

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

Çağrı İnceoğlu, Ph.D.

KIZILIRMAK KARAKOYUN (Kızılırmak Black Sheep) 1967

Lütfi Ö. Akad

Overview

The film is based on old folk tales. It was previously adapted for the cinema in the 1940s by Muhsin Ertuğrul with Nazım Hikmet's screenplay. In this second adaptation of the narrative, Akad remains loyal to the essence based on the first work in which Nazım Hikmet synthesizes two different folk stories, but he prepared the new script with some changes.

This time, in Central Anatolia, he represents the life of a nomadic community living in the delta of Kızılırmak (the Halys in ancient era) River and engages in animal husbandry. Akad depicts the difficult living conditions of landless and impoverished people as he did in the *Law of the Borders*. He concentrates on the obstacles that inequality and exploitation remain in front of love and humane life. Abdi Ağa's wealth source, which was not found in the original work, appears here as usury and exploitation. In addition, the director maintains his cooperation with Yılmaz Güney, which began with the *Law of the Borders*. For the first time, Yılmaz Güney portrays a poor shepherd, in contrast to the masculine characters he bears until this film.

The carefully designed music contains original folk songs. Orhan Gencebay, who stars in Akad's *Bir Teselli Ver* (1971) four years later, performed the music and sang for the film.

People

Ali Haydar The main character of the film. He's a poor shepherd in the bottom of his nomad tribe.

Hatçe She is the daughter of Hüseyin Ağa. She is also Ali Haydar's lover.

Hüseyin Ağa He is the leader of the nomads. He is also Hatçe's father and Zehra's husband.

Zehra Hüseyin Ağa's young wife. She is Hatçe's stepmother and a relative of Abdi Ağa.

Abdi Ağa He is the wealthy and powerful landowner, who owns most of the territory of the region.

Şaban A traitor who is a member of the tribe, but secretly worked for Abdi Ağa.

Fettah Abdi Ağa's right arm, representative, and accountant. He conducts relations with the nearby villagers.

Ahmet The son of Abdi Ağa.

Synopsis

The villagers are engaged in animal husbandry in Central Anatolia and practice a semi-nomadic life. They owe more money day to day to the rich and powerful feudal lord (Ağa or Ağa) of the region. Abdi Ağa begins to demand large amounts of rent from the villagers by purchasing the summer and winter lands of the tribe. The nomads have their debts backed up and cannot find a way out. Ali Haydar, a shepherd who herds for the tribe, walks around with a black sheep that follows him. Ali Haydar and Hatçe, the daughter of the chief of the tribe, love each other, and dream of marriage. Upon learning of this, Hüseyin Ağa (the chief) opposes this relationship since they have a status gap. He carries this situation to the traditional tribal council. The council of elders stipulates to the shepherd Ali Haydar an impossible condition to overcome. His herd to be fed only with salt for three days. In the end, he is expected to take this herd across the stream without drinking water. However, Ali Haydar is entitled to marry Hatçe by accomplishing this difficult task. Abdi Ağa's son Ahmet wants Hatçe too. Therefore, Abdi Ağa increases the economic pressure on the community. Hüseyin Ağa is forced to break the traditional law by giving his daughter to Ahmet, but he regrets what he did in no time. Ali Haydar and the villagers move to take Hatçe back.

Scenes

Opening A group of men burns a village in Anatolia. The villagers left their homes by force.

Business In the town, the Ağa accepts the goods Şaban and others brought to him from their communities. Ağa's son Ahmet says that the village of Sarıcalı, which could not pay its debt, was evacuated and burned as ordered.

Interest The leader of Sarıcalı village confronts Abdi Ağa. He says he has put an interest burden on their debts for years, and he swears for revenge for Ağa's evil acts.

Debt Ferhat also brought wool and olive oil to the Ağa. Ferhat and Şaban complain about high debts and the danger of them while returning.

Shepherd Ali Haydar, a shepherd, and his Ağa complain about not having enough grass in the pasture, and Abdi Ağa's strategy to take over the surrounding lands one by one.

