
**EVOLUTION OF AN INSTRUMENTAL GENRE IN TRADITIONAL TURKISH ART MUSIC: A
DISCUSSION ON “INSTRUMENTAL SEMÂÎ”**

**Geleneksel Türk Sanat Müziğinde Çalgısal Biçimler ve Türler: “Çalgısal Semâî” Üzerine Bir Tartışma
Sıtkı Bahadır TUTU***

ABSTRACT

The formal aspects of traditional Turkish art music creations had been evolved throughout the centuries. On the other hand, during the evolution period the performing features and the functions of the creations changed and varied, too. As a result of those changes, the terms like *peşrev* and *saz semâîsi* (which means *semâî for instruments, instrumental semâî*) gained their complexions which are discussed here. In this article, brief information about the instrumental genres is given chronically based on some *edvârs* which are the written historical sources. Then evolution of the genre instrumental semâî is explained and its relations with a much older genre *peşrev* are emphasized. At this stage, I mentioned a generally accepted judgment about some specific *usûls* (*rhythm patterns*), seeing them as the essential design elements of *peşrev* genre. I arrive at the conclusion that significant role which is attributed to *usûl* is the result of a traditional composition style in a broad sense. In this frame, the determinative aspects of instrumental semâî (form, function, context and the relations of these elements) are clarified here. In connection with my discussion on instrumental semâî, the common use of *form* as a term instead of *genre* is needed to be addressed. Because the terms form and genre are important keys for music research they are also important for classifying the creations of Turkish art music tradition. As an inference, form can contribute a lot to the description of a genre indeed. But it is not the unique element determining the genre and because of this, using the term form instead of genre just produces obscurity ordinarily. As the main result of this article, all the aspects of genres can evolve or disappear, therefore it must be considered that classifications are not permanent.

Keywords: Saz semâîsi, evolution, instrumental semâî, form, genre.

ÖZ

Türk sanat müziği geleneği yaratmalarının biçim özellikleri yüzyıllar boyunca evrilmiştir. Diğer taraftan, evrim süreci esnasında yaratmaların icra özellikleri ve işlevleri de değişerek çeşitlenmiştir. Bu değişimlerin bir sonucu olarak, *peşrev* ve *sazsemâîsi* (*çalgi için semâî, çalgısal semâî*) gibi terimler de burada tartışılan mahiyetlerini kazanmışlardır. Bu makalede; çalgısal türler hakkında kısa bilgiler, yazılı tarihi kaynaklar olan edvârlardan bazılarına dayanılarak kronolojik sırada verilmiştir. Ardından, çalgısal semâî türünün evrimi açıklanmış ve çok daha eski bir tür olan *peşrev* ile ilişkileri üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu aşamada; belirli bazı *usûlleri* *peşrev* türünün esas tasarım unsurları olarak gören yaygın bir yargıya değindim. Sonuçta, usûle atfedilen önemli rolün geniş anlamda geleneksel bir kompozisyon tarzından kaynaklandığı vargısına ulaştım. Bu çerçevede, çalgısal semâînin belirleyici özellikleri (*biçim, işlev, bağlam* ve bu bileşenlerin ilişkileri) burada açıklığa kavuşturuldu. Çalgısal semâî hakkındaki tartışma ile ilgili olarak, *form* (*biçim*) teriminin yaygın bir şekilde *tür* terimi yerine kullanılması üzerinde durmak gerekmiştir. Çünkü biçim ve tür terimleri, müzik araştırmaları için önemli anahtarlardır; ayrıca bu terimler, Türk sanat müziği geleneği yaratmalarını tasnif etmek için de önem taşımaktadır. Bir çıkarım olarak; biçim, gerçekten de bir türün tarifinin yapılmasına büyük katkıda bulunabilir. Fakat biçim, türü belirleyen eşsiz bir unsur değildir ve bu sebeple biçim teriminin tür terimi yerine kullanılması doğal olarak belirsizlik üretir. Makalenin başlıca sonucu, türlerin her özellikliğinin evrilebileceği ya da yok olabileceği, buna bağlı olarak tasniflerin kalıcı olmadıklarının gözden kaçırılmaması gerektiğidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Saz semâîsi, evrim, çalgısal semâî, biçim, tür.

