

Musical Note Writing Systems developed between 17'Th and 19'Th century

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Abstract. Besides transferring the spoken language into written one, the human searched numerous methods to transfer the music into writing. One of the first efforts to notate that were known in the history was carried out by the Sumerians. Sumerians provided the samples of first notating activities reach to present days through using symbols similar to their writings. In Turkish music, the first notating samples are seen in the forms of letters. In this system (ebced) developed by Yakub Al Kîndi (790 – 874) for the first time, the letters in Arabic alphabets was thought to be equal to a sound. Later on, this system was used with a different method of expression by Nâyî Osman Dede (1652-1730) who was an important composer and performer in Turkish music. It was developed by Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede (1765-1821), an important composer and performer of Turkish music; some sample works were notated through this method and were transferred to present days. Another name that developed an alternative notating system in the same period with Nâsır Dede is Hamparsum (Hampartzum) Limonciyan (1768-1839). This system, also known as Hamparsun notes, was formed using the letters in the Armenian alphabet. In Turkish music, another name who has developed a distinctive method in the notating system that depends on letters is the Prince of Moldova Demetrius Cantemir (1673-1727). Through the notating system he developed himself; Cantemir notated numerous songs of Turkish music and transferred them to the present. Current Western notes were used in Turkish music during the Ottoman Empire. Ali Ufkî Bey (1610-1675) (Albert-Wojciech Bobowski) of Polish (Poland) origin, notated many works of Turkish music of seventeenth century and transferred to the present. In this study, the notating systems developed in Turkish music between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries and the importance of these systems in accordance with Turkish music have been discussed.

Keywords: Turkish music, notating system, 17.th century, 19.th century

1 Introduction

First notating activities known in the history were carried out Sumerians. Sumerians provided the transfer of first samples of notating to the present through using the symbols on clay tablets through cuneiform scripts similar to their own writing system.

In Turkish music, it is seen that the first notating samples depend on letters. First of all, the Arabic philosopher Yakub Al Kîndi (790 – 874), set the system to equalize every letter in the Arabic alphabet to a sound. This method (ebced) was used later on by Safiyüddin Abdülmümin Urmevî (?-1294), the theoretician of Turkish music in the 13.th century in his manuscript called 'Kitabü'l Edvar'. Urmevî notated his own composition through ebced method. This composition that was notated has great importance since it is the oldest piece of work written in the current notes and reflects the melodic perception of the period. This ebced system was effectively used by the musicians of the period after Urmevi, the founder of systematic theory in Turkish music, until the seventeenth century.

Except the ebced system, there are musician such as Nâyî Osman Dede (1652-1730), Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede (1765-1821), Demetrius Cantemir the Moldova Prince (1673-1727) and Armenian origin Hamparsum Limonciyan'dır (1768-1839). Moreover, the first use of current western notes in Turkey was performed by Ali Ufkî Bey (1610-1675) (Albert-Wojciech Bobowski) in Polish origin. Those names notated the oral and

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instrumental works of the period through the notating systems they have developed and their works and they transferred them to the present.

2 Method

In this study, It is benefited from the images taken the manuscripts in order to provide information about notation writing systems between 17th and 19th century in Turkish music. In addition, It is used the source scanning method in this study.

3 Data and Comments

3.1 Ali Ufkî Bey (Albert / Wojciech Bobowski) (1610-1675)

Real name of Ali Ufkî Bey with Polish origin is Wojciech Bobowski. In the European sources, his name is given as Albert Bobowski or Bobovius. He has used the name of Albertus Bobovius in his Latin works. He was born in the city of Lwow / Lviv that is currently within the borders of Ukraine in 1610. According to Polish sources, he was captured by Crimean Tatars and brought to İstanbul. His knowledge of thirteen languages (Behar, 2005) and his knowledge about western music and notating show that he has received a good education in the city where he was born. After he was brought to İstanbul, he was taken to Enderun, the educational institute of the palace and learned Classical Turkish music, Turkish pop music and how to play the instrument of dulcimer (İhsanoğlu, 2006). Bobowski who has lived in the palace for nineteen years converted to Islam and took the name of Ali and worked in the palace as a musician and music instructor. Ali Ufkî gave his works in three different fields such as language, religion and music. He used the notating system which he specifically applied in his work called ‘Hazâ Mecmua-i Sâz-ü Söz’. He recorded about 400 Turkish songs which he performed during the period he lived in the palace through using this system. He has written the western notes on the portrait with five lines according to the Ottoman alphabet and formed his own system using Ottoman letters in the expression of clef (Girgin Tohumcu, 2006). This work is being exhibited as a solely copy in British Museum in London.