Stepmother Hatçe's young stepmother, Zehra, rebukes Hatçe, the daughter of Hüseyin Ağa. Zehra sends her to the stream to wash black wool.

Lovers Ali Haydar comes to Hatçe by the stream. He sees that she is sorry and gives white wool to Hatçe. He tells her to replace them with black wool.

Modern dye Şaban disperses modern chemical dye to the women of the tribe as a gift from Abdi Ağa and practical innovation.

Revenge Ferhat and the blind bard complain that the folks will be accustomed to the dyes and then the dye will be provided with money. They also discuss Hüseyin Ağa has made a large amount of debt because of his new wife. The blind bard says he knows Abdi Ağa's intention to take revenge.

A visit Hüseyin Ağa's son Ahmet and his man Fettah visit Hüseyin Ağa. They remind him of the tribe's debts. They say that they purchased the winter land the community migrates to every year and demand the rent.

Approach Ahmet tries to approach Hatçe, who is twitching wool in front of the tent. Hatçe runs.

Escape Hatçe comes to Ali Haydar and offers to escape from there together. Ali Haydar finds this impossible and wants to talk to her father. Hatçe believes that her father will not give his daughter to a shepherd. Zehra hears the two of them talking by the stream and interrupts. Hatçe runs, Zehra wants to flirt Ali Haydar.

Party Fettah and Ahmet drink and get drunk.

Intent Abdi Ağa's son Ahmet opens his intention to marry Hatçe to Şaban. He assigns him to prepare the conditions that will make this possible. Şaban finds it not easy.

Date Hatçe and Ali Haydar meet by the creek. Şaban sees them.

Complain Abdi Ağa questions why Hatçe goes to the stream. He yells at his wife. Şaban says Hatçe and Ali Haydar love each other.

Accusation His father accuses Hatçe of disobeying the tradition and of indecent behavior.

Confession Abdi Ağa calls Ali Haydar. The shepherd admits that he loves Hatçe. Ağa says he will be treated according to the tradition.

Fear Hatçe and Ali Haydar are afraid to break up. Ali Haydar says they have to abide by the tradition.

Trial Council of the elders convenes after Abidin Ağa's allegation. The witnesses, Şaban and Zehra accuse Ali Haydar of harassing Hatçe. Ali Haydar says that he loves Hatçe and that there is no evil in him.

Verdict The old and blind bard and Ferhat try to prevent the shepherd from being expelled from the tribe by stepping forward before the verdict is declared. Ferhat also recommends amnesty if he succeeds in an impossible task. Hüseyin Ağa promises to give his daughter if he succeeds in the difficult task proposed.

The test It is decided to feed Ali Haydar's herd with salt for three days without any water. The shepherd is expected to pass through the stream with his herd preventing them from drinking water.

Intrigue Şaban let Ahmet know the situation. Ahmet orders Şaban to prevent this crossing. He says he wants to marry Hatçe but intends to divorce her soon.

Worry Ali Haydar visits the blind bard and Ferhat and expresses his concern of not succeeding. Ali Haydar plays his flute to his herd.

Salt Hatçe, like Ali Haydar and his herd, does not drink water; she just eats salt.

Asking to her father Fettah visits Hüseyin Ağa. He wants Ağa's daughter to Ahmet. Hüseyin Ağa says he will think about it.

Before the test Hatçe tells Ali Haydar about the situation with concern. They talk about the black sheep and the herd having to get over the water.

Big day On one side of the water, Ali Haydar plays his flute; the herd comes to the other side. First, the Black Sheep and then the whole herd follow the sound of the shepherd's flute and pass the water without drinking. Ali succeeds, Hatçe and the people rejoice.

Threat Fettah and his men come to the village. He tells Ağa they bought the plateau and threaten him to give his daughter. Hüseyin Ağa says that he cannot do that because Ali Haydar has fulfilled the condition.

Give up Ali Haydar announces to his people that Abdi Ağa has the bread. Thus, he changes his mind to marry Hatçe for the sake of everyone and leaves the final decision to Hüseyin Ağa.