Araştırma Makalesi Geliş Tarihi/Received Date: 03.05.2020 Kabul Tarihi/Accepted Date: 26.05.2020

This article is the elaborated and renewed version of the unpressed conference text “Instrumental Forms and Genres in Traditional Turkish Art Music: A Discussion on Saz Semaisi” presented at International Theory Conference: Turkey, İzmir, 2012.

* **Sorumlu Yazar:** Assoc. Prof., Turkey: Izmir, Ege University, Turkish Music State Conservatory, Turkish Music Department. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9720-328X

Atf/Citation: Tutu, S.B. (2020) Evolution of an Instrumental Genre in Traditional Turkish Art Music: A Discussion On “Instrumental Semai”. *Eurasian Journal of Music and Dance*, (16), 114-133.

Traditional Turkish music has two main branches which are Turkish folk music and Turkish art music. Here, an instrumental genre of Turkish art music is dealt. This genre *saz semâisi* (which means *semâi for instruments, instrumental semâi*) has evolved like the other vocal and instrumental genres throughout the centuries. First, I must emphasize that the large majority, about %80-90 in today’s large and popular web archives, of the works in traditional Turkish art music repertoire are vocal works³. As far as we know, instrumental works except the genres which have already certain relations with dance positioned around the vocal works predominantly in the religious and secular traditional repertoire groups like *ayin-i şerif* and *fasıl* performances at least from 13th century to 20th century. From the instrumental genres, *peşrev* and instrumental semâi are the most familiar genres which still exist.

In this article, a brief information about the instrumental genres is given chronically. Then evolution of the genre instrumental semâi is explained. In this frame, the determinative aspects of instrumental semâi (form, function, context and the relations of these elements) are clarified here. In connection to this, the common use of *form* as a term instead of *genre* in Turkish music is discussed, too. In the meanwhile, some samples are used in order to support the ideas presented in this article.

Two Archaic Instrumental Genres: *Kök* and *Tarîka*

We have no musical scores of some instrumental works which were performed in the past. But the written historical sources provide us with some information concerning their genres. For musicians, *edvârs* are the most important ones among these written sources. The term *edvâr* has several meanings. Here, this term is used for the books written by old musicologists and this is the most common meaning of this term. In these handwritten books, there are theoretical information about the music of the past, the instruments and the context. Also, there are a few musical notes.

One of the oldest terms concerning instrumental genres which we come across in *edvârs* is *kök*. Abdülkâdir Merâgî who lived in 14th century stated that the köks were the instrumental works performed by Turks, Mongols and Hitays (Bardakçı, 1986, p. 94-95). According to Hitays, there were 366 köks (equal to the number of the days in a year). One of them was played behind the Khans throne daily. Nine of them were the most important köks and they were called *bisun kök*. These nine köks were performed with the *kök* which was special to the day (Gazimihal, 2006, p. 101). As Bardakçı notifies, some of the köks were still in demand in 15th century (Bardakçı, 1986, p. 98). Another detail from Merâgî about köks is their rhythmic patterns which are called *usûl* in Turkish music. The köks were composed only in some certain *usûls* which are *remel*, *mütekârib* and *muhammes* (Bardakçı, 1986, p. 94-95). And the last thing about the köks, we do not have any evidence that the köks were performed separately from the vocal genres, yet. In this case, it is possible that the köks could be positioned around a repertoire group including mostly vocal works.

