

TURKIC FOLKLORE

As Performance Art

Course Description:

Designed for English-speaking students, this course will cover some of the major issues surrounding Turkish folklore and oral literature. Among the subjects are the Turkish epic, romantic epic (or *hikâye*), Turkish name-giving traditions, folklore and nationalism, folk religion, the structure and performance of Turkish romances, the formula in oral creation, performer-audience relationship, folklore as a political instrument, digression in oral narrative, proverbs and social change, folk theater, orality in the written text, and the gender dynamics of oral literature and performance. The course will also integrate some of the fundamental theoretical works of the field of Folklore, and their applicability to the Turkish context.

About the Professor

This course was developed by Ilhan Basgoz, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Folklore at Indiana University. Professor Basgoz is widely recognized as a preeminent scholar of Turkish folklore, and is author of numerous articles, essays, and many books, including *Hikaye: Turkish Folk Romance as Performance Art*, *Turkish Folklore Reader, I*, *Hoca Nasreddin*, *Never Shall I Die: A Thematic Analysis of Hoca Stories*.

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ASSIGNMENTS

Unit Essays : Write a paper of 3000 words on ONE of the following topics for each unit. Whichever you choose, support your argument with citations from the relevant texts.

Unit I Topics:

After reading the definition of folklore in *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (pp. 398-401) and considering the problems of consistency within the definition of folklore, discuss the challenges and problems in collecting original folklore materials in the United States.

Proverb as an expression of norms and values in a society.

Unit II Topics:

The interrelation of language and folklore studies in Turkey.

The epic in nomadic tribes and sedentary peasant society.

The impact of European culture on the Ottoman Empire after the 1860s.

Comparison of the main characteristics of the two epic traditions in terms of the epic tellers, the places in which epics were performed, and the social milieu in which they were created and thrived.

Comparing the main characteristics of the two epic traditions, the Koroglu and *Dede Qorqut*; include in your discussion the nature of the teller, the place of performance and the social milieu in which they live.

Final Paper: Write a paper of 5000 words on ONE of the following topics. Whichever you choose, support your argument with citations from the relevant texts.

Topics:

How and by what means the story teller introduces changes to the text and creates a realistic milieu in a coffee house in "The Romance of Aşık Garip and Şah Senem" in *Başgözs*, p. 31-69.

The contribution of Albert Lord to the studies of oral epics

The foundation of the Republic of Turkey and the drastic changes in social, political and cultural domain which take place after 1923.

Introduction to the Study of Folklore

Outline

Introduction to folklore as a social science.

William Thomas and the emergence of folklore as the study of popular antiquities and popular literatures.

Definition of folklore, its scope and field of study.

The forms and functions of Folklore.

Overview

Folklore has not been recognized as an independent social science. Anthropologists view folklore as a part of their own fields, as do sociologists and scholars of literature. Furthermore, the clarification of the term of "folklore" itself (which consists of the two components "folk" and "lore") has not been clear. Exactly who are the "folk" and what kind of knowledge is "lore" were two questions which were difficult to answer.

In folklore, knowledge is either oral and traditional. But there are certain forms such as epitaphs, writings on cars and the names of apartment buildings which are not oral but are still included in the study of folklore.

The same difficulty emerges when the question "who are the folk?" is asked. Should folklore be collected from only peasant communities, city dwellers or people without education? Alan Dundes' article "What is Folklore" (among the recommended readings below) tackles that problem and proposes some answers.

I recommend that the genres which have been included in the study of folklore by folklore scholars throughout history should be examined, in order to understand the field of folklore and its scope better. Pertev Boratav's "List of Turkish Folklore Genres" (also among the recommended readings) facilitates our understanding what folklore is.

Since the middle of the 19th century, folklore studies have examined the origin and dissemination of human knowledge by means of a comparative methodology, the interrelations between folklore and human psychology, by a Freudian approach, the correlation of social structure, human relations and the basic economic activities necessary to produce food, and the theoretical definition of folklore proposed by Arensberg (Arensberg, Conrad. *Culture and Community*).

Finally, viewing folklore as performance art, folklorists put forward theories which established links with the social context, ecology, individual creativity and traditions in cultures. Their theories of course are relative and are subject to being challenged, as is the case with all social sciences. Our knowledge today challenges even the theories and laws of the "hard" sciences, such as physics and mathematics, and considers them to be relative.

Reading

Dundes Alan. "What Is Folklore?" in *The Study of Folklore*. pp. 1-16. Prentice-Hall Inc., N.J., 1965.

Brunvand, Jan Harold. *The Study of American Folklore*. pp. 11-20. W.W.Norton Co., N.Y., 1968

Standard Dictionnary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend. pp. 398-401. Funk and Wagnall's, San Fransisco, Harper and Row, 1972.

Boratav, Pertev. "List of Turkish folklore genres" In *Halk Edebiyatı Dersleri, Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayını*, 1943,

Discussion

What are some of the difficulties in recognizing folklore as a social science?

