

## 2. Periodization of Ottoman Music



# From Anatolian *Edvâr* (Musical Theory Book) Writers to Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede: An Evaluation of the History of Ottoman/Turkish Music Theory

*Nilgün Doğrusöz*

When we look at the adventure of a history of Turkish music, the first person who comes to mind is Rauf Yekta. In the “Turkish Music” article which he penned for the *Encyclopédie de la Musique Lavignac* in 1913, Yekta starts his history from al-Fârâbî and he continues with Ibn Sînâ, Safî al-Dîn, and Kutb al-Dîn al-Şîrâzî. Yekta points out the fact that there are no documents that give any practical information about those centuries as a reason for mentioning theorists and their works, and he goes on to write history on the basis of these theorists and their works. In the same article, Yekta seems to categorize theorists into two groups: *akvâm-ı kâdime* (Ibn Sînâ, al-Kindî, al-Fârâbî) and *müteabirin* (Safî al-Dîn, Hatip Erbilî, Şîrâzî, Mahmud Âlmûlî, Hasan Kâşânî, ‘Abd al Qâdir Marâghî, Kırşehirî, Şukrullâh).

As can be seen in other history books, written sources – in other words, music theory books – can be referred to as sources or evidence for the history of Ottoman/Turkish music. As history is based on written sources, it is apparent that theorists and music theory books have an important place in historical narratives. Categorizations similar to Yekta’s can be also seen within the written sources themselves (in the context of the history of theory). The 18<sup>th</sup> century theory writer Hızır Ağa, for example, uses expressions such as *edvâr-ı kadime* (old theory books) and *fî zamanına* (in our time) to describe older musical theory books and books from his own period (the 18<sup>th</sup> century) respectively. Despite the fact that Hızır Ağa used these expressions, he writes exclusively about the *makam* concepts that he preferred according to his era (Uslu 2009:53). Moreover, the names of theorists are not mentioned in this categorization. Another perspective in this period’s trends can be gleaned from the theorist and musician Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede who developed a categorization in his book *Tedkik ü Tabkik* (Observation and Investigation, 1794) by taking the history of theories into consideration. However, Nâsır Dede did not specify any dating in this categorization, but he used distinguishing adjectives to state that the formations that he mentioned were created by people who lived during different periods. For instance, he uses adjectives like *akdemun* (the oldest ones) and *kudema* (the old ones). It can be guessed from clues in his book that the period he designated as “the old ones of the subsequents” (*kudema-i müteabirin*) refers to the theorists of the eras of Murad II and Mehmet II the Con-

queror. The authors of the music theory books (*edvâr*) of Anatolia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century mention some of the important theorists of the pre-15<sup>th</sup> century period using adjectives such as “philosopher” or “master” in their prologues. Al-Fârâbî, Ibn-i Sinâ, Muhammed Rebâbî, Kemal Tebrîzî and Safî al-Dîn Urmavî etc. can be cited as examples of these names. Yûsuf Kırşehrî, Kadızâde Tirevî, Şükrüllâh Çemişgezekî and Mehmet Ladikî that we view as 15<sup>th</sup> century *edvâr* writers, are some of the theorists of that time. Anatolian music theory tradition within the framework of these theorists will be the primary concern of this study, after which the music theory books of Nayî Osman Dede, Cantemir and Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede and their differences in terms of the music theory tradition will be examined.

In brief, in this article, the alterations and transformations in the history of theories of Ottoman/Turkish music will be reviewed, basing on the music theory books of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in other words the Anatolian *edvâr* tradition until the period that Nâsır Dede lived in.