About one century before Merâgî, Safüyiddin Abdülmü’min Urnevî mentioned an instrumental melody type named *tarîka* in his *edvâr* which is named *Kitabü'l-Edvâr*. The word *tarîka* is Arabic and it means “way” (Kestelli, 2004, p. 478). In this book, there are the scores of 12 *tarîkas* (Uygun, 1999, p.126-130). After each of the first two *tarîkas* which consist of one musical phrase, there are the musical notes of two *savts* in the same *makâms* (melodic models including scales, dominant notes, tonic and traditional route of melody) of the *tarîkas*. Depending on these

³ For example; total 45553, vocal 40038 (%87,89), instrumental 5515 works are in the web archives (Divan Makam, n.d)

two samples, savts are the vocal works consisting of one or two musical phrases with Arabic lyrics. Tarikâs have the same melody with the savt's first phrase except the duration of the first note. Savt's first note is always longer than the first note of the related tarîka in our samples. This shows us that the tarîka was not an independent instrumental genre. It was only a preparation for the performing of the savt. There is another important information about savt in a historical source written in 14th century. According to Alişah Hacı Bûke, some savts had no lyrics (Çakır, 1999, p. 201-202). In this case it is possible to say that even if there were no independent instrumental genres, it is obvious that there were instrumental performances. The sample tarîkas are in two different usûls which are remel and *sakîlu'l-evvel*. It means that there were different usûls which could be used for tarîkas. Lastly, it is necessary to notify that old musicologists classified tarîka as a genre because of its function. It seems that the formal aspect of tarîka had less importance than the function in these classifications.

An Ancestor and Still Living Instrumental Genre: Peşrev

Kök and tarîka are the genres whose names are forgotten. But, another genre, maybe as old as them, "*peşrev*" has kept its popularity for a very long time. Many features of this genre are still alive today. It proves that the evolution process had been almost complete before the earliest samples which we have. There are some rumors without any evidence about some *peşrevs* from 10th century. But we have only three from 15th century by Sultan Bayezid II. Abdülkâdir Merâgî, describes the *peşrev* as the work with no lyrics in 14th century. As he wrote, *peşrevs* could have 15 sections which were called *hâne* and after each *hâne* the section called *serbend-i hâne* (first section) was performed (Bardakçı, 1986, p. 94). According to Alişah Hacı Bûke, it was a rule that *peşrevs* had to include three *hânes* at least (Çakır, 1999, p. 201). Also, in "Mecmûa-i Sâz ü Söz" written by Ali Ufkî in 17th century, the large majority of the *peşrevs* had three *hânes* (Cevher, 2003, p. 51). But, *peşrevs* which have four *hânes* are more common today. The form which was mentioned by Merâgî and Hacı Bûke in 14th century is as below. "A" stands for *serbend-i hâne* below.

A, BA, CA, DA, EA ...

In the beginning of 18th century, Kantemiroğlu mentioned this type and gave some examples in his *edvâr* which is named *Kitâbu 'İlmi'l-Mûsikî 'alâ vechi'l-Hurûfât* (Tura, 2001, p. 184). This type of works isn't composed commonly today but has already been living in traditional Turkish art music. As it is seen, the concept of *serbend-i hâne* is like the refrain and very important when defining the genre of *peşrev*. At the following centuries, this concept has given way to *mülâzime* or *teslim* mostly. But some researchers think that *mülâzime* and *teslim* don't have the same meaning. In their opinion, *teslim* is a unit, phrase, sentence, maybe a motif, which connects a *hâne* to the *mülâzime* section (Öztuna, 1990: p. 88)⁴. "B" stands for *mülâzime* below:

AB, CB, DB, EB ...

We can see these samples at the Kantemiroğlu's *Edvâr* and also, we see the information about this type of form at the resources of the last century (Tura, 2001, p. 184; Özkan, 2012, p.200; Karadeniz, 1983, p.159).

It is a common acceptance that the usûl of *peşrev* must be *büyük* (large, long). And a *büyük* usûl must contain 16 *darbs* (beats) according to this acceptance (Özkan, 2012, p.200). It means that a *peşrev* must contain sixteen beats in one measure at least. According to some others, for example Mahmut Ekrem Karadeniz, it must be more than ten (Karadeniz, 1983, p. 159). But none of them is right on the button. We can see that many *peşrevs* in

⁴ In the sample 7, the last half of the measures 8. 21, 29 and the measures 54, 55 are the *teslim* units.

musical units are clearer than peşrev. Owing to the deficiency of audial desire, which is expected from a peşrev, medhâls are classified as another genre generally. But, the methâl is a subgenre of peşrev in my opinion.