Victim Hatçe is hopeless and tells Ali Haydar that she will be sacrificed for the sake of the tribe. Hüseyin Ağa is reluctant to give a decision. Finally, he sends the news in shame that Abdi Ağa waits for.

Celebration The wedding news is celebrated in the town and the tribe. Preparations begin. The old, blind bard foresees these as the beginning of even worse things.

Wedding Fettah and Ahmet come to the camp and declare that the wedding will be held in the town, not in the camp, and they take the bride to the town. Abdi Ağa is embarrassed again by this humiliation.

Honor Ferhat wants Hatçe brought back, saying that the honor of the tribe has been down to the feet. Ali Haydar and the others go after them to get Hatçe back.

Clash A clash begins between the tribesmen and Abidin Ağa's gang. Hatçe and Ali Haydar ride their horses towards each other. However, the weak bridge over the Kızılırmak river collapses while they cross it.

Themes

Exploitation and inequality Abidin Ağa holds large areas of the region. The poor villagers are heavily in debt for various reasons. Ağa takes the opportunity and gives this money at very high-interest rates. The people, who suffer under the burden of interests, are not able to pay their debt after a while.

Abdi Ağa becomes more prosperous and buys the surrounding land one by one. He also purchases the land where the nomads stay in winter. He bribes officials to buy this place, which is public land. In addition to the rent he receives from pastures in summer, he also begins to receive high rent from the land where they stay in winter. He wants a hundred gold pieces from Hüseyin Ağa for the land that previously cost five gold pieces.

Since there are no other buyers in the vicinity, the Ağa buys the goods like wool, oil, and animals underpriced.

The nomads depend on pastures for feeding their herds. Abdi Ağa seizes the entire habitat of them and the other sources one by one. Under these circumstances, peasants can never get a fair deal for their labor and property. All the trading they make takes place in a way that benefits landlords but at their loss.

Revenge Abdi Ağa's grandfather was expelled from there for some reason while he was a member of the nomadic tribe. For this reason, there is a rumor that Abdi Ağa has a personal animosity towards the tribe and suppresses it with economic and political maneuvers to get revenge. Villagers are worried about this situation, afraid of Abdi Ağa, and wonder what he will do.

Zehra, Hüseyin Ağa's new wife, and Hatçe's stepmother is a relative of Abdi Ağa's expelled grandfather. She, too, is filled with a sense of vengeance towards her husband and stepdaughter. She has evil intentions and behaves against them.

Love Hatçe, the daughter of the ağa of the nomad tribe, and Ali Haydar, the shepherd, love each other. However, obstacles surround their love. First, the community attaches importance to hierarchical relationships, status. It is not appropriate for a lower status shepherd to marry the Ağa's daughter. Ali Haydar achieves a difficult task and is entitled to overcome this obstruction and marry Hatçe. However, Abdi Ağa's son Ahmet wants Hatçe and creates a new barrier for the lovers.

Although Hatçe and Ali Haydar love each other, Zehra is also in love with Ali Haydar. The situation depicts a love triangle that we often encounter in Akad's films.

Blindness The old bard is blind. However, even though Hüseyin Ağa's eyes seemed to be open, the old bard says that Hüseyin is blinded, and he cannot see what happens around him.

The old bard is blind. However, even though Hüseyin Ağa's eyes seemed to be open, he says that Hüseyin is blinded, and cannot see what happens around him. The old bard analyzes the events much better than he does. He is more visionary than those who can see. He understands the causes and consequences of the incidents best. In dialogue, he tells Ferhat that the decision of Hatçe's marriage to Ahmet instead of Ali Haydar will cause more problems and that he is the only one who sees what is in Abdi Ağa's heart and mind.

Zehra, who loves the shepherd too, implies that he does not see this love and he is even blind. Ali Haydar does not refuse it: "Yes, I'm blind, but the light in my heart is enough for me."

Tradition The community in which the characters live is conservative and bound by traditional rules. The council of elders is the guardian and practitioner of the tradition. The council, which draws its power from tradition, is obliged to resolve disputes in the court and to ensure justice and order. Members of the community apply to the council when they conflict. Abidin Ağa complains about Ali Haydar, the shepherd who approached his daughter.