### *Anatolian Edvâr Writers*

From the time of Yıldırım Bayezid who reigned until the early 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Ottoman palace became an important centre where music lovers, poets and scientists were protected. Henceforward, the Ottoman palace retained this identity (Uzunçarşılı 1977:79, 144). At this stage, Murad II contributed to the translation of many works into Turkish. Uzunçarşılı explains this issue using these words: “In parallel to the expansion of the Ottomans in Rumelia and Anatolia during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Turkish language became a scientific language as well and thus many scientific and literary works were translated into Turkish; in particular Murad II struggled for the growth of Turkish language and literature and safeguarded the music as well” (Uzunçarşılı, 1995:528). It was not only Murad II, but also Mehmet the Conqueror and Bayezid II, who established educational institutions in locations they had conquered, and helped science and art to thrive.

For music theory books the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a fruitful period. Süreyya Agayeva regarded the music theory books of the era as Turkish music theory works and classified their authors as Anatolian writers (Agayeva & Uslu 2008:7). Popescu-Judetzu together with Neubauer made a similar evaluation in their book *Seydi's Book in Music: A 15th century Turkish Discourse* where they transcribed and analysed Seydi's *el-Matlâ* (Popescu-Judetzu & Neubauer 2004:xiv). As I outlined in my PhD thesis titled “A Review of Hariri bin Muhammed's Translation of Kırşehrî Music Theory Book” (Doğrusöz 2007:6-7-9), I prefer to use the term “Anatolian *edvâr* writers”. The first known work on music theory in Anatolia was written by Kırşehrî. It was initially written in Persian, but this original version is lost. Its first known Turkish translation was by Hariri bin Muhammed. Other Anatolian music theory writers generally lived during the reigns of Murad II and Mehmet II the

Conqueror and most of them wrote in Turkish, e.g. Kadızâde Tirevî, Şükrullah Çemişgezekî and Ladikî. Some of the writings composed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and belonging to different theories include:

Kırşehirî Yusuf: *Kitâbü'l Edvâr*, 1411 (Hariri bin Muhammed's translation of Kırşehirî Edvar, 1469);  
 Bedr-i Dilşad: *Muradnâme*, 1427;  
 'Abd al Qâdir Marâghî: *Makâsîd al-Albân*, 1435;  
 Hızır bin Abdullah: *Kitabü'l Edvâr*, 1441;  
 Kadızade Mehmet Tirevî: *Risâle-i Mûsikî*, 1492?;  
 Lâdikî Mehmet Çelebi: *Zeynü'l Elbân*, 1494;  
 Hacı Abdülaziz: *Nekavetü'l Edvâr*, 15<sup>th</sup> century;  
 Ahmedoğlu Şükrüllâh: *Tercüme-i Kitab-ı Edvâr* (?);  
 Fethullah Şirvanî: *Mecelletün fi'l-Mûsika*, 1453;  
 Harîrî Bin Muhammed: *Kırşehirî Edvâr*, 1469;  
 Seydî: *El Matlâ fi Beyân el-Edvâr ve'l Makamât*, 1504.<sup>1</sup>

Theorists who explain octaves and intervals by dividing them into segments also use alphabetic notation, called "ebced" in theory explanations, for example Lâdikî Mehmet: *Zeynü'l Elhan* (1494), Hacı Abdülaziz: *Nekavetü'l Edvâr* (15<sup>th</sup> century), Ahmedoğlu Şükrüllâh: *Tercüme-i Kitab-ı Edvâr* (15<sup>th</sup> century), Fethullah Şirvanî: *Mecelletün fi'l-Musika* (1453), and Seydî: *el-Matlâ fi Beyânî el-Edvâr ve'l Makamât* (1504). All other Anatolian *edvâr* writers fail to provide mathematical explanations using *ebced*. Apart from this issue, it is necessary to reflect the understanding of the time by searching for an inter-textual relationship between Hızır's *Kitâb-ı Edvâr* (1451) and Seydî's *el-Matlâ* (1504), both dependent on the information in *Kırşehirî* (1451). The common features evident in the Anatolian *edvâr* writers are given below.