Here, the first hâne and the mülâzime of two works can be given as samples. The first work is by Giriftzen Asım Bey and the second by Refik Fersan. They are in the same makam Rast. While the first one is accepted as a peşrev without exception, the second is known as “Rast Medhâl” commonly. Their usûls do not make an important difference. In each measure there are more beats than ten. All the difference is the composition techniques of the melodies. Inscrutable symmetries versus clear symmetries.

Rast Peşrev

Devr-i Kebîr Giriftzen Asım Bey
(1851-1929)

♩ = 80

1. Hâne

Mülâzime

Sample 2. *Rast Peşrev (Giriftzen Asım Bey)-The first hâne and mülâzime*

Rast Medhâl

Hafif Refik Fersan
(1893-1965)

♩ = 96

1. Hâne

Mülâzime

Sample 3. *Rast Medhal (Refik Fersan)-The first hâne and mülâzime***The Genre Instrumental Semâî**

At this point, it is suitable to discuss the genre *saz semâîsi* which means instrumental *semâî*. Its form isn't very different from the *peşrev*. *Mülâzime* is the crossing and prominent feature of *peşrev* and instrumental *semâî* genres. In short, the formal similarity between *peşrev* and *instrumental semâî* is caused by the section of *mülâzime*. The current general form of instrumental *semâî* is below.

AB CB DB EB

Some researchers notify this similarity. But none of them puts these genres under the same title. It proves that, form is only a factor when classifying the genres. Moreover, there were some different formulas yesterday and there can be more tomorrow. To say the truth the diachronic forms of a genre can exist as synchronic in the evolution process. For example, Suphi Ezgi stated that there are four types of instrumental *semâî* in 1937 (Ezgi, 1937, p. 37-52). His criterion in classification is the relation between *hânes* and *mülâzime*. In the first type instrumental *semâî*, *mülâzime* section is not connected with the last sentences of *hânes*. The second type is opposite of the first type. In the works of the third group first *hâne* is the *mülâzime* at the same time. And the works of the last group include *teslim* sections which connect a *hâne* to *mülâzime*. I think that, the first, second and fourth types might not be independent forms. Because the relation of each *hâne* and *mülâzime* can be various in an instrumental

semâî. But the last group is meaningful. Because Kantemiroğlu mentioned a similar form when classifying the peşrevs. It reminds *rondo* form of Europe.

Kantemiroğlu (second type of peşrev): A BA CA DA

Ezgi (fourth type of *instrumental semâî*): A BA CA DA

If the forms can be similar what makes the instrumental semâî different from the peşrev? There are three factors in fact. The first is usûl.

The prototypes of instrumental semâîs were called as just semâî in the written sources of 17th and 18th centuries. This naming is related to the usûl which the works are composed in. It is the usûl of *yürük semâî* (Cevher, 2003: p. 42).



Fig. 1. The Usûl Yürük Semâî

In *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz* written by Ali Ufkî there are 44 instrumental semâîs in this usûl. Three of them are not finished. 39 of them are composed in three hânes and a mülâzime. One of them has no mülâzime. But the last musical units of the hânes execute this function. According to these, the common form can be shown as below:

AB CB DB

The presence of disproportioned samples proves that the form was not the most important criterion when Ufkî was using semâî as a title.

Here is another sample which is an instrumental semâî in the makam Irak from *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz*. Its composer is unspecified. But some people ascribe this creation to Sultan Veled from 13th century. On the other hand, to say the least it reflects the common type of instrumental semâî of 300 years ago.

Irak Semâî

Yürük Semâî

1. Hâne



Mülâzime



Finish

2. Hâne




3. Hâne



Sample 4. Irak Semâî (Excerpted from Cevher, 2003)

In 18th century Kantemiroğlu wrote the notes of 39 instrumental semâîs. Five of them are in another usûl which is *aksak semâî*. Gazi Giray Han who lived in 16th century is the composer of one. In this case, the instrumental semâî composed in aksak semâî usûl arose in 16th century at the latest. But, do not forget the yürük semâî usûl was still more common in the 18th century.



