CHAPTER 8

THE CONTINUITY BETWEEN THE MEHTERHÂNE-İ HÜMÂYÛN AND THE MUSİKA-İ HÜMÂYÛN*

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ABSTRACT

The Musika-i Hümayûn was founded in 1826 as a Western-type military band at the Ottoman court after the Mehterhâne-i Hümayûn was abolished. The Musika-i Hümayûn resembled a Western-type musical band; however, an analysis of the two reveals a degree of continuity between them. The Musika-i Hümayûn was a Western-type military band with a repertoire comprising Western pieces, but it could be viewed as a sequel to the Mehterhâne because of the similarities in the way it was managed, its areas of performance, and certain other characteristics. This shift represented a prototype for all Ottoman reforms of the 19th century. This study examines the phenomenon of the continuity between the old and the new military bands of the Ottoman Court. Additionally, it attempts to discover some rules common to all Ottoman foundational reforms. Finally, the present study employs the examples of Musika-i Hümayûn and Mehterhâne-i Hümayûn to illustrate the roles played by politics and political reforms with respect to music in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century.

Keywords: Ottoman music, mehterhâne-i hümayûn, military music, Ottoman westernisation, musika-i hümayûn

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The modernization of the Ottoman Empire brought changes to the social, economic and cultural structures of its established system. The change was characterised by a process of Westernisation and was carried under the directives of European countries and over time, citizens of the Ottoman Empire also began to be involved in the modernisation process. During this process, new institutions were established, and some of the existing ones were restructured in line with the needs of a modern, centralized state structure. However, the traditional legacy and several institutions of the classical period continued to exist and this resulted in a reality in which the old and the new coexisted. We could therefore define the main phenomenon of Ottoman modernisation as eclecticism and continuity.

Towards the last century of the Ottoman Empire, the effect of the Westernisation efforts intensified. This could also be witnessed in the world of Ottoman arts and artists. After this period, the number of Western-style works increased in almost all fields of art. The Westernisation of artistic life was characterised by eclecticism and continuity across all of these fields. Additionally, the political events and the ideologies of the era became the major determining factor in shaping change across all art life.

In the case of music, the relationship between Turks and Europeans started early. Musicologist M. Ragıp Gazimihal states that Altınordu and the Crimean Tatars had performed Turkish military music in earlier periods. According to him, Europeans borrowed many instruments from Turks such as the Oboe and Bassoon (Kösemihal, 1939, pp. 24-25). It is also known that many rhythmic instruments were introduced to Europe by the Turks and the Arabs. Although this relationship started early, it was rather limited until the 19th century. The Ottoman acquaintance with Western music began with the Treaty of Friendship signed with the French King François. King François sent a band to Istanbul to perform for the Sultan. The Sultan enjoyed the concerts performed by the group, but later sent them into exile on the grounds that this delicate music could damage the brave character of the Ottoman people (Toker, 2016, p. 25). Another account on the performance of Western music in the Ottoman lands is the story of Ali Ufki Bey, about the Italian master who lived in the Ottoman court in the 17th century. This relationship was, however, very limited before the 19th century. The foundation of the *Musika-i Hümâyûn* after the abolition of the *Mehterhane-i Hümâyûn*, the military music band affiliated with the Janissary Corps, was a milestone of Ottoman musical Westernisation.

During the 19th century, music institutions were affected by the drastic reforms. In the course of this century of reforms, all art foundations changed. However, when we look at the mindset and the structure, it can be seen that there was continuity between the old and

new foundations. This study explores the continuity between the Musika-i Hümâyûn and the Mehterhâne-i Hümâyûn as predecessor and successor music foundations. For this purpose, the mindset behind management and education as well as the performance practices of both foundations will be examined. This examination will be carried out in the light of primary and secondary sources about these foundations.