### *Characteristics of the Anatolian Edvâr Authors' Works:*

- *Makam*, *âvâz*, *şû'be* and *usûl* are explained with circles; besides *terkîbs* are explained using rulers. In other words, schematic explanations are used.
- *Makams* classified in 12 *makams*, seven *âvâz*'s, four *şû'bes* and *terkîbs*. *Makam* and *âvâzes* explanations are made through *seyir*.
- 12 *makams*, seven *âvâz*'s and four *şû'bes* which do not exist in the theories of al-Fârâbî and Sâfi al-Dîn are associated with 12 zodiac signs, seven stars and four main elements. Pythagorean understanding prevails in the cosmology classification and numbers by Anatolian music theory writers.

<sup>1</sup> For 15<sup>th</sup> century music theories, see Akdoğan 1999 and Uslu 2000. For music theories until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Uslu 2002.

- Although Safi al-Dîn is mentioned, the mathematical explanation of the pitch system according to Safi al-Dîn's theory is absent and not even mentioned. Therefore, in these periods one does not make use of *ebced* music notation in explaining the tone system.
- The importance of music is stressed and it is stated that music is an honourable discipline, stories are told to demonstrate this (for ex. the camel story). Mentioning Ibn Sinâ and Saf al-Dîn in these stories is a historical mistake.
- *Usûls* are related to *aruz vezni* and they are explained referencing the rules of *aruz*. *Usûls* are categorized in two groups: *sakîl* and *haffîf*.
- The importance of masters in musical education is often stressed. It is understood that, in education, *meşk* is essential.
- There are layouts of *ud*, *ney*, *çeng* (harp) and *miskal* (pan flute).
- *Rast makam* and the tones of *rast* are taken as a basis in *makam* explanations and instrument layouts. The explanation of 12 *makams* starts with *makam rast*.
- *Nevbet-i mürettep* is mentioned as a genre, together with further sub-genres.
- Pitch names are introduced.

Although Seydî's book represents the theories of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, content-wise he can be classified under the Anatolian *edvâr* writers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, it seems possible to speak of an era in the theoretical approaches of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The main examples for music theory writings in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are:

Nayî Osman Dede: *Rabt-ı Tâbirât-ı Mûsikî*, 17<sup>th</sup> century;  
 Cantemir: *Kitâbu 'İlmi'l Mûsikî 'ala Vecbi'l Hurûfât*, 1691;  
 Abdülbâkî Nâsir Dede: *Tedkik ü Tabkik*, 1794.

As a common feature these three works all include both music notation and theoretical writings. I will try to draw attention to these aspects and transformations, specifying the features of the writings in the section headings.

#### *17<sup>th</sup> Century Music Theory Writing:*

Nayî Osman Dede's *Rabt-i Tâ'birât-i Mûsikî*  
 (Determining the Musical Expressions)

The first example for the writings of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is Nayî Osman Dede's *Rabt-ı Tâbirât-ı Mûsikî* (Akdoğan 1991). Beside this treatise, there is a collection (*mecmû'â*) with music notation, owned until his recent death by Yavuz Yekta, which includes the music of the time with around 70 instrumental compositions (*peşrev* and *saz semâ'i*) in alphabetic notation (Popescu-Judet 1996b:38). Although there are still twelve *makams* in the theoretical work of Nâyî Osman Dede, in their designation differences become visible. The classification concept can be seen below and in the explanations of notes and intervals attributions to Marâghî are made.

- *Makams* (12 *makams* (they start with *rast* but they are different from the 12 *makams* in the tradition));
- *Şu'bes* (24 *şu'bes*);
- *Terkîbs* (44 *terkîbs*);
- *Perdes* (33 *perdes*, i.e. tones, from *yegâh* to *tiz evc*).