Ali Haydar also respects the tradition and does not reject it. Although Hatçe proposes to escape from the community together; Ali Haydar believes this would not be an honorable act. He does not accept Hatçe's offer.

Hüseyin Ağa does not approve of the relation between his daughter Hatçe and Ali Haydar at first. However, he gladly agrees to give his daughter to the shepherd who succeeded the task under the tradition. He would not consider opposing and ignoring the law of the community.

Hüseyin Ağa, who is happy to have the tradition fulfilled, is ashamed of it when Abdi Ağa's son asks for his daughter despite the law. He is humiliated by this offer. He does not want to give his daughter to Abdi Ağa's son, but being economically dependent on them prevents him from doing what he wants. Abdi Ağa, who is uncomfortable with not being able to act by the tradition, is in a difficult situation. When he finally violates the law by making a decision based on economic reals, he regrets it.

Betrayal Şaban is a member of the community. However, he works for Abdi Ağa's account and has an interest in the excessive debts of the community, and is an informant for ağa. Şaban tries to prepare the conditions for the ağa's son Ahmet to obtain Hatçe. In cooperation with Zehra, he works to ensure that the shepherd Ali Haydar is accused and driven out from the community. On Ahmet's instructions, he initially tries to prevent Ali Haydar from succeeding in the task. When he fails to do so, he accepts the task of preventing the marriage of Hatçe.

Zehra, the wife of the leader of the tribe, is also part of the intrigues of Ahmet and Şaban. On the one hand, he helps Ahmet get Hatçe by separating the lovers, and she seeks ways to approach Ali Haydar, the shepherd she fell in love with. On the other hand, she has a role in the increase of her tribe's debts too.

Victimization Although Ali Haydar wins the right to marry Hatçe by achieving a difficult test, he announces that he has given up his right to save his community, which faces economic pressure. He says: "You have given me life. You're my mother, you're my father. I'm a poor Ali Haydar."

Hatçe describes her father's act to force her marry to Abdi Ağa's son Ahmet, as being sacrificed.

Ferhat and the old bard also speak, confirming that Hatçe is a victim. When they arrive to receive Hatçe as a bride, he questions, "Though the lamb does not become a sacrifice, why it would be?" Akad made the promise in the 16th century. Akad states that he received this line from the 16th-century Anatolian folk poet Pir Sultan Abdal and designed it as the central theme.

Indeed, in the finale, two lovers get lost in the waters of the Kızılırmak River. They become victims.

Character Analysis

Ali Haydar Ali Haydar, the main character, is a poor shepherd who is a member of the nomad community. He is portrayed as an honest, hopeful, and calm but brave character.

Honest Ali Haydar does not go against tradition at the cost of losing the girl he loves. If he has committed a crime, he would be willing to pay. He does not lie nor does not deny his love. He speaks with openness. He says he loves Hatçe, and his intentions are not bad, as others claim.

Victim Ali Haydar is in love with the daughter of the leader of the tribe, but since he is a shepherd of down-status, but since he is a shepherd of down-status, the community bans their relationship. Ali Haydar does not know how to meet his loved one. He knows it is severe, but still hopes. Their relationship with Hatçe becomes visible in the small community quickly. The people want to punish him according to the tradition. He faces being expelled from the community, which is the most severe sentence. Instead, the court offers him a tough test, and if he succeeds, he will be allowed to marry Hatçe.

Ali Haydar will leave his herd for three days, and the herd will not drink water during this time. The animals will be fed with salt. Eventually, Ali Haydar will accomplish the task if he can get the herd to the other side of the stream without leaving the animals to drink any water. Although it seems impossible to fulfill this condition, Ali Haydar believes that he will be succeeded. Abdi Ağa's son Ahmet separates the lovers by intervening to marry Hüseyin Ağa's daughter with threats and blackmail. Thus, the shepherd Ali Haydar is victimized once again.

Hopeful Ali Haydar believes they come together with Hatçe. When Hatçe despairs and thinks negatively, he says everything will be all right. Shepherd Ali does not lose hope when a challenging condition appears. He has the patience and hopes to confront the challenges.