Mehterhane-i Hümâyûn and Musika-i Hümâyûn:

The word mehter is originally Persian. This word was used for the first time to describe the Ottoman Military band in the 15th century (Gazimihal 1955, pp. 12-13). Even though the word mehter is not found until the 15th century, it is possible to identify many military bands which functioned as the Mehter. In the period before Islam, military bands existed in Turkic states. These older types of Military bands consisted of tambourines and horns. After the 11th-century, Kös (Big drum), drums and cymbals were added. The ones later used in the Mehter resembled the shapes of these earlier instruments. (Eralp 2013, p. 1120)

It is known that, besides the Middle Asian Turkic states, Abbassis, Harzemshahs, Anadolu Seljukians and The Great Seljukians had military bands similar to the Mehter. This military band tradition had been passed on to the Ottoman Empire, and the Turkish style military band that began to be called Mehter after the 15th century continued existing until the 19th century. (Altınölçek, 2013, p. 1114)

There were different types of Mehters in the Ottoman Empire. These bands spread to all of the imperial lands. Alongside the Sultan's Mehter, called Mehterhâne-i Hümâyûn, many high ranking Ottoman officers owned their own mehters. These bands were named according to the number of each instrument that they consisted of. For instance, if there were three performers for each instrument, the band would be called three-fold mehter. The mehter's fold number was parallel to the rank of the mehter's owner. Based on this, only Sultans could have nine-fold mehters.

The Mehterhane-i Hümayun was divided into units according to instrument types, such as the Nefiryan unit (Nefir Players) or the cymbal players unit (Zilciyan). As it can be seen from these examples, mehter contained some old Turkish military band instruments such as the Zil, Kös, Zurna, Nakkare, Nefir. (Sanal ,1964, p. 15)

The repertoire of the Mehter consisted purely of Turkish music forms such as Saz Semai, Pesrev, Söz Semai, Ceng-i Harbi, Raksiye and Kalenderi. As previously mentioned, the mehter, with its special structure, survived until the 19th century. (Sana,l 1964, p.11.)

After 1826, the Mehterhane was replaced by the Musika-i Hümayûn. The Musika-i Hümayûn was actually the foundation for all music activities and ensembles in the Ottoman court, such as the Sazendegân-ı Hâssa (Turkish music ensemble) and the Mûezzınan-ı Hâssa (Religious music ensemble). Additionally, the name Musika-i Hümayûn was used for the Western type military band found in the Ottoman Court. (Toker, 2016, p. 261) The instruments used in the Musika-i hümayûn were the same as those used in other Western military bands, such as the Trombone, Bassoon, Clarinet and Cornet. The main form played in the Musika were the marches. Some selections from operas and small Western music forms, such as polka and valse, would also be played. (Gazimihal, 1955, p.53)

The Adaptive Nature of Ottoman Reforms and the Foundation of the Musika-i Hümayûn:

Historical events do not happen suddenly and disjointedly, they occur within certain conjunctures. This leads to continuity between historical events and phenomena. Additionally, if we look at Ottoman reform and modernisation movements, we can easily see how these movements presented a spontaneous continuity between old and new structures because of their adaptive nature. This can be seen, for example, in the relationship between the Mehterhane-i Hümayûn and the Musika-I Hümayûn.

Some prominent historians highlighted this adaptive element in their studies. For instance, Carter Findley states that Ottoman reforms were adaptive in that they replicated older structures. He describes the issue as follows:

"Where organic regulations were drawn up, the extent to which they simply perpetuated traditional patterns is perhaps their most salient characteristic" (Findley, 1980, p. 198)

Another scholar who highlighted this issue was Obert Voll. Voll pointed out how the main feature of Ottoman reforms was adaptiveness. According to Voll, Ottoman officers adapted old structures with a pragmatic vision. As Voll observed:

"The ideas and techniques were relatively new to both the reformers and the society, but the role of the political elite was basically a continuation of the adaptationist style of Islam..."

