaz havası*) played in various tuning systems (Parlak, 2000, p. 183).

A region where the hand-playing saz tradition of Teke region is kept alive, and that produced many masters is Dirmil. Parlak states that particularly Hüseyin Karakaya from Dirmil has a more advanced performance style, even compared to Ramazan Güngör, especially in the performance of *boğaz havası*. Hüseyin Karakaya was an apprentice of Koca Şakir from Çörten, and he himself raised many apprentices during his lifetime (Parlak, 2000, p. 185).



We think that *parmak vurma technique* can be emerged when fingers of the right hand were used to hammer-on/pull-off the fifth fret used in the performance of *boğaz havası* instead of the more difficult left hand's little finger of the *tel çekme* technique. The facts that *parmak vurma technique* is only used in *boğaz havası* and that the fingers of right hand are used only on a single fret support this argument.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, two-hand tapping technique of *saz*, known as *parmak vurma* technique, is a traditional technique. *Parmak vurma technique* is performed on *üçtelli*, which is a small-sized three stringed Yörük Turkmen *saz*. The traditional tuning system of *parmak vurma* technique is the *bağlama düzeni*. *Parmak vurma* technique's traditional repertoire consists of *boğaz havası* songs. *Boğaz havası* is a vocal music of Yörük girls. They produce melodic leaps (mostly fourth and fifth) to push their fingers on their throat during *boğaz havası* performance. On the *üçtelli* adaptation of this technique, the fret that produces the fifth degree pitch of open string is often used. Traditional use of *parmak vurma technique* is limited to only that fret for right hand hammer-on. Usually the index finger, and sometimes the middle finger of the right hand are used for this fret. Other fingers of the right hand are not used.

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