What is your favorite folklore genre and which ones would you like to study?

Have you attended any performances of folk dances or folk songs? If so, please write down your feelings and ideas about these performances.

Folklore Studies in the West

Outline

The interest of pre-romantics in folklore in England.

The "Ossianism" of McPherson and the collection and publication of Scottish folk poetry.

German romantic nationalism: Herder and the discovery of the Indo-European origins of the German language in folk poetry, myth and folk tales.

The Grimm brothers' contribution to the collecting of folk tales from German villages and to the comparative study of folk tales.

Overview

Interest in folk culture in the West began just after the exploration of the Americas by Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries. Some adventurers, travelers, men of religion and letters who went to America for various reasons admired the culture of American "noble savages."

The first visitors who were intrigued by the ways of the indigenous peoples wrote their admiring impressions, which led to the writing of a large collection of books which included the folk traditions, moral principles and folk life and literature of the American natives.

This interest and love of indigenous American culture opened the way for Europeans to come to know their own folk culture. James McPherson (1736-1796) was the first to collect folk songs in England and publish them in a famous book *Fragments of Ancient Poetry from the Highlands of Scotland*. His collection was not drawn from actual people but rather was his own creation. He himself wrote these poems, but he attributed them to an unknown poet named Ossian.

McPherson's book had so great an impact on people that soon others began to visit small villages and ancient castles and record the relics of ancient poetry and literature to be found there. The English middle classes who were prospering with the new international trade welcomed that antique literature. And "Ossianism" helped create what was called the pre-Romantic movement in England. French and German writers, who could not express their emotions freely in their own literary works because of the restrictions which Classical literature imposed on them, joined the Romantic Movement which allowed for the free expression of emotion.

Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) was the most important figure in Germany as far as his contribution to the rise of folklore studies and Romantic Nationalism in Europe. He collected German folk songs (lieder) and published them in two substantial volumes, believing that, if the life and survival of a nation or culture was in danger, the best way to save them was to collect folk poetry and to use it to recreate the basis of the national culture. This view had a great impact among European nations which were then under the occupation of Napoleon's armies. Finland, which was occupied by Sweden for centuries and almost lost its national language and culture, began in the 1830's to collect the collection of songs called the *Kalevala*. This national epic saved the language and culture of Finland from the yoke

of Sweden. Other European countries such as Germany, France, Greece and Italy joined the folklore movement and collected and published their own national folklore.

The Grimm brothers in Germany – Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859)– not only collected German folktales, but compared them with those of other European nations. Finnish scholars toward the end of the 19th century collected a great corpus of folklore material from all European, African and American cultures and archived them. Thus began the comparative study of folklore (or the Finnish school of folklore studies). Great credit should go to the *Academia Scientiarum Fennica* for sponsoring the publication of the first great folklore Journal, *The Folklore Fellows' Communications* series (first issue, 1910; issue 303, 2012). The study of the history of folklore in general and especially in Europe suggests that folklore may create and nourish a narrow and dogmatic nationalism and an exaggerated admiration of a particular nation's past. On the other hand, folklore may also become a source for the creation of international peace and brotherhood, of an egalitarian view of society, as Paul Saintive puts it, "Folklore is a doctrine of brotherhood." (Paul Saintive *Apologie du Folklore.*)

Reading

Cocchiera, Giuseppe. ***The History of Folklore in Europe***. Translated by John McDaniel , Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia,1980.

For the impact of the discovery of America in 1492. pp. 13-17.

For Herder and romantic nationalism in Germany. pp. 176-184.

For the Grimm brothers. pp. 225-238.

For the Kalevala epic in Finland. pp. 268-273.

Discussion

Why did interest in folklore in the West emerge following the discovery of America?

What was the impact of Herder's Romantic Nationalism on folklore studies?

Who was the first to collect folk tales in Germany from peasants? What was the reason for their interest in folk tales?

The Function of Folklore

Outline

What is the function of folklore?

Social Sciences and function.

The emergence of folklore studies.

The methodology for studying the function of folklore.

Conflicting views in function studies.

Conflicting theories in function studies.

Overview

The social structure is frequently defined as social life as a dynamic process which retains continuity by the orderly operation of its components within a system. Human relations, social institutions, ecology, and the means and forms of economic life must work together in relative harmony if society is to survive.

The role each component plays in the general social system is called its "function." Functional studies in folklore have not yet developed an effective methodology to identify function as a necessary relationship between folklore and society or to identify its impact on social and individual life.