Fig. 2. The Usûl Aksak Semâî

About 150 years later, the trend was changed. The majority of the instrumental semâîs were in the aksak *semâî usûl*. And this trend still continues. Below is a sample for this trend. It is a work of Tanburî Cemil Bey who lived between the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century.

Ferahfezâ Saz Semâisi

Aksak Semâi

Tanburî Cemil Bey
(1873-1916)

♩ = 120

1.
Hâne

Mülâzime X

2.
Hâne

3. Hâne

4. Hâne

Sample 5. *Ferafhezâ Saz Semâisi* (Tanbûri Cemil Bey)

The first three hânes and mülâzime section of this sample are in the usûl aksak semâî. But the fourth hâne is in the usûl yürük semâî. Moreover, there can be several rhythmic modulations in the last hâne. Yes, this is the second difference of saz semâisi. In peşrevs, except the subgenre medhâl there are not any rhythmic modulations. But, in the second, third and fourth hânes there can be modulations of makams in both peşrev and saz semâisi.

The third and the most important difference between peşrev and *saz semâisi* is the function. I explained that peşrev is the first composed work to be performed in a fasıl. And saz semâisi is the last. There were two main types of fasıl as *fasl-ı hânende* and *fasl-ı sazende* according to Kantemiroğlu (Tura, 2001: p. 186-187). Fasıl-ı

hânende (hânende means singer) including vocal works and instrumental works in the same makam is the common type which have existed throughout the centuries. However, the concept of fasl-ı sazende which means instrumental fasıl has not been mostly mentioned. According to Kantemiroğlu, the instrumental fasıl includes taksim, peşrev and saz semâisi respectively. In the both types of fasıl the saz semâisi is generally the last work of the performance. In a traditionally performed fasıl, the audience anticipates acceleration in tempo. Because of this, a saz semâisi which is composed for fasıl is usually quicker in tempo than peşrev. This need about speed leads to other practices some times. Two dynamic dance music genres, which are performed independent of dance today, *sirto* and *longa* can be replaced with instrumental semâî.

In 20th century the evolution process of instrumental semâî continued. In that century there were many instrumental semâîs which are composed independent of fasıl. The technical capabilities of solo instruments were widely used as far as the tradition permitted. The influences of the western tonal melodies growing in 19th century manifested themselves as the impressions especially in the instrumental works of some composers. It's not an exaggeration that, Reşat Aysu is the composer who is at the top of this trend. The first hâne and the mülâzime of his instrumental semâî in the makam Nihavend are given below.

Nihavend Saz Semâisi

Reşat AYSU
20.10.1953

Aksak Semâî

1. Hâne

4.
Hâne

Sample 7. *Nihavend Saz Semâisi (Reşat Aysu)-Last Hâne*

The first measure of the work (Sample 6) is interesting. There is an arpeggio on the first-degree, Sol minor. In 20th century, there are many samples which are beginning with a measure long musical expression exhibiting the scale and finishing at the tonic. Here is a sample from a well-known work in Turkey, the first measure from the instrumental semâi by Refik Talat in the makam Mahur. The virtual harmonic move is I, V, I of Sol major.

Aksak Semâi

♩ = 112

Sample 8. *Mahur Saz Semâisi (Refik Talat)*

Conclusion

In 20th and 21st centuries, all of the works are not like the last two samples. Some of the older composing manners still exist. There are also long musical sentences whose connections are hidden by the composer and in which the western tonal impressions do not exist intensively. But it does not mean that there are no innovations in them. For example, I composed an instrumental semâi in the makam Hüz zam for a quartet including G clarinet, tanbur, ud and violoncello. It is polyphonic in the style of harmony with fourths. It was performed after my presentation which is the proto resource of this article at International Theory Conference in Izmir Turkey/2012. Maybe, somebody will analyze it in the future and discuss the instrumental semâi genre like me and might talk about some new features of the genre or maybe labels my composition just as marginal.

