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WESTERN EFFECTS AND RESPONSES IN OTTOMAN COURT MUSIC IDENTITY DURING THE AREAS OF SELIM III AND MAHMUT II

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Abstract

In this article, the enterprises that were initiated in the name of westernization movements during the periods of Selim III, and his nephew, Mahmut II, in which the concrete effects of the westernization current asserted itself, the influence of these endeavors on "Ottoman Court Music Identity", the historical outcomes of these effects will be analyzed. Historical documents, recollections, letters and the archives of the state will serve as resources and the presented information will be supported by visual materials.

Keywords: Ottoman Court Music Identity, Westernization Movement, Mehterhane, Muzıka-yı Humayun.

The court, which is the center of the Ottoman Empire, was not only the center of the state but it was the center of art as well. After the Ottomans had enlarged its territories to rule over three continents and the state power and authority reached its peak position, the music of the court acquired its own identity. Indeed, the court music and musicianship have been concepts that have echoed both in the west and the east throughout the history.

While our focus will be on the westernization current during the periods of Selim III and Mahmut II and its impact on the court music, we need to touch upon the process in which the music that we can name as *Ottoman Turkish Music*, or *Court Music* acquires its own identity and which the westernization movement gains momentum.

The 15th century marks a period where the *Turkish Music Identity* is formed in the Ottomans whose focus was more on capturing and expanding territories. In the 16th century, we observe a state which has reached its peak power, enlarged its rule over three continents and managed to rule over the whole Islamic world with the conquest of Egypt in the time of Selim I. On the other hand, significant developments can be observed in this century in the composition and performance of Turkish Music while the weighted bulk of music performance within the Turks moves from Turkistan, North India and Azerbaijan to the Ottomans (Özcan, 1997: 477).

The shift of the tradition of theory in the 15th, and performance and composition in the 16th century from the east towards the Ottomans initiates the process in which "Ottoman-Turkish Music" and "Ottoman Court Music" embarks on to form its own identity. Along with this process the sultan, the sole center of the Ottomans and Islam, takes upon the role of being the center of the music life in the empire. The court music that begins to flourish as of this period and that forms its own existence and individuality is simultaneously "the music of

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royalty” which is backed up by the state and, first and foremost, by the sultan¹. Some examples about the music assemblages in Ottoman Empire for the sultan can be seen in Figure 1 and 2.

The 17th century, which ended with a severe loss of territory in the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) compared to the glory of the 16th century, signifies a brand new formation in music and the continuation of the musical understanding of the 16th century. This century; furthermore, indicates a period in which a music genius like Ali Ufki lived, brought the musical notes of the West adapting it to the Turkish Music which back then had no sense of musical writing, hence maybe the first steps of the westernization traces in the Ottomans (Turkish Music) (Elçin, 1975: iv, xix). The first piece in this work can be seen in figure 3.



Figure 1: Arifi's sahneme (*Süleymanname*²) provides some information about music and instruments in 16th century of Ottoman. Kanuni was watching the performance of the ensemble in the circumcision feast of his three sons (shahzadahs). (And, 1982: r.29).

The reappearance of these traces coincides with the second half of the reign of Ahmet III and the 12-year grand vizier of Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha. In this period, huge supports can be witnessed for the art and the artist (Berker, 1985: 157) as the Ottoman-Turkish music proves its identity independent from the east. In the Tulip Era, which ends with the Patrona Halil Uprising (1730), mansions, palaces in the coast, pavilions, pools and gardens are set up and music *meşks* are conducted following the literature talks in the meetings called “Çırağan Amusements” in summer nights and “Helva³ Meetings” in winters. The whole era, in general, can be said to host a great number of prominent composers and musicians.

¹ Due to such reasons, considering the periods it gains its uniqueness and the environments it blossoms, we found it appropriate to name the aforementioned music as the Ottoman Turkish music. Although there are many uses for this term today such as the Traditional Turkish Music, Turkish Makam Music, Turkish Art Music and Turkish Music, we still prefer the term Ottoman-Turkish Music - though the previous terms are all self-reasonable and compatible with the context. Moreover, the *art* and *folk* music is viewed as a general distinction in the histories of most of the societies; however, the two are actually the pieces of a unified whole. In a historical context, the existence of *art* and *folk* music cultures in a given society has always resulted in a difference in performance though the music culture is the same as a result of using various forms and instruments.