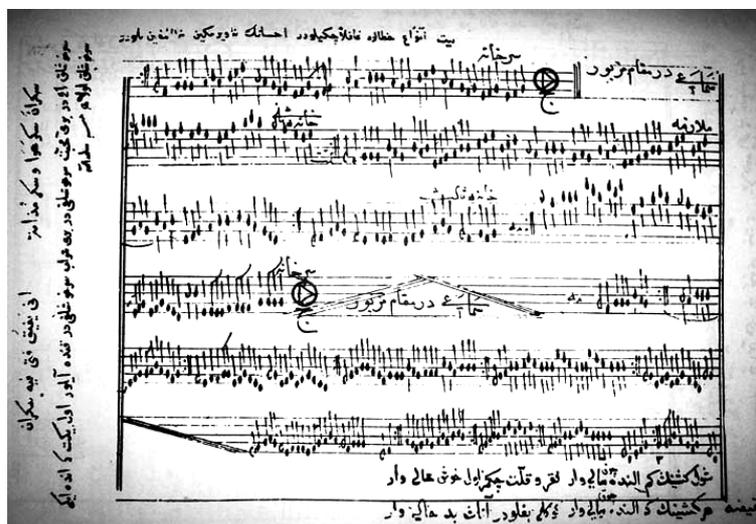


Fig.1

3.2 Notating System of Demetrius Cantemir the Prince (1673-1727)

The composer, performer and the Turkish music theorist who was called as ‘Kantemiroğlu’ by the Turks, ‘Kantemiroğlu’, ‘Dimitrie Cantemir’ by the Romanians, ‘Demetrius Cantemir’ by the Western people was born in Yaş (Romania), the capital city of Moldavia on the 26th of October 1673. When he was a small child, he learned Latin, Greek and Slovenian languages; he took his first music lessons from Yeremia Kakavellas from Crete Island who knows Byzantiand music very well (Tura, 2001). Cantemir came to İstanbul when he was fourteen and stayed for twenty one years. He was in the Ottoman Palace during the period of Sultan Ahmet the Second (1691-1695) and was appointed as Moldavian bey (Öztuna, 2006). He received musical education in Enderun, the educational institution of the palace. Cantemir who knows

Turkish music very well developed a notating system depending on letters. In order to show the frets (notes), Cantemir considered the name of the notes and accepted the most important letter or the compounds of letters that associate each word as the symbol of that fret through this system, (Tura, 2001). Through this system, Cantemir showed the notes with letters and durations with numbers (Girgin Tohumcu, 2006). In the first section of ‘Kitâbu İlmi’l-Mûsikî alâ vechi’l-Hurûfat’, Cantemir gave the theory of Turkish music, and the samples of notating he determined the works of the period through his own notating system in the second chapter (Tura, 2001).

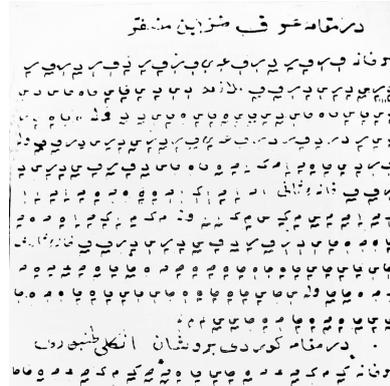


Fig.2

3.3 Notating System of Nâyî Osman Dede (1652-1730)

Nâyî Osman Dede the Mevlevi Sheik, poet, composer, the theorist of Turkish Music, and a reed virtuoso, lived in İstanbul between the dates of 1652 and 1730. He mostly composed religious parts (İhsanoğlu, 2006). He has been mentioned as Kutb-î Nâyî (the pole of the flute players) since he used the reed flute, an althorn instrument in Turkish music, well (Ak, 2009). Nâyî Osman Dede, wrote two manuscripts called ‘Rabt-ı Ta ‘bîrât-ı Mûsikî’ and ‘Risale-i Edvar’ which he gave information about the theory of Turkish music, modes and rhythms (Çakır, 1998). ‘Rabt-ı Ta ‘bîrât-ı Mûsikî’ is a poetical book on the theory of Turkish music written in Persian and includes 276 couplets (Öztuna, 2006). Besides, he developed a different method of expression based on ebcad writing and letters in the field of notation. He explained this system in his work called ‘Nota-i Türkî’, but this book doesn’t exist anymore. In this system, 25 letters or group of letters were used to express the pest octaves. Some of those letters which were added a short line over them other 8 frets that form the second octave were also shown and 33 literal symbols were used (Girgin Tohumcu, 2006).