[Reformers] like the early caliphs and Umayyads, they made use of the available techniques in a pragmatic way in order to strengthen to state. " (Voll, 1982, p. 89)

This adaptive approach can also be seen in the examples of the Mehterhâne- Hümayûn and the Musika-I Hümayûn. This points out to the continuity between the two. 1826 was a crucial year for Turkish music history, due to the founding of the Musika-i Hümayûn (Sanal, 1964,

p. 291). In accordance with the new type of military organisation of the Ottoman Empire, the military band system changed. The Mehterhane-i Hümayûn, which was in accordance with the new system, was replaced by the Musika-i Hümayûn. The Musika-i Hümayûn became the first Western music foundation of the Ottoman Empire.

Although the Musika-i Hümayûn was founded in 1826, Mehter music survived until the 1850s. Musicologist Hikmet Toker states that even though the Mehterhane-i Hümayûn was abolished in 1826, the other Mehter Bands continued existing in Anatolia and in different parts of Istanbul. According to Toker, the last Mehter band in Istanbul survived until 1856. (Toker, 2017, p. 40)

The Continuity Between the Mehterhâne-i Hümayûn and Musika-i Hümayûn

Despite the differences, it can be said that there was a form of continuity between the Musika-i Hümayun and the Mehterhâne. The next part of the article will examine this phenomenon. As previously mentioned, the abolishment of Mehterhane did not happen suddenly. One of the reasons was the lack of staff professionally versed in Western Music. An attempt to solve this problem was to hire some musicians from the Enderun and transfer them to the Musika-i Hümayûn. Many of them were former Mehterhane members. According to Takiyuddin Mehmet Emin Ali, many Mehter musicians who passed to the Musika began by playing Western instruments which were similar to their instrument. For instance, zurna players became clarinet players after being accepted into the Musika-i Hümayûn.) Takiyuddin also provided the names of many musicians who passed to the Musika from the Mehterhane. (Takiyuddin Mehmet Emin Ali, p. 2)

Continuity between the two ensembles can be seen firstly in the phenomenon of musicians serving both, at different times. The ceremonies performed by these two ensembles are another important element. Musicologist Hikmet Toker stated that nearly all of the ceremonies performed by the Mehterhâne passed on to the Musika-i Hümayun. These were Nevbet Ceremony, Cuma Selamlığı, Muayede Töreni (Toker, 2021, p. 171). The Mehter's performance on prayer times was a very old Ottoman tradition. Before the Musika-i Hümayûn, the Mehterhâne-i Hümayûn and the other mehter bands all over the country performed at prayer times. This performance was called Nevbet vurma (Drumming Nevbet). During this performance, the Mehterhâne played their special repertoire, such as peşrev, saz semai ve kalenderi...

The aforementioned “Musika-i Hümâyûn member Takiyuddin Mehmed Emin Ali stated that Nevbet was played every day after three prayer times (İkindi, akşam ve yatsı) by the Musika. According to him, the Musika played little airs or marches during these performances. Even though the repertoire changed, these ceremonial performances directly passed on to the Musikâ-i Hümâyûn. (Toker, 2016, p. 285)

Another example was the Muayede Ceremony. Muayede means ceremony of religious holidays. As many readers know there are two holidays, “İyd-ı Adha and İyd-ı Fıtr”. The Muayede ceremony was performed on the first day of each holiday. During this ceremony, Ottoman officers gave their greetings to the Sultan. Throughout this ceremony, the Mehter would constantly play some pieces from its repertoire. (Esad Efendi, 1979, p. 59)

Illustration 1. Illustration of the Muayede Ceremony at the Topkapı Palace

This ceremony was performed in front of the Babussaade, in Topkapı Palace. After Dolmabahçe Palace was built (1856), this ceremony was moved to the biggest hall of the palace which was subsequently named Muayede Hall (Salonu). The performance of music during this ceremony was inherited by the Musika from the Mehterhâne-I Hümâyûn. Musika-i

Hümâyûn played some marches throughout this ceremony on the balcony of the hall. The balcony was later called the Musika balcony. (Karatteke, 2004, p. 87)