² *Süleymanname*” is a sahneme, which is held in Topkapı Palace Library now. It was written by Fettullah Arifi Çelebi. It explains life of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman and gives examples of Turkish miniature art works.

³ A sweet prepared in many varieties with sesame oil.



Figure 2: Intizâmi's surname⁴ (*Surnâme-i Hümayûn*) provides some information about music and instruments in the 16th century of Ottoman. Sultan Murat III was watching the performance of the ensemble with the *köçek*⁵ in the circumcision feast of his son (shahzadah Mehmed) (Atasoy, 1997: 33).



Figure 3: The first notation in Mecmua-i Saz u Söz: Pişrev-i Osmân Paşa El-Atik Der Makâm-ı Dügâh Hüseyini Usûles Düyek

The fact that the Tulip Era encompasses the first periods the Ottomans turn towards to the west and that the first westernization essence can be found in this period ensures that music takes upon one of the leading roles in this wave. Until that time, the whole problems of the Ottomans are linked to the state's inability to practice its characteristic features which featured its rise back in the past. However, in this period, the state employs a new understanding of at least investigating a structure it belittled till then, and of researching the reasons of its success (Hanioglu, 1985; 1382). That is why, the Ottoman Empire start to learn more and more from the Europeans, to establish embassies in the western countries, and to adopt the western institutions, hence to set off on a road to become a "European" and "Western" (Kunt, 1997: 64). The change the Ottoman administrator's desire at this stage is only about the import of the technology into the empire, and the theme one witnesses in the sefaretnames and seyahatnames remained from the representatives and ambassadors of the time points toward superiority of

⁴ It is a treatise about the Ottoman festivals in Turkish language.

⁵ They were male dancers cross-dressed in feminine attire, employed as entertainers in Ottoman.

the west in every single aspect (Hanioglu, 1985: 1382). Music assemblages in Tulip Era can be seen in Figure 4 (Atıl, 1999: r.24).

These years are marked by the Istanbulites, especially the women, getting out of their domestic spaces, joining the amusements, and later deployed as a subject of the songs of Tanburi Çavuş such as “Küçüksu’da Gördüm Seni”. The works of Tanburi Mustafa Çavuş, one of the best composers of the song form, which is considered *less of a caliber*, are important indicators of the differentiation experience in this period. In the song of Küçüksu’da Gördüm Seni, the lyrics is very understandable, melodic structure is very simple and lyrical. These are the first examples of city folk music.

Following the Tulip Era in the first half of the 18th century, the Selim III Era, or even the *école*, becomes the peak point for the Ottoman-Turkish Music. During the reign of Selim III for 18 years (1789–1807) new makams and new horizons were the focus of researches among the whole rush of new compositions (Berker, 1985: 157).

Selim III, the founder of *Nizamı-ı Cedid*⁶ meaning *new order* or *modern order* in politics and military, is the sultan of an *école* that is successful in bringing the traditional form to its top position as well as adding a new understanding to the elements in this tradition. His reign characterizes the first important political, military and diplomatic as well as the musical approach to Europe. It can also be stipulated that the westernization movements take their first significant step into the court with Selim III in that both the tradition acquires a new ‘face’ and new elements are adapted to the court music.



Figure 4: Miniature from Surnâme-i Vehbi, work of Levni, in the Tulip Era.

The musical movements in the period of Selim III, which can be defined as an “*école*”⁷, is such a turning point in the historical process of the traditional form that is not only comprised of the main elements that precede itself but also of new makams and forms since the

⁶ *Nizam-ı Cedid*, which means *new order*, was used for two different meanings. As the first designates the trained soldier educated in Europe in the time of Selim III, the second points towards the whole enterprise of Selim III characterized by his will to demolish the Janissaries, break away the authority of the ulema (the prominent people) and the innovation attempts which are aimed to make the Ottomans a part of the science, art, agriculture and commerce developments of Europe (Karal, 1988: 61).

⁷ The usage of such a word to describe the period of Selim III does not come from a musical understanding he creates but rather from the support he gives to artists and from his musical contribution to these supports.

westernization concept, thus emerged in the political and military life in the first place, has already found its way to the cultural and artistic life. In this regard, this era can also be viewed as the period of the “cedid”s. The patronage of the studies in the fields of makam, form, musical writing and theory, which was initiated in the period of Ahmet III, hits the climax with the Selim III école. As there are traditional composers such as İsmail Dede Efendi (1778–1846), Şakir Ağa (1779–1840) in the école of Selim III, we also notice the existence of composers like Basmacı Abdi Efendi, Tahir Ağa, Kemani Ali Ağa, Numan Ağa who value the song form or the köçekçe or tavşanca, which are basically the types of dance music, and İsmail Dede Efendi and Selim III who combine the traditional and the new forms.