After the discussion, it is obvious that a genre can come in different formal types. The function and the audial acceptance of a traditional culture are the most important elements when classifying the genres. If the members of the tradition sense enormous differences out of their acceptance in the frame of a genre, they can give another name to new types. It can be suitable to call these types as subgenres. Sometimes a genre gains new functions as the instrumental *semâî*. It can be the last performed unit of the *fasil* performance or can be a soloistic creation which is performed independently from a repertoire group. In this situation of different functions, formal and structural aspects connect the new works to the older ones. As a structural aspect, *usûl* can do it. In addition to this, the *usûl* can be the difference between the genres. *Usûl* does not determine a form but can gain importance when classifying the genres.

As another result, form may be a factor when classifying the musical creations alongside many other components like structure, composition technique or style and aesthetical acceptance of the tradition members etc. But this also means that, form can be just an important element of many genre definitions. It is not a broad term which can be used instead of genre. Form is just what it is.

Lastly, it must be considered that classifications are not permanent. Because, it is possible that music genres can evolve like other genres as the new works are being composed and as the evolved features are adopted by members of the traditions.

References/Kaynakça

- Bardakçı, M. (1986). *Maragalı Abdülkadir*. İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık.
- Çakır, A. (1999). *Alişah B. Hacı Büke (?-1500)'nin Mukaddimetü'l-Usûl Adlı Eseri* (Unpublished Doctorate Thesis). İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi SBE.
- Cevher, M. H. (2003). *Ali Ufkî Hâzâ Mecmûa-I Sâz ü Söz*. İzmir: Meta Basım.
- Divan Makam (n.d.). *Eser (Nota) Arşivi*. https://divanmakam.com/_forum_/eser-nota-arsivi.4/
- Ezgi, S.Z. (1937). *Nazari ve Ameli Türk Musikisi*. İstanbul: Milli Mecmua Matbaası.
- Gazimihal, M. R. (2006). *Anadolu Türküleri ve Musiki İstikbâlimiz*. İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphânesi (1st edition 1928).
- Karadeniz, M. E. (1983). *Türk Mûsikîsinin Nazariye ve Esasları*. Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları,.
- Kestelli, R. N. (2004). *Resimli Türkçe Kamus*. Ankara: TDK Yayınları.
- Özkan, İ. H. (2007). Peşrev. TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi (Volume 9, p. 253), İstanbul: İSAM.
- Öztuna, Y. (1990). *Büyük Türk Mûsikîsi Ansiklopedisi*. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı.
- Tura, Y. (2001). *Kantemiroğlu Kitâbu 'İlmi'l Mûsikî 'alâ vehi'l Hurûfât*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Uygun, M. N. (1999). *Safiyüddin Abdülmü'min Urmevi ve Kitâbü'l-Edvârı*. İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyat.

Hüzzam Saz Semâisi-2

Kla. *p* *mf* *rit.* *p* **Son**

Tan. *mf* *f* *mf* *rit.* *p* **Son**

Ud *mf* *f* *mf* *rit.* *p* **Son**

Çel. *f* *pizz.* *rit.* *p* **Son**

İkinci Hane

Kla. *a temp.* *p* *mf* *p*

Tan. *mf* *p*

Ud *a temp.* *p* *mf* *p*

Çel. *a temp.* *mf* *p*

Kla. *mf* *p* *f* §

Tan. *mf* *p* *mf* *f* §

Ud *p* *mf* *f* §

Çel. *p* *mf* §

Hüzzam Saz Semâisi-4

Kla. *p*

Tan. *f* *mf*

Ud *mf* *f* *mf*

Çel. *p*
arco

Kla. *mf* *rit.* *p*

Tan. *f* *mf* *rit.* *p*

Ud *mf* *rit.* *p*

Çel. *mf* *pizz.* *rit.* *p*

Dördüncü Hane
♩=152

Kla. *mf*

Tan. *mf* *p*

Ud *mf* *p*

Çel. *f* *mf* *f* *p* *mf*

Hüzzam Saz Semâisi-5

Kla.

Tan.

Ud.

Çel.

Kla.

Tan.

Ud.

Çel.

$\text{♩} = 240$

Kla.

Tan.

Ud.

Çel.