3.4 Notating System of Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede (1765-1821)

Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede who was born in İstanbul in 1765 received his first education from Ebu Bekir Dede who was both the Sheik of Yenikapı Mevlevi Lodge and his father. He studied Arabic and religious sciences with Halil Efendi the Mufti of Milas (Tura, 2006) and the education of Turkish music from the musicians of Yenikapı Mevlevi Lodge (Küçük, 2003). Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede who was a Mevlevî Sheik, a flute player and a theorist of Turkish music developed ebcad notes in 1794 in order to answer the need of notating in Turkish music and organized the writing principles with the encourage of Sultan Selim the III’rd who is an Ottoman Sultan and a poet and a musician and he notated Sûz-i Dilârâ Mevlevî Âyini and songs (instrumental) composed by Sultan Selim the III’rd and submitted to him with the name of (Tura, 2006). According to Judetz (1998); Abdülbâkî Dede increased the number of frets (notes) in the Turkish serials consisting of two octal sounds and a complete sound from yegah (Re) to squeal huseyniye. He added two frets between yegah and asiran and a fret between rast and zirgule and a fret between squeal neva and squeal hisar.

The elementary idea in this notating system is matching definite letters with definite notes (frequencies). Processual values were shown through numbers written under the letters. Besides, another important aspect of this notating system is the use of full-stop and commas as the signs of mute point (Girgin Tohumcu, 2006).

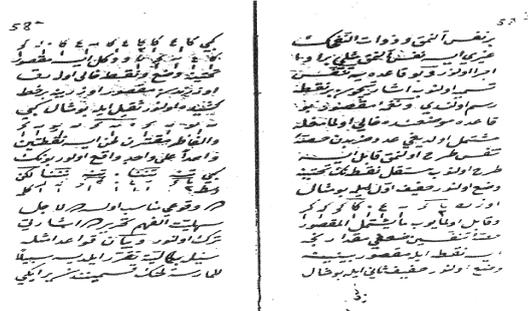


Fig. 3

3.5 Notating System of Hamparsum (1768-1839)

Hamparsum (Hampartzum) Limonciyan with Armenian origin and who was born in İstanbul in 1768 was taken under the protection of a rich Armenian ‘Düzyan family’ and received the education of music since he came from a poor family. Hamparsum who can play violin and tambour attended to the Beşiktaş Mevlevî Lodge and Armenian churches and became the head singer of Meryem Ana Church (Bora, 2010). Moreover, he came into the presence of Sultan Selim the IIIrd and he found ‘Hamparsum letter-symbol’ that consists of seven basic symbols obtained from the Armenian ‘Khaz’ writing and tails added to determine the lower and upper octaves and short lines and dots with the support of the Sultan (İhsanoğlu, 2003) in order to answer the need of notating (Girgin Tohumcu, 2006). He has written the classical pieces of Ottoman/Turkish music during the 18.th century into six notebooks (İhsanoğlu, 2003). During this period which this system is developed, this method that is rapidly accepted has maintained to present.

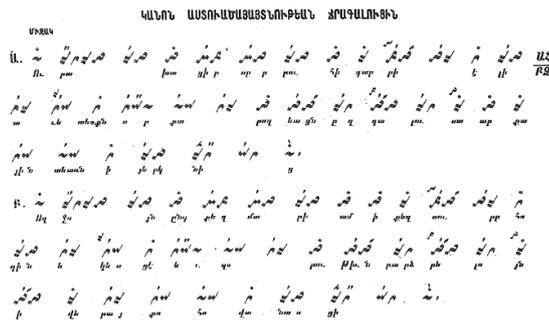


Fig. 4

4 Conclusion

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, notating forms were developed, the systems with great importance according to the history of Turkish music. After Yakub Al Kîndî’, Nâyî Osman Dede who has developed ebcad notation and used with a different expression method explained this system in his work called ‘Nota-i Türkî’. However, this work isn’t available at present. Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede developed ebcad and the number system and used the sign of resting for the first time. Nâsır Dede notated the works of Ottoman sultan Selim the IIIrd through this method and provide them available today. Hamparsum Limonciyan, the musician of the same age as Nâsır Dede, developed the mostly accepted notating system among the number based systems in Turkish music developed from Armenian alphabet (Khaz) since he has the Armenian origin. It can be said that the composers and performers of minor groups in İstanbul contributed in the acceptance of this system. Although the notating system developed by Demetrius Cantemir the Prince wasn’t accepted by the Turkish music society, he had great contributions in transferring numerous works of that period to the present says. Ali Ufkî Bey (Albert / Wojciech Bobowski) with Polish origin is the first person to use the portrait western notes in Turkish music and writing the method of notating from right to the left in a similar way to the Ottoman writing system although he hasn’t developed a new system.

Besides the notating systems used by the five musicians mentioned above have specific values, they have been mediators for the transfer the works of Turkish music during their ages to the present days. Moreover,

these works give us significant information about the melodies and performing styles during the previous ages.

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