The studies on makam, notes and theory in the period of Selim III and the entrance of western forms into the court can be thought as the impact of the western understanding of the time on music. The reform attempts of Selim III, who is viewed as “progressive” and “reformist” composer and is known for the piano and harp concerts he organized in the courts with the operettas from France. Yet historians state that the sultan, known for his grace and artistic inclinations, end up in a failure in his reform attempts due to his such qualities, and later is dethroned and murdered (Beşiroğlu, 1993: s.15).

Dede Efendi, who takes place within the école of Selim III, needs a careful elaboration on this issue. The so-called folk music works of Dede Efendi, the composer of as diverse forms as *Mevlevî rituals*, *kâr*, *köçekçe*, *beste* and the *3/4 song form*, are indeed works that belong to Istanbul. İsmail Dede Efendi continues to be a court musician following the decease of Selim III during the reigns of Mahmut II and Abdülmecit. But the time Abdülmecit was in power become the years that witness the drift away of the prominent musician and composer who was treated with a great respect by Mahmut II as well after Selim III. We will deal with shortly. During those years the westernization trend will assume a different shape for itself in the court to bring the social life and the military to an order.

Mahmut II (1808–1839) pulls down the whole institution of the Janissaries who serve as a focal threat to the reforms in the Ottomans, renders the contemporary armies formed during the time of Selim III as the essence of the military units (Mardin, 2002: 11–12), hence opens up a relatively unbarred path for the reforms to be enacted (Kunt, 1997: 93). The abolition of the Janissaries by Mahmut later leads to the repeal of Mehterhane, which is replaced with Mızıkâ-i Hümayun, a military musical education and performance institution, in 1826 possessing *the identity of musical band* (See figure 5).

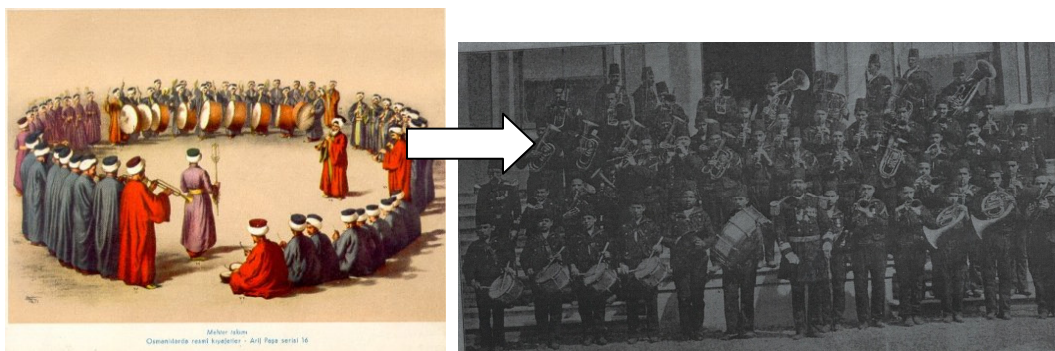


Figure 5: Mehterhane replaced by Mızıkâ-i Hümayun, having *the identity of musical ensemble* (<http://www.mkutup.gov.tr/osmanli/30>) Bahriye Sıbyan Muzikası (Malumat Mecmuası, 1909)

The setting up of the first orchestra in the court with a western identity and later turning into the sole military education institution of the court can be seen as the one-to-one effect of the westernization on the court. The arrival of the Italian chief Donizetti who will later teach Hamparsum, the musical writing of the period, and the western musical notes to the whole musical ensemble should also be kept in mind as a key point since Donizetti will ease the

path the western musical note actively and dominantly enters into the court as of the 17th century (See figure 6).

The reaction to the whole westernization enterprise, on the other hand, can be said to take place on a large scale. The period of Mahmut II displays a theme in which the administration and the state, in time, tend to be biased toward encouraging and backing up the western music more than ever in time. In the period of Abdülmecit; however, everything takes on a different shape and path. Although Dede Efendi received considerable respect from the great uncle and father of Abdülmecit, the magnificent composer will be asked to compose light and brisk works rather than something declamatory. As Dede leaves the palace with an excuse for pilgrimage purposes, he mumbles his famous “this game started to wear thin” words indicating the weakening support of Ottoman-Turkish music by the court (Pekin, 1999).

