

SLOPING PLUCKED INSTRUMENTS USED IN THE 15TH CENTURY AND IN COMPARISON WITH TODAY

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Instruments are used as a means of state human sense for centuries. With the use of materials found in nature, many instruments invented, developed and played by the human. After the acceptance of Islam by the 9th century, systematic studies were started on musical theory books and these books were inspired 15th-century books. Besides many issues, we can encounter many reference books written about Turkish music instruments in 15th. century especially in Abdülkadir Meragi's books like *Camiü'l-elhân*, *Makasidü'l-elhân* as a continuation of *Kitabü'l-Edvâr* written by Safiyyüddîn el-Urmevî music theorist of the 13th century. Most of these instruments have been forgotten or modified today. The aim of this study is to explore sloping plucked instruments in the 15th century and how they are used in the past and today. Also, we will play Abdülkadir Merâgi's some compositions which are during the oral presentation to have an idea about 15th. century music.

Keywords: Sloping instruments, Pucked instruments, 15th Century, Meragi, Qanun.

Edvar Books

Edvâr books hold an important place as reference books about instruments. Safiyyüddîn el-Urmevi who is the important music theorist first started to write edvar books in the 13th century. Edvâr writing tradition continued by many musicians in the following centuries, especially in the 15th century.

Edvâr books mainly tell about music theory. Besides music theory also information about astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, musicians behaviors, music therapy, and instruments can be found. So we are going to tell about 15th. century instruments from edvâr books.

15th century, Abdülkadir Meragi and Amasyalı Ahmedoğlu Şukrullah come to the forefront as an author of edvar books tell about instruments. Şukrullah's book -is the translation of 14th centuries book *Kenzu't Tuhaf* from Persian to Turkish- involves instrument's technical properties like instruments dimensions or how they are done. Meragi also gives detailed information about instruments.

Instruments Classification

When we look Islamic and Western sources, instruments classified variously. İbn Sina and Farabi who are Islamic scientists made a classification studies for instruments. In the 15 th. century especially Meragi's instrument classification come to the forefront.

Meragi classified instruments as;

1. Stringed Instruments
String instruments divided into two: String Instruments Used with Bow and String Instruments Used with plectrum
2. Wind Instruments
3. Bowls, Wessels, and Plaques used as rhythm instruments

Also, he thought human throat as an instrument.

In the 15th-century instruments thought as mutlak/eksik and mukayyed/kamil. What does this mean; in mutlak or eksik string instruments no finger press or mandal system on the string the instrument is played. The instrument played by opened strings. So to arrange the makam (mode) with this instrument is so difficult. In mukayyed or kâmil string instruments, we can apply finger press on the string or a device used - like mandal for kanun- to arrange makam (mode) easily.

When we analyze the western classification system, Hornbostel-Sachs system is the most developed one used widely in the world.

According to this system instruments classified as;

1. Idiophones
2. Membranophones
3. Aerophones
4. Chordophones

If we compare classification systems we can say that 15th centuries Stringed Instruments are equivalent with Chordophones.

Sloping String Instruments

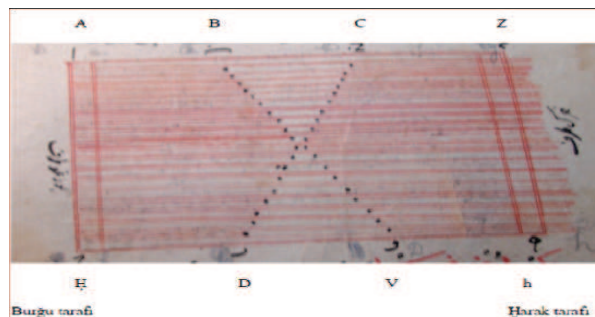
When we look at 15th-century edvar books we can encounter four sloping strings instruments; Nuzhe, Santur, Yatugan, Kanun.

Nuzhe

Nuzhe is found by Safiyuddin in 13th century. But in Safiyuddin's book he doesn't tell about his invention Nuzhe. We find this information in Sukrullah's book in the 15th century and also in the 15th century this instrument used by musicians. Sukrullah gives technical information about this instrument.

Sukrullah gives us the following information about Nuzhe:

This instrument is tetragon. It's length is 2 hand span and 3 finger. It's width is 2 hand span, depth is 4 open finger. It's manufactured from the redwillow tree. But boxwood or cypress tree is able to get a better instrument. The surface board must be slim like oud instrument. It consists of 27 tone (*perde*) and each tone has 3 string equal tuned. Three different types of string thickness used in this instrument. You have to perform this instrument as the peg side stand on the left and the bridge side stand on the right.



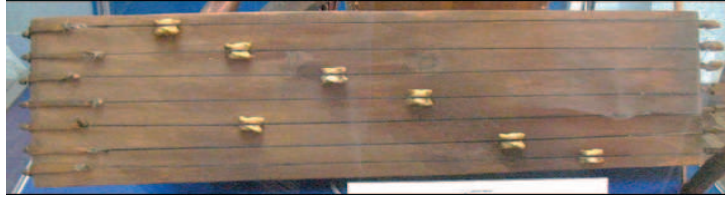
Nuzhe , Sukrullah, *Risâle-i Mûsîkî*

Yatugan

The other instrument we encounter is Yatugan. This instrument especially used by Central Asian Turks and it's sometimes said as *cadırgan*, *cotugen*, *cetigen*. Actually, we can say that this instrument is the prototype of sloping instruments. Sometimes Yatugan is used as a general name for Kanun, Santur, Zither instruments.