*Characteristics of the theory book of Nayî Osman Dede:*

- In particular in the explanations of the tones and intervals reference is made to Marâghî;
- names of *perdes* (notes) are mentioned;
- introduction of a new classification concept for the *makams*;
- absence of *âvâzes*, *usûls* and genres;
- educational qualities;
- musical notation.<sup>2</sup>

*17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Music Theory Writing:*

*Cantemir: Kitâbu 'İlmi'l Mûsikî 'ala vechi'l Hurûfât*

(Book on the Science of Defining and Performing Music with Letters)

The other important book of the time is the one which is also known as *Cantemir's Edvâr* (Cantemir 2000). Cantemir describes his own ideas as a new theory, literally “new words” (*kavl-i cedid*) as opposed to “old words” (*kavl-i kadim*). By *kavl-i cedid*<sup>3</sup> he means his music theory in general (see Popescu-Judet, 2000:37). Cantemir's theory is thus *new word*, *new theory*, and it is designated accordingly by many musicologists. The theory part of the book is grouped under eight main headings. In the explanation of theory, the *tanbur* is accepted as the main instrument. This is the most characteristic feature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- The signs of notes (*perde*), introduction to the science of music
- Music theory
- *Makams* of high register
- Pseudo-*makams*
- Explanations of *terkîbs* in use
- Consonance and dissonance in music
- Music theory according to older authorities
- Science of defining and performing of *usûl* according to *vezin* and numbers.

<sup>2</sup> For the music writing, see Doğrusöz 2006:47.

<sup>3</sup> Previous theorists sometimes used the term *cedid* for a new *usûl* form or a *makam*. In his work *Fethiye* (1483), Ladikî explains the differences between the perspectives of the new and old *makams* (Popescu-Judet, 2000:38).

- I. There are seven *makams* in low-pitched whole notes: 1. *trak*, 2. *rast*, 3. *dügâh*, 4. *segâh*, 5. *çârgâh*, 6. *nevâ*, 7. *hüseynî*
- II. There are three high-pitched notes: 1. *evç*, 2. *gerdâniye*, 3. *muhayyer*
- III. As we progress from the low-pitched notes to high-pitched notes, we see four *makams* of half notes: 1. *kürdî*, 2. *sabâ*, 3. *bayâtî*, 4. *‘acem*
- IV. There are five *makams* of half notes that we see progressing towards high-pitched notes: 1. *şelmâz*, 2. *bisar*, 3. *‘uzzâl*, 4. *bûselîk*, 5. *zîrgüle*.
- V. There are five compound *makams*: 1. *sünbüle*, 2. *mabûr*, 3. *pençgâh*, 4. *nik-rîz*, 5. *nişâbûr*.
- VI. There are two pseudo-*makams*: 1. *bestenigâr*, 2. *yîrefkend*
- VII. There is one *makam* which has a name but does not really exist: *rehâvî*
- VIII. There are *terkîbs* which everyone mistakes for *makams*.

#### *Characteristics of the Theoretical Explanations of Cantemir:*

- Inclusion of performance;
- “New” classification concept to *makams*;
- Explanation of *usûls* with *düm-teks*;<sup>4</sup>
- Educational approach;
- Development of a musical notation;
- Use of a basic scale concept;
- *Makam rast*, as in the case of Anatolian *edvâr* writers consists of whole notes.

In my opinion Cantemir’s *edvâr* provides both a new approach and includes issues from the older *edvâr* books. In other words, there is detailed information about *makams*, *usûls*, forms and even though he does not give information about instruments, while explaining the vocal *fasıl* (*fasl-ı hanende*) he gives the names of the instruments of the period. Besides, the fact that Cantemir took *tanbur* as the main instrument for his theory and the explanations of some musical terms (like accompaniment) is interesting and important.