William Bascom's classic study attributes four functions to folklore:

1. To amuse and entertain;
2. To sanction social institutions, norms and values;
3. To educate new generations by transmitting the existing culture;
4. To escape from tension and repression (**Bascom 1954:297**)

Bascom's four-function theory is subject to criticism however, because the four functions he enumerates can be grouped together under the single function of maintaining the stability of a culture. The single-function theory has received both substantial support and opposition from psychologists and anthropologists. Edmond Leach, for example, points out that ritual is sometimes "a mechanism of integration, one could as well argue that it is a mechanism of disintegration." **Leach 1968:197**

I joined the discussion with an article entitled "Protest: the Sixth Function of Folklore" (in *Selected Essays of İlhan Başgöz*: 339-356) and pointed out that the minstrel poetry, folk theater, folk songs, jokes and anecdotes of Turkey functioned as a strong force of social and political protest which aimed to not only destabilize the social system but also to destroy it.

My opinion in this matter is that neither folklore in general nor each folklore genre should be thought of as having a single, constant function. Function is variable, and each performance, depending upon circumstances, may have a different function or even functions. The individual narrator may always include new functions in his performance.

Reading

Dundes, Alan. The Functions of Folklore, in *The Study of Folklore*, pp. 277-278. Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1965.

Bascom, William R. Four Functions of Folklore, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol.67 (1964) pp. 333-49.

Başgöz, İlhan. Protest: The fifth Function of Folklore, in *Turkish Folklore and Oral Literature, Selected Essays of İlhan Başgöz*, ed. Kemal Silay. Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications Series, 20. 1998, pp. 339-357.

Leach, Edmond. Myth as an Institution for Friction and Social Change, in *Studies on Mythology*, ed. Robert A. Georges, pp.184-198. Dorsey Press, Homewood, IL, 1968.

Discussion

As an individual, what function or functions would you attribute to folklore?

What sciences influenced folklorists to study function?

Has any folklore performance influenced your behavior or ideas and changed them?

Folklore as Performance

Outline

Text oriented studies and analysis of folklore as recorded text.

Folklore forms narrated by a folk artist to an audience, a live social event.

The place of performance theory in folklore studies.

The basic view of performance in defining folklore.

The role of the narrator, the audience and the traditional text in performances.

The social context and performance.

Overview

Folklore, which began as the study of antiquity in the 18th century, followed until 1960 a text-oriented approach, which examined and analyzed the text alone – just recorded and archived *texts*, and only texts.

The study of texts, which is also called the comparative study of folklore, produced some important works, such as *The Motive Index of Folktales* by Stith Thompson and the works of Hasan el Shami and Boratav-Eberhard. Despite its positive contribution, the comparative study of folklore has its own shortcomings. Such an approach excludes some very important components of folklore.

In every folklore event or occasion, an individual folk artist (or artists) narrates or performs folklore to a group of people –i.e., an audience– and repeats a traditional folklore form which has been told in the past and will continue to be told in the future in the same recognizable form. The performer is not a folk artist who repeats the traditional form verbatim. His desire for individual creativity is always at work in every performance. The audience, as well, does not consist of just passive listeners. The social origin, education and norms and values of the audience are always at play.

In every performance, the audience finds several means to make its demands known to the teller-performer. And the teller responds by adjusting his behavior and introducing some changes in the text of the narrative in order to satisfy the demands of his audience. The text recorded from a live performance is just a skeleton of the folklore material, and does not represent the whole performance.

A new folklore movement emerged in the 1960s, called performance-oriented study, which examined all the components of a live social event : Richard Bauman, a leading figure advocating this theory; Dan Ben-Amos; John Adams; Robert Georges; Adam Georges. I am also considered to be a scholar who contributed to this new approach.

Richard Bauman defined the performance, not as a conception of oral literature as disembodied super organic stuff, but rather considered that it should be viewed "contextually and ethnographically, in order to discover the individual, the social and cultural factors that give it shape, and meaning in the conduct of social life."

Reading

Basgöz, İlhan. *Hikaye, Turkish Folk Romance as Performance Art*. Indiana University Press, 2008. Chapter 5: Performance, pp. 153-174.

Bauman, Richard. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Series in Sociolinguistics, ed. Roger W. Shuy. Rowley, Mass., Newbury House, 1978.

Abrahams, Rogers D. Toward an enactment-centered Theory of Folklore. In *Frontiers of Folklore*, ed. Williams Bascom. p.79-120. Boulder: Westview, 1977, pp. ??

Discussion

How and by what means may a singer-narrator of folklore in performance change the traditional text?

Why do text-oriented folklore studies not represent folklore as a whole?

Please explain the basic differences between text-oriented and performance studies in folklore.

Turkish Folklore Studies

Outline

A brief history of Turkish folklore studies in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

Social and political reforms of the Tanzimat era beginning in 1839.

First contact of Turkish writers with French literature.

The first collections of folklore genres.

The necessity of the purification of the Turkish language from the vocabulary and grammatical rules of Persian and Arabic, in order to allow people to understand the emerging literature.

Turkish nationalism and the study of folklore after 1908: Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), the founding father of Turkish nationalism and his impact on folklore studies.