When we analyze the 15th-century reference books Meragi gives us the following information about Yatugan:

It's used by especially in Eastern Turkestan. The shape of this instrument likes long wood plaque. The length is approximately 156 cm. and it's width is 18 cm. Depth is 13 cm. 15 or 17 single string is fastened on a wood plaque. There are mandals on the instrument to arrange the open strings tune. If you pull the mandal to exterior the high-pitched sound occurs, if you pull the mandal inside of the instrument the low-pitched sound occur. If you are talented to perform this instrument then it's possible to perform makams properly. Today some Turkish communities still continuing to perform this instrument as it's undeveloped shape.



Yatugan

Santur

Santur which the first examples are found in Babylon and Assyria period played by hitting strings with oval shaped mallets. Sometimes santur is thought as the same instrument with yatugan. Probably yatugan is the prototype of santur. Each course has four strings. It consists of 72 -160 strings. When we researched the 15th-century reference books there's no descriptive information about santur but just the name of santur be mentioned in some texts. So we also wanted to mention santur shortly.



Santur

Kanun

It's said in Arabic *el-kanun*, in Persian *qanon*, in Greek *kanonaki*, in Turkish *kanun*. The source of kanun comes from Greek *kanon* which means single stringed instrument. In many reference books, it's said that kanun is invented by el-Farabi who's the Islam philosopher but this information is not considered to be accurate. Some resources say it's invented by Ali Şah. There's also information about being used by Egyptians and Sumerians in ancient time. As a result of our own investigation, we encounter kanun earliest in the 14th century resource book *Kesfu'l Humum* written in Egypt. Also in the 15th-century kanun is used by Turkish people. However, when it comes to the 18th century it is not used. It was started to be re-introduced by Damascus Arab in the early 19th century and started to be played again.

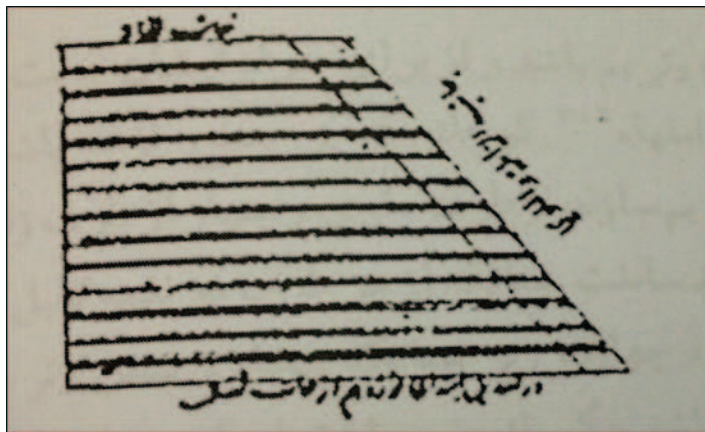
In the 15th century kanun is described in Meragi's and Sukrullah's book. Meragi gives us the following information about Kanun:

It's armless and the body of this instrument is the triangle. The string on the instrument usually brass. Each 3 string constitute 1 harmony. Each tone has 3 string equal tuned

This is known as mutlak/eksik instrument.

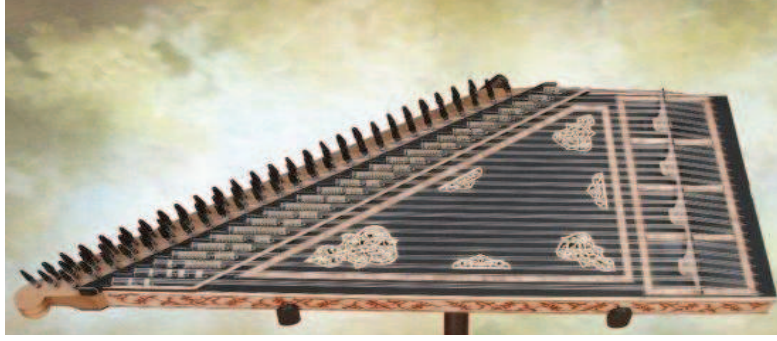
Sukrullah gives us the following information about Kanun, what kind of wood is used, and production techniques:

Formally kanun is half of nuzhe instrument. Kanun's shape is similar with nuzhe however the difference is, kanun's one side is widely than the other side. In the production, apricot tree is used. As for it's size, one side is 60cm, the other side is 30cm. Number of strings are 64 and these 64 strings are three different sizes.



Kanun, Kasani, Kenzu't-Tuhaf

When we compare kanun with today, structural it's still triangular and armless. Each tone has 3 string equal tuned. 3 different types of string thickness used in this instrument. Generally, 26 courses of string kanun's used today. Rarely 1 course missing or 2-3 additional courses can be used preferably. So 26 courses of string equal to 78 single string. In the 15th century, strings made from natural materials or brass strings used. Today nylon strings are preferred and 3-5 different thickness strings can be applied. Thicker in the lower regions, medium thickness in the middle region and thinner in the upper regions. Kanun is played on the lap. No mandal system was used until the 20th century which is used for arrange the mode. In the past before the invention of mandal, the mode can be arranged by fingernail applying pressure to the strings. Rings with tortoise shell (*mizrap*) or fingernails used to play the instrument. At the right of the instrument, you can see eşik and strings pass over the eşik threshold. Under the threshold, there is leather that provides resonance.



Kanun, Today

Conclusions

The study we have presented today we have tried to give information about sloping instruments used or mentioned about in the 15th century. We tried to compare with today.

We can say that some of these instruments are still primitive but still in use like Santur, Yatugan. Some of them are completely forgotten like Nuzhe. Some of them have reached today by developing like Kanun.

Kanun is the most popular instrument in Turkish Music nowadays. Approximately with a sound field about 3,5 octaves, musicians can play different kinds of music, for example, Turkish music, Folk Music, Popular music either Classic music or jazz music.

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