After this stage, the westernization movement bluntly revealed its effects during the time of Abdülmecit distinctly favoring the west tones over the east lineage as the sole thing heard within the walls of the court became the orchestra. The French musician Litsz composed an anthem for the sultan along with the many other artists invited to Istanbul.



Figure 6: Donizetti (Gazimihal, 1955: 47) and Hamparsum Notation: III. Selim's Suzidilara Peşrevi

Musical plays and operettas began to be staged in the French Theatre opened in Istanbul in 1839. Such representations coming from the west enriched the polyphonic musical and the famous Italian operas were staged in the Naum Theatre in 1840's. The theatre built in Yıldız following the order of Abdülhamit was also for hosting such plays (Manrtan, 2000: 190)

We can mention two important reactions in the court to the westernization currents. The biggest one was the impact this movement had on many of the composers, the example and the greatest proof of which can be viewed as the “Yine Bir Gülnihâl” of Dede Efendi composed in the $\frac{3}{4}$ waltz rhythm (See figure 7).

One other reaction was the outcome that the Turkish music performers and composers had to continue their professions outside the court due to the fading support for them from the court. Turkish Music, the unaccepted music in the court, chose the places of city folk music. The city folk music, which continued since the Tulip Era due to the great interest of the Istanbulites, was later accompanied by the *kaba saz* ensembles consisting of *hanendes* (singers), *sazendes* (instrument players), *köçeks*, *tavşans*⁸ and *çengis*⁹ as a result of the performances alongside with dance in the *mesires* (popular excursion spots), coffeehouses and *meyhanes* (Aksoy, 1999: 807).

⁸ They were male dancers cross-dressed like rabbit, employed as entertainers in Ottoman.

Serâî

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of four staves of music in a 3/4 time signature, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first two staves are identical and contain the lyrics: "Yi ne bir gül ni hâl Âl di ku gön lü mü". The last two staves are also identical and contain the lyrics: "Sim ten gon ca fem bî be del ol gü zel".

Yi ne bir gül ni hâl Âl di ku gön lü mü

Yi ne bir gül ni hâl Âl di ku gön lü mü

Sim ten gon ca fem bî be del ol gü zel

Sim ten gon ca fem bî be del ol gü zel

Figure 7: The first part and refrain of *Yine Bir Gülnihâl*

As the western music was performed in the court, *ince saz* and *kaba saz* ensembles were espoused among the Istanbul public. Yet, the westernization current was always restricted with the court and never was able to pour itself out of the walls of the court. The shift of the performing places from the court into the city is the major proof of the reactions to the westernization in the Ottoman Court Music Identity.



Figure 8: Enderunî Fazıl, a poet of Divan literature, wrote a book. It was called as "Hubânname and Zenannâme" in 1793. The book includes a fresco, in which there was an old *Istanbul Meyhane* (Bar Room); some musicians were playing the kemenche and lute and a tavşan (a kind of dancer) was dancing.

In conclusion, the whole experience of the Ottomans starting from the Tulip Era marks a significant wave of adopting the Western 'style' in its institutions. Although this is simply an acceptance of the strength of the West in terms of its technological innovation, the traces of this

⁹ They were female dancers, employed as entertainers in Ottoman Seraglio.

current, in time, transgress into the field of court music, which is basically the main circle where the music springs from to the public in the Ottomans. Nevertheless, in this paper, it is important to evade the simplistic notion of viewing westernization as a process that totally changed and transformed the Ottoman culture, let alone the court music. Until the time the Turkish Republic is established, when the whole transformation project by the state will be initiated, the operation of the idea of the 'west' will be restricted with the elitist circles and not blend into the public. The 'west' will mostly remain side by side with the 'traditional' institutions. Even if in Traditional Turkish Music "big forms" and "big rhythms" were used in a less dense manner, the traditional music continued with a new conception. Although with the westernization Turkish Music fell into contempt in the court and this approach continued in the Republic Era, by the courtesy of composers, which were the symbols of the traditional école, it was recovered to adopt a new view, and due to the interest in and love for their music outside the court, Ottoman and Turkish music is carried along to the 20th century.

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