Overview

A Brief History of Turkish folklore studies

The term folklore was translated into Turkish, first as "studies of folk culture" (halkiyat) by Ziya Gökalp; however, after 1922 he preferred to use the international term "folklore" (Köprülü 1966:1). Interest in folklore forms such as the proverb, folk expressions, jokes and anecdotes, folk poetry and folk songs had begun before the time of Ziya Gökalp.

Following the Tanzimat Reforms initiated after 1839, Turkish politicians and men of letters who had come in contact with French literature realized that literature might have an important impact on society by educating people and promoting political and religious ideas. This social function of literature had been unknown in the Ottoman past, in which literature consisted merely of mystical abstractions and world views, having no contact with the mass. When the urge for political and social reforms was felt in Ottoman society, the Tanzimat writers realized that their works would not be understood by the folk at large because the language they used was laden with Arabic and Persian vocabularies and grammatical rules.

Writers such as Namik Kemal, Şinasi (1826-71) and Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1913) began to publish newspapers (which were unknown in the Ottoman past) and wrote plays and poetry in order to educate the masses. Thus, changing the literary language which should be understood by the ordinary people became a necessity.

Ahmet Mithat Efendi writes: "I would like to ask this question to the Ottoman intellectuals. Do we have a language of our own? If we invite a Turk from Turkestan in Central Asia, an Arab from Necit, and a Persian from Shiraz and read them the best literary texts in the Ottoman language, would they understand them? Undoubtedly not. When that text is read to us, we do not understand either." (Levend 1949:41)

Vernacular Turkish was preserved by and survived in folk literature. For that reason Ottoman writers collected proverbs, folk expressions, anecdotes and jokes and published them. Şinasi for example, collected 5,000 proverbs and folk sayings and published them in 1881. The Turkish nationalism which emerged in full force after 1908 was a turning point in folklore studies.

The leading figure in that movement was Ziya Gökalp, the founder of Turkish Nationalism. He believed that original and authentic Turkish music, literature, architecture and arts, had been oppressed by the dominant Ottoman culture, which was detrimental to the originality of true national Turkish culture. For that reason Gokalp collected folk literature, in which was preserved pure Turkish culture and used it in his propagation of Turkish nationalism. In the folk tales, for example, he published the good characters, who were Turkish heroes, while the bad ones represented England. To Gökalp, the Turkish national spirit was preserved within Turkish folklore.

His nationalistic approach to Turkish folk culture dominated folklore studies until 1943, when the Ankara University Faculty of letters established a chair of folklore under Professor Pertev Boratav. However, that chair did not last long –only 4 years.

In 1947 Boratav stopped teaching in Ankara under pressure from the nationalistic milieu, but continued to teach Turkish folklore at the Sorbonne in Paris. Turkish universities did not include the teaching of folklore in their programs until the 1960s, when it was again included in the curriculum of the state universities.

After 1960, Indiana University in Bloomington included courses on Turkish folklore offered by Professor Ilhan Basgoz, who published several Turkish folklore studies and established a Turkish Folklore Archive at Indiana University, which included a large corpus of material, especially folk romances, folk songs, riddles, proverbs, folk customs and rituals, and the life stories of several folk artists.

Reading

Basgöz, Ilhan. Nationalism and Folklore studies in Turkey, in *The Journal of the Folklore Institute*, IX/2-3, 1972, pp. 162-176.

Gökalp, Ziya. *The principles of Turkism*. Translated by Robert Devereux. Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1968.

Discussion

Do you find any similarity between Herder's and Gökalp's nationalistic ideologies?

What countries other than Turkey were influenced by nationalism?

Who was the leading figure influencing folklore studies in Turkey and what was his basic view of Turkish folklore?

Epic literature

Outline

General considerations of the epic narrative in the world.

The great epic literatures.

Basic features of the epic.

Epic heroes and the characteristics of epic combat.

Epic and its relation to history.

The geographic distribution of the epic. Epic and society.

Overview

In their book, *The Growth of Literature*, Nora and Hector Chaudwick (1940) explain that there is a period called the heroic age in the histories of the Ancient Greeks, Irish, English, French and Germans. In the last four, this age begins in the 4th century AD and ends in the 10th century. The main characteristic of this period is the worship of a hero who fights not for individual gain but for unselfish adventure. These heroes belong to a superior class. In the medieval French epic *le chevalier*, the Spanish *Caballero*, the Russian *Bogatyr*, the Tatar *Batyr*, the Oguz Turk *Bey*, the Uzbek *Palvan* all are such heroes. The heroic age is aristocratic and magnificent. In the heroic age the ruler and the ruled were not widely separated by wealth and social standing. There individual and society live in a harmonious unity.