#### *18<sup>th</sup> Century Music Theory Writing:*

*Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede’s Tedkik ü Tahkik*  
(Observation and Investigation)

Among the 18<sup>th</sup> century theory books, Nâsır Dede’s *Tedkik ü Tahkik* (mentioned above) includes his theoretical explanations about *makams* and *usûls* in a manner that is closer to our day. We have to add that Nâsır Dede also wrote another work

<sup>4</sup> In manuscript no. 292 which is located in the Paris National Museum, the expressions “*dümtek*” are mentioned. This means that this trend started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Behar 2008:131).



called *Tabririye* (1794) in which he developed the old alphabetical notation system “*ebced*” which was used in the music history of the Islamic era (Doğrusöz Dışiaçık & Uslu 2009). In this manuscript he explained his new notation system and notated a *Mevlevi aşm* of Selim III, the sultan of the time. Just as with Nâyi Osman Dede and Cantemir, it is an alphabetic notation system.

Abdülbâki Nâsır Dede was occupied with the theory of Turkish music. As Yalçın Turan observed, he deserted the explanatory traditions of the old *edvâr* writers, and he was occupied with the performance of the music of his time, thus putting practice before theory (Tura 2006:15). Tura characterises his approach as similar to Cantemir’s. Thus, in the last part of the book *Tabririye*, he emphasizes that “nothing could be explained with what the old generations tried to express by strumming on a string and it is unnecessary to explain music theory with this method” (Doğrusöz & Uslu 2009:65). Turning back to the music theory, I shall summarize the expressions used in Nâsır Dede’s theory book:

- Notes (*perde*): How we can produce 37 *perdes* playing the *ney*.
- *Makams*: 14 *makams*, notes of *makams*, additionally the presence of ornamental notes, the *seyir* (melodic progression) of *makams* (with intro, *seyir*, ornamentation, ambitus and finalis (*karar*)), consonance between notes and *makams* and *makams*’ effect on humans, *terkîbs* (125 *terkîbs*), 6 or 7 *âvâzes* which are mentioned in categorizations of older *edvârs*, 24 *şu’be* as constituting branches and calling them *terkîb* and, finally, 11 additional *terkîbs*.
- *Usûls* (21 *usûls*), explanation of “*düm-tek*”, the implementation of three levels: *hafîf-i evvel*, *hafîf-i sâni* and *sakîl*.

#### *Characteristics of the Theory Explanation of Nâsır Dede:*

- Priority on practice.
- Nâsır Dede details who arranged *makams* and *terkîbs* and/or in which period it took place. New names are given in these cases.
- Ornamentations.
- Educational qualities.

#### *An Outlook on the Concept of Periodisation in Nâsır Dede’s Theory History*

As I stated above, in my study of the theory books from the Anatolian *edvâr* writers up to Abdülbâki Nâsır Dede, we can find nominations about the approaches of the different periods in some theory books. However, the most comprehensive one among them is in *Tedkik ü Tabkik* of Nâsır Dede who is one of the last representatives of the *edvâr* traditions. It seems to be necessary to present his classification and the estimated classification of Yalçın Tura and compare both. This set of classifications is as follows:

Nâsır Dede	Yalçın Turan
– <i>Akdemun</i> (The oldest ones)	Until Fârâbi
– <i>Kudemâ-i mütekaddimîn</i> (The old ones of the predecessors)	?
– <i>Kudemâ</i> (The old ones)	Safî al-Dîn and his followers
– <i>Kudemâ-i müteabhirin</i> (The old ones of the subsequents)	Period of Murad and Mehmet II the Conqueror
– <i>Müteabhirin</i> (The subsequents)	Lâdiki
– <i>Mütekaddimîn-selef</i> (The ones before that ones that precede the present day)	The successors of Lâdiki
– <i>Eslâf</i> (The ones that precede the present day)	The latter ones
– <i>Müteabhirin-i Selef</i> (The latter ones that precede the present day)	Osman Dede and Cantemir
– <i>Fi zemanuna</i> (The present day)	Selim III period

Having made this classification, Yalçın Tura stated that “in spite of the fact that it seems possible to make a categorization examining the periods during which *makams* and combinations were arranged, there are contradictions and incoherencies in the information on this issue, any categorization that may be conducted cannot be far from an estimation” (Tura 2006:23).