Illustration 2. Illustration of Muayede Ceremony in the Muayede Hall

Another ceremony was the Cuma Selamlığı. Sultans saluted the public on their way to the Cuma prayer and returned to the palace after the end of the prayer. The Mehter played throughout this ceremony. After the foundation of the Musika-i Hümâyûn, this band performed the ceremony. Naturally, the repertoire changed in accordance with the Musika-i Hümâyûn's repertoire practice. (Toker, 2016, p. 145)

Alongside these ceremonies, on the occasion of the ambassadors' admission ceremony music was performed by the Musika-i Hümâyûn, after the Mehterhâne-i Hümâyûn was abolished. Before the 19th century, the Mehter's playing of Elçi Peşrevi was a tradition. After the Mehter was abolished, this tradition changed and some Western marches began to be played during the ambassador admission ceremony. Alongside these ceremonies, the Musika took over the duty of the Mehter on small and big official ceremonies such as the Culus (coronation) and Biat (allegiance) ceremonies. (Karatteke, 2004, p. 141)

Continuities are also found in the organisation of these two ensembles. The member supply of the Mehterhane was based on references and on the education of individuals trained according to the meşk system. According to this system, the apprentices were accepted into the Mehterhane by means of reference and they were supervised by one of the master musicians. (Hafız Hızır İlyas, 2011, p. 386)

The master was responsible for the training of the apprentice. This continued with the Musika-i Hümâyûn. Afterwards, there were attempts to establish a more formal music education in the Musika-i Hümâyûn but these attempts were not successful until the beginning of the 20th century. In some documents found in the Ottoman archive, we see that the staff management mindset of the Mehterhâne-i Hümâyûn lived on in the Musika-i Hümâyûn. For instance, a document shows that the Valide Sultan (mother of the sultan) acted as a referee for someone in order for that person to be accepted as an apprentice in the Musika-i Hümâyûn. As it is seen from this document, the staff policy which was based on a reference system rather than competence and merit was still in force in the Musika-i Hümâyûn. (BOA, HH.VRK. 116/61)

In the following periods, this situation impacted the performance quality of the Musika-i Hümâyûn negatively. Many members were accepted into the Musika thanks to the reference of a high ranking person and many of them were not educated enough. According to musicologist Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal, only a limited number of Musika members could play adequately although there were hundreds of musicians employed in the band. (Gazimihal, 1955, p. 90)

Regulations were made at the beginning of the 20th century in an attempt to solve this problem and these particularly affected the staff management and the members' education. These regulations were published in 1912 and 1918 (Toker, 2015, p. 610). However, the organisation and educational mindset of the Mehter was kept alive in the Musika-i Hümâyûn until the final years of the Ottoman period.

Conclusion

If we look at the mindset and characteristic structure of Ottoman Reforms, we can easily see that all reforms share some points. The main motivation of all reforms was militaristic. The reforms in the military field became the catalyst for reforms in different areas. Nearly all reforms were adaptive. Because of this, continuity existed between the old and new structures.

The Musika-i Hümâyûn is an example of the first point. The first Western Music Foundation of the Ottoman Empire, the Musika-i Hümâyûn, was actually a military foundation. This

foundation officially depended on the Ottoman Military but practically served under the Mabeyn-i Hümâyûn (Court Management).

The second point can be observed in the relationship of the Mehterhane and the Musika-i Hümâyûn. As we have mentioned, the Mehterhane was replaced by the Musika-i Hümâyûn as a result of political and military decisions. The Musika-i Hümâyûn was founded as part of the reforms of the Ottoman Army. It was seen as the prominent symbol of Ottoman Westernisation, and this is partly true.

It is true that the Musika-İ Hümâyûn was a Western type band and its repertoire contained only Western marches and pieces composed in simple, Western music forms. But, if we look at its structure and mindset, we can see that the Musika shared the performance ceremonies, mindset and the education system of the Mehterhâne-i Hümâyûn.

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Archival Documents

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