Bakhtin summarizes the epic as having three features: 1. The national epic past, which serves as the subject of the epic; 2. National tradition, rather than personal experience, is the source of epic; 3. An absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality. That past which is inaccessible to personal experience reflects the beginnings, the first founders, the ancestors, and at that time everything was good, and great. The epic past does not permit a personal point of view of evaluation. In epic literature, it is *memory*, not *knowledge* that serves as the source and power for the creative impulse. (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 11-18) The epic is born and sustained in the heroic age. Epic literature was oral before being recorded in writing. The Greek epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the German epic *The Nibelungen*, the Russian *Blynies*, the Finnish *Kalevala*, the French *Chanson de Rolland*, are the great epics of the world.

The long narration of the epic which last sometimes for whole winter months interests folklore scholars since the beginning of the 19th Century. Albert Lord proposes a theory which is called oral formulaic composition. He challenges the long established view that the epic-singer has a powerful memory and can repeat thousands of epic lines in verbatim. Lord claims that the epic singer does not memorize the whole epic, he composes the epic in the performance before his audience by using oral formulas. These formulas describe in few sentences the power of the hero, the beauty of the heroine, the fight of the hero, the departure and reunion, the wedding ceremonies and so on. He memorizes the oral formulas and uses them to build the composition of the epic. He further explains that the epic, during the oral performance is also influenced by the audience. For example, " The

Yugoslavian epic singers "Sing epic songs to the Muslim audience in such a way that the Muslim wins the battle." (Lord 1965:26).

The Russian scholar Radloff, much before Albert Lord elucidates the same point. The Uzbek singer "is known to vary the text of his dastan (epic) depending on the demand and preferences of his audience. He may shorten or prolong the narration, as well as include, develop, or exclude whole episode ; he can perform one and the same dastan in a different way before an audience of elders or young man., as in the olden days he used to sing differently in the emir's (ruler) palace or among common peasants(Chadwick and (Zhirmunski 1969 ,234-240)

Readings

Bowra, C.M. *Heroic Poetry*. London, Macmilland and Co., 1952. pp. 1-90.

Albert Lord. *Singer of Tales*. Athenaeum, New York, 1965.

Chadwick, Nora and Victor Zhirmunsky. *The Epics of Central Asia*, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Discussion

What are the basic characteristics of the epic?

How is an epic created and sustained in a society?

What is the relation of the epic hero to history, to its social context, its society?

What kind of war does the epic hero fight?

How can a single epic narrator-singer remember hundreds of thousands of epic lines and narrate them?

How does the audience contribute to the preservation and changes in the epic plots and characters?

Turkic Epics

Introduction

The term Turkic and its relation.

General characteristics of the Turkic epic.

The epic among the Turks in Central Asia and Turkey.

Forms of the Turkic epics. The epic singer-teller (*Ozan* and *bakshi*) and his place in the Turkic societies of Central Asia.

The *Ozan* in Anatolia and his transformation into the minstrel (*ashik*) in sedentary peasant society.

Main issues and problems in the study of Turkic epics.

The memorization of long epics and their performance before the audience.

The role of the audience in changing epic narration.

The dissemination of the epic among the Turkic peoples and the migration of the epic from Central Asia to Anatolia.

The epic and shamanism.

Overview

The term Turkic refers to a large group of nations who speak the dialects of a common language called Old Turkish and live in the large geographic area stretching from the Balkans in the west to as far as China in East Asia. Turkic nations, because of different historical and geographic reasons, are given different names. They are Turks in Turkey, Azerbaijanis in West Asia; Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazak, Kyrgyz, Tatar and Uighur in central and East Asia. Furthermore, there are Turkic minorities in Syria, Iran, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and the Russian Federation. The total Turkic population is estimated to be 200 million. In some cases, the language barrier among this group of nations is so great that Kazaks and Turks in Turkey, for example, may not be able to understand each other. However, Turks living in Azerbaijan and in Turkey can communicate easily. In the past, this linguistic barrier was apparently not so great that a heroic epic born in one Turkic land could easily pass to another and survive in the new land in recognizable variants. The *Dede Qorqut* epic for example, which was born among the Oguz Turks in Central Asia, traveled as far as Turkey. The *Koroglu* epic, on the other hand, which was born in Turkey, travelled westward and reached as far as the Uighur lands of Chinese Turkestan.

The Turkic oral epics are not very different from the oral epic poetry of other nations. However, separate historical developments and ways of life created some differences. The majority of the Turkic heroic epics were born in the central Asian steppes and are the product of pastoral nomadic life. The epic is the literary form preferred by nomadic tribal aristocracies. The tribal society's basic way of life involves fighting to preserve the survival and the unity of the tribe. The social classes in a tribal society are not separated from each other by a wide gap. The Khan, the supreme ruler, lives in a tent, just like the other members of the nomadic society, and he enjoys the same cultural discourse, which is mainly oral. Furthermore, the tribal members and the aristocracy share a strong belief that they are all descended from the same totemic ancestor, a wolf or an eagle for example. Thus, they are all kin. This ritual kinship is an important bond which secures the unity of the nomadic society and helps insure the survival of heroic poetry. For that reason, the epic hero wages a fight for sustaining and securing the life of the tribe. He is very much