There are such statements of Abdülbâki Nâsır in his book as “possibly an invention by *müteabhirin*” or “appeared in the *edvârs* that we have seen” (Aksud 1988).

Let’s prove this with an example based on what I stated above. For *sâzkâr* Nâsır Dede gives the starting rule by making *segâh*, cadencing on *rast* and pacing like *mâye*. He stated that this combination belongs to “the latter of those that precede the present day” (fol. 32b.), thus *müteabhirin-i selef*. According to Yalçın Tura’s classification, this *sâzkâr* description should have been seen in the theories of Osman Dede and Cantemir. However, this description fits descriptions of the Anatolian *edvâr* writers. In Kırşehirî, (fol. 15b.), the *sâzkâr terkip* is described as “beginning with *segâh*, showing *mâye* and *karcigâr*, and ends on *rast*”. Hızır described it using these words: “beginning with *segâh* and descend, show *mâye* and ends in the house of *rast*” (fol. 144a). The descriptions made by Seydî (fol. 15b) and Tirevî (fol. 180a) are similar. In short, this description is that of *kudemâ-i müteabhirin* (the old ones of the subsequents). According to Tura’s classification, it is the description of the writers during the reigns of Mehmet the Conqueror and Murad II.

For this study, it should be necessary to look at other examples. However, it might be sufficient to get an idea of the issue.<sup>5</sup> Inferring from *makams*, we certainly can consider a historical periodization. One of the two basic elements in Ottoman/Turkish music theory books is *makam* and Nâsır Dede developed a categorization basing on *makams*. The other one is *usûl*, but a categorization of *usûls* is not included in Nâsır Dede. In addition to that, issues in other theory books such as form or instruments could add important contributions to the issue of periodization.

So far, form and content transformations in the selected theory books have been taken into consideration. Let us briefly review some points we need to consider in order to develop a historical periodization, as emerged from this study of a few theory books and which reflects on their respective periods:

*Makam* categorization: The categorization of *makam*, *âvâze*, *şû'be* and *terkîb*; most of the categorizations of the new theorists with a different approach are made in the form of basic *makams* and *terkîbs*.

Terminology: Terms like *âgâze etme* (beginning), vibrating notes (*perdeyi titretme*), dissonance-consonance (*arbede-ünsiyet*).

Notation: Reflexions on the fixation through notation by Europeans such as Ali Ufkî and Cantemir in theory books; musical notations written with the support of those sultans who were in favour of innovation; at the behest of Selim III, Nâsır Dede developed a system of musical notation.

Instruments: Instruments of the 15<sup>th</sup> century like *ud* and *çeng* gave way to *tanbur* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (as in Cantemir); theorists who emerged from the Mevlevi tradition explained notes via the *ney* (as in Nâsır Dede).

Genres: While in the works of the Anatolian *edvâr* writers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century *nevbet-i mürettep* was an issue, Centemir explanations forms such as *semâ'î* and *kâr*.

Notes: The denomination of notes, beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, varied over time. In the comparisons of notes mentioned in the theory books musical notation should also be taken into consideration, for instance the theory book and the *mecmû'â* which uses the musical notation of Nayî Osman Dede. Meanwhile in the theory book, the note *nikriz* is not mentioned, yet it exists in his notation.

*Usûl*: For *usûl* the expression *tenen* was used and set up in association with poems and *aruz*; beginning in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular after Ali Ufkî, the expression *dümtek* was implemented, taking percussion instruments as a new basis. These are the main parameters that we have to take into consideration in order to determine an approach to a history of Ottoman/Turkish music theory.

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive study on Nâsır Dede's categorization, see Yarman 2008.

If we look at the history of theory concerning Ottoman/Turkish music we might conclude as follows: while following Anatolian *edvâr* writers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century there is hardly anything worth mentioning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries form a distinct period, in that the Ottomans internalized theories and brought them to maturity.