Calm Ali Haydar remains calm against the difficulties he faced and the injustices he suffered.

Brave Ali Haydar does not hesitate to act to defend the honor of the humiliated community and save Hatçe from the hands of Abdi Ağa's son Ahmet and his men.

Hatçe Hatçe, Ali Haydar's beloved, is also the daughter of the leader of the tribe. She is anxious and obedient.

Anxious Hatçe knows the status difference between herself and the man she loves, so she worries those in the tribe will separate and prevent them from coming together. Therefore, she suggests to her lover to run away together at various times. Hatçe is overly concerned when her family learns the situation and predicts the verdict by perceiving what will happen when the situation is presented to the court.

Obedient She obeys the decisions and traditions of her community. Although she loves Ali Haydar, she cannot resist her father's decision to wed her to Ahmet.

Hüseyin Ağa He is the leader of the nomadic tribe and Hatçe's father. He is an honest but desperate person.

Honest Hüseyin Ağa is a man of his word. He tries to keep his promise. Although he represents the authority in his community, he is careful to act by the traditional rules. In the beginning, he does not want Shepherd Ali Haydar as his son-in-law because of the difference in their status. He eventually accepts the success of Ali Haydar, who fulfills the conditions of the traditional council. He lets the shepherd marry her daughter.

Desperate Hüseyin Ağa regrets that the economic and social conditions of his community are worsening with excessive debts. He looks for ways to get out of the situation they confront. His semi-nomadic community, which lives on animal husbandry, is in a complex position because Abdi Ağa has monopolized their grazing and winter lands. Furthermore, Hüseyin becomes helpless when the

summer is drought. He compromises more with the desperation. Inescapably, he has to sacrifice her daughter as a bride to the people he owes. It violates the honor of his family and the community.

Şaban Although Şaban is a member of the tribe, he is sneaky and betrays his community for money.

Traitor Şaban works for the benefit of Abdi Ağa for profit. He serves as an informant and lets Abdi Ağa know what happens in the tribe. He causes Hüseyin Ağa and his tribe to borrow money with high interest.

Şaban also expected to create controversy and confusion within the family and the tribe by informing everyone about Hatçe and Ali Haydar's hidden love. He also tries to prevent Ali Haydar from achieving success and marrying Hatçe.

Zehra Kadın Zehra is the young wife of Hüseyin Ağa. When Hatçe's mother died, Ağa married to her. Zehra is also a relative of Abdi Ağa and placed in the family for an intrigue.

Liar Zehra lies to manipulate people, solidify her position and take revenge. Zehra, who never liked her stepdaughter Hatçe, blames her alongside her husband. Even though she regularly sends her to the stream, she says Hatçe does not obey, leaves on her own, and has other intentions.

According to the tradition, when they appear in the trial, she lies that Ali Haydar is after Hatçe and regularly disturbs her maliciously.

Sneaky Zehra tries to humiliate her stepdaughter Hatçe and Ali Haydar in front of Hüseyin Ağa. She fabricates various lies for this. She also tries to prevent the happiness of the community and its members by secretly planning with Şaban. She has a financial interest in it.

Ahmet Ahmet is the son of the wealthiest man, Abdi Ağa, in the region. He is a malicious and corrupt person and wants to get Hatçe.

Corrupt Ahmet destroys a village that cannot repay the ağa. He expels the villagers. He tries to prevent Haydar from accomplishing the task he was subjected to by cheating. When he fails to achieve his goal, he tries to steal Hatçe away from Ali Haydar through threats and blackmail. Ahmet has no problem with Ali Haydar but aims to leave the tribe in a tough condition and humiliate it. He suppresses the community by pretending to fall in love with Hatçe and increasing economic pressure. Even if he pretends that he wants to marry Hatçe, he hides his real purpose. In reality, he does not consider Hatçe worthy as a wife. He intends to be with Hatçe in a fake marriage and then leave her immediately.



Ali Haydar with his herd.



Hatçe and Ali Haydar



Şaban and Fettah are caught red handed.



Hatçe is hopeless.



Ali Haydar and his black sheep.