appreciated and admired by both tribal members and the aristocracy alike. The hero in the epic is always a man of the tribe, a part of the mass. He never takes part in an individual adventure or fights for individual gain or fame. From that point of view, the epic narrator-singer does not claim an individual personality different from the other members of the tribe and we do not know the name of the epic narrator. When however, a tribal society settled down and is replaced by a sedentary peasant society, the epic ceased to exist and was replaced by the romance, whose hero (the minstrel, *ashik*) follows an individual cause, that is to win the heart of a beauty and to fight to reach her. As such, the romance teller *ashik* has a more developed personality than the *ozan*.

The Turkic peoples created and sustained the most extensive epic tradition in the world. This tradition includes the most primitive forms of the epic, called the heroic tale among the Turkic Altai tribes, and the fully developed epic form, such as the *Manas* of the Kyrgyz and the *Dede Qorqut* epic of the Oguz Turks.

The following are a limited selection from such epic traditions: the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*; the Uzbek *Alpamiş*; the Karakalpak *Forty Maidens*; the Oguz Turk *The Grandfather Qorqut*; the Anatolian Turk *Koroglu*. All these traveled westward except *Koroğlu*, which began to travel from central Anatolia eastward. It may be claimed that epic poetry, in general was introduced to Europe by horse riders coming from the central Asian steps.

The themes of the Turkic heroic epics are raids, single combats, the theft of large herds, revenge, heroic and supernatural adventures, the pillage of merchandise, abductions, recovery of stolen goods, etc. The epic in central Asia is narrated and sung by a folk artist called the *ozan* among the Oguz and *Bahshi* among Turkmen. The *ozan* is the creator and performer of the epic. He, of course cannot memorize an epic consisting of half a million lines. But he was able to perform it with the help of oral formulas, short repeated sentences, clichés which describe the birth of the hero, the power of his legendary horse, his weapon, the beauty of his lover, his travels, separation and return. Using these oral formulas, like building blocks, the epic singer is easily able to sing a long epic. (See Albert Lord for the oral formulas)

The audience of the epic plays an important role in shaping the performance and changing the epic's text. "The Uzbek epic singer is known to vary the text of his epic depending on the demands and preferences of his audience; he may shorten and prolong the narration as well as include, develop, or exclude whole episodes; he can perform one and the same epic in a different way before an audience of elders or young men." (Basgoz, *Hikaye* p. 202)

The Turkic epic survived in three basic forms: verse, prose and a mixture of both. The true epic in central Asiatic society is in verse. Several epics of Muslim heroes, such as Battal and Danişmend Gazi, are recorded either in prose or in verse. The *Dede Qorqut* and *Koroglu* epics are narrated in prose. but here and there songs are included in the prose narration. We will examine three epics from the Turkic epic tradition: *Manas*, *Dede Qorqut* and *Koroglu*.

Readings

Basgoz, Ilhan. *The Epic Tradition Among the Turkic Peoples*, in Felix Oinas, ed., *Heroic Epic and Saga, An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics*. Indiana University Press, 1975, pp. 310-336.

Cohn, Norman Rufus. *Gold Khan*. London, 1946. (This is the translation of the earliest epic tales collected from the Minusin Tartars in 1859 by Anton Schifner and published in Germany in 1859.)

Hatto, A.T. *Hamasa*. In the *Encyclopedia of Islam III*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971. This is a Survey of the Central Asiatic Epic with a Rich Bibliography.

Discussion

What are the basic characteristics of the Turkic epics?

What are the basic features of the society in which epics were born and survived?

Why is the epic hero admired and what kind of war did he fight?

How could an epic narrator-singer remember hundreds of thousands of epic lines and narrates them?

What is the impact of the audience on the epic performance?

Manas

Introduction

The Kyrgyz epic *Manas* consists of a trilogy narrating the adventures of Manas, the main hero, his son Semetey and grand-son Seytek. The Kyrgyz people today consider Manas to be a great historical treasure and bestow his name upon many places and art forms: Manas Air Port, Manas opera, Manas Medal of Honor, Manas Institute and so on. In 1995 the Kyrgyz celebrated the 1000th anniversary of Manas with great festivities and scholarly meetings.

Manas is not a historical figure and the main epic stories, although they refer to 17 and 18th century events, are not historical either. As a literary form the epic juxtaposes the memory of many historical periods and events, including an invented glorious past. The epic begins with the supernatural birth of Manas. His mother craves to eat 80 mares and is not satiated until she eats tiger meat. Manas is born circumcised. When Manas is born, the world is shaken, unable to withstand his might. His bones are made out of rock. At 12 years old, he begins to fight against the outside enemies of the Kyrgyz people who occupied Kyrgyz land and expulse them – this is the main plot of the epic. He defeats all with the help of his forty companions, and united the Kyrgyz people.

In 1860, Russian folklorists recorded 250,000 poetical lines of the *Manas* epic as recited by a single epic narrator, Saghimbay Orozbekof. The *Manas* epic is sung by a folk artist called the *Manaschi* (the Manas singer). The great *Manaschis* not only repeat the epic but also recreate it by adding new episodes, themes and characters.

Until written literature emerged among the Turkish people, which coincided with the adoption of Islam and their settlement in their land, oral discourse was the main form of epic literature.

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The Dede Qorqut Epic

Outline

The Dede Korkut Epic in Anatolia and the time of its recording in manuscripts in the second half of the 15th century.

The form of the Dede Korkut Epic as a mixture of prose and verse.

The history of the Dede Korkut Epic and its relation of the history, geography and ethnography of Turkey.

Heroes of the Dede Korkut Epic as the rulers of the Oguz tribal aristocracy.

Survival of the Dede Korkut Epic in Turkish folktales.

The ending of the epic tradition in Anatolia after the 15th century.

Introduction

Dede Qorqut, the name of the epic refers to the legendary creator and narrator-singer of the epic as well to the epic itself. This epic, called *The Book of My Grandfather Qorqut*, is the unique survival of the great Turkic epic tradition of central Asia in Turkey. It is found in two manuscripts, one in Dresden the other in the Vatican library. Although the epic was written down in the second half of the 15th century, it must have lived in oral tradition long before that time. In fact, starting from the ninth century, in the historical sources of Persians, Arabs and Turks, references are made to some of the plots found in *The Grandfather Qorqut* epic. Dede Qorqut, the legendary hero of the book, is presented at the end of each epic lay as 1) An epic teller-singer *ozan* (bard), who composes the epic, sings and narrates it with the accompaniment of his *kopuz*, a string instrument; 2) A wise man who advises the rulers and the people alike; 3) A shaman and sorcerer; 4) A Muslim saint. One single person cannot be a Shaman and a Muslim saint at the same time. That complex personality embodies the traces of several layers in the social and cultural background of the Turkic peoples, from the pagan era to the Islamic period.

The book contains twelve epic stories and a prologue. The majority of the story narrates the heroic fights of the Oguz Beys, members of the ruling aristocracy, against external enemies, such as the Trebizond Byzantines, the Georgians, the Kipchak and the supernatural forces which threaten the life of the nomadic tribal community. In one story, the fight is against the one-eyed-giant Basat, the Cyclops of the Homeric epics. One of the last two stories describes an internal fight between two factions of the tribe and the other the fight of the hero, Deli Dumrul, against the Angel of Death.

Oguz Beys join all fights together, defeat the enemy forces and save the Khan or a member of his family who has been taken prisoner by the enemy. The fight ends and the unity and life of the nomadic community are restored. Despite the fact that the enemies are unbelievers (Christians), the main theme of the book is not a clash between Islam and Christianity.

The *Dede Qorqut* epic survived in manuscripts, but it still preserves all the stylistic, linguistic and narrative features of an oral narration. Judging from that aspect, we may claim that the scribe was a bard (the epic teller *ozan*) himself.

Stylistically, the epic consists of a main part, in prose, bound together with verse, interspersed in the plot here and there. The former is narrated by the epic teller-singer *ozan*, who speaks in the third person singular. However, when the hero begins to talk the discourse shifts to first person singular. The prose part of the epic is not a typical prose but a rhythmical one, which looks like verse by its internal rhymes, alliterations and structural parallelisms. The verse does not have an established pattern of rhyming and quatrains. As such, it is also very similar to the prose. The verse is sung, accompanied by a kind of stringed musical instrument called the *Kopuz*.

None of the heroes in epics represent historical personalities and the epic plots do not refer to any historical time or society. However, the ethnography, social structures, habits, moral principles and the concepts of heroism in Oguz nomadic society reflect the historical and social facts. As such, the epic provides valuable documentation of the Oguz Turk's culture before Islam.

The women in the *Dede Qorqut* epic have equal status with the men: they join in the decision making process in Oguz society, take the place of the Khan in his absence, and even fight together with the men of tribe. Polygamy is not yet practiced in the period of this epic.

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The Köroglu (*The Blind Man's Son*) Epic Cycle

Outline

The emergence of the *Köroglu (The Blind Man's Son)* epic in the Ottoman Empire.
The historical personality of Köroğlu and his friends.
The relation of Köroglu and his bandit friends to the Jelali revolt in the Empire.
The social bandit and Köroglu.
The form of the Köroglu epic.
The epic teller (*ashık*) and his relationship to Ozan.
The dissemination of the Köroglu epic in the Central Asian Turkic nations and its transformation in the new social milieus.
The place of narration of the epic.
The impact of the audience on the epic narration.
The end of the narration of the Köroglu epic in Turkey.

Overview

Koroglu, the main hero of the epic and some of his friends, such as Kiziroglu Mustafa Bey and Demircioglu, are historical figures. They are bandits who joined the Jelali revolts which shook the very foundation of the Ottoman Empire for 200 hundred years, beginning in the second half of the 16th century. Around this bandit, an epic cycle containing more than forty stories is clustered, for reasons unknown to us. People elevate him to the status of a social bandit, as Eric Hobsbawm has called it. (Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels*) He fights for the under privileged and the poor and takes from the rich to distribute to the poor. The society in which the Köroglu epic is borne and survives is a medieval empire which has a complex social structure and social classes with conflicting interests. The fights in the Köroglu epic are waged rarely against external powers but with the representative of some social classes within the Empire, such as rich merchants, wealthy caravan owners, and the large landlords. In its travel westward the Koroglu epic underwent very important changes. In Azerbaijan, Koroglu is the head of the Teke tribe, and fights for the independence of that tribe. Among Uzbek he is called Guroglu, means a man born in a grave and fights to the outside enemy of the Uzbek nation.

Koroglu, his bandit friends and their wives all live at a forest called Çamlıbel. The fighting is always initiated when a caravan passes by or the whereabouts of a beautiful woman is learned. Koroglu or his men go out, fight and defeat the owner, plunder the caravan or kidnapp the woman. The wealth of the caravan is stored in a fortress and the woman is placed in Koroglu's harem. Unlike the *Dede Qorqut* epic the heroes in the K Köroglu community practice polygamy, and the social standing of the woman is lower than that of the men. The members of the Köroglu community eat from a common kitchen and drink spirits, spend their money until the next occasion for plunder.

Stylistically, the Koroglu epic also mixes prose, in which the main part of the epic is written, and verse, which occurs here and there in the epic. However, both the prose and verse sections are different from that found in the *Dede Qorqut* epic. The prose does not have a rhythmical pattern, and the verse is no longer a rudimentary declamation. The verse is performed as song by a minstrel (*aşık*) with the accompaniment of a musical instrument called a *saz*. It is the typical folk song

created by the Turkish minstrel, the *ashik*, which represents the transformation of the epic teller-singer *Ozan* in Anatolian sedentary society. Such songs have a well established rhyming and stanzaic pattern consisting at least three stanzas, each with four poetical lines. In the last stanza of the song the name (or pen-name) of the minstrel is mentioned, which means, unlike the bard (*ozan*) of the *Dede Qorqut* epic, the minstrel claims individual ownership of his work, a sign of a more developed, distinctive artistic personality. He is no longer a part of the masses.

The involvement of Koroglu and his bandit friends with each epic story makes them part of a great epic cycle. The *Dede Qorqut* epic was traditionally performed in the great tribal tent of the chief before the tribal community. This placed the epic teller face to face with the heroes. But the Koroglu epic is generally performed in coffee houses and rarely at marriage celebrations in order to entertain peasants and or the lower social classes of a small city. In the *Köroglu* performance, which may last for two to five consecutive evenings (depending upon the ability of the performer), the enthusiasm of the audience survived until 1982, especially in Eastern Anatolia. The introduction of television and radio to the coffee houses put an end to such colorful and very democratic cultural activities. Listening to a Koroglu performance in a coffee house would only require the price of a cup of tea.

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Discussion

In what social milieu were the *Dede Qorqut* and *Koroglu* epics born and survived?

Who are the teller-singers of the two epics and what musical instruments did they use in their performances?

Why does the performance of the *Koroglu* epic change in each performance?

Shamanism.

Outline

Shamanism as a religious phenomenon.

The selection and education of the shaman.

Initiation of a shaman into his future profession.

The functions of a shaman.

Shamanism and the heroic epic.

The geographic distribution of shamanism.

Exstatic experiences of the shaman.

Transformation of the shaman into a minstrel *ashik* in Turkey

Introduction

Shamanism should be included in any Turkic folklore course for two reasons: First a shaman was the singer of epics in central Asia, among Turkmen for example. Both the epic singer and the shaman are called *Bakhshi*. Second, as a consequence of this interrelationship the descriptions of the travels of a shaman both in the the sky and in the underworld provided an important model for the central Asiatic epic and several epic episodes are borrowed from the ecstatic narration of a shaman. In the shaman's travels described in the Kirgiz epic *Er Thoshdük*, the underworld and the shaman's capture and release from captivity is very similar to the shaman's dream-like narratives. This close relation between *shaman* and epic narrator-singer make the epic into a sacred genre. When a Kyrgyz woman had trouble during childbirth, for example, a *Manaschi* would be called to sing a *Manas*. Likewise, when a long drought hit a society, a *Manaschi* would sing a *Manas* to bring rain.

Although shamanism is a religious phenomenon with its own special beliefs, rituals, and symbolism (especially in central and northern Asia), it is not a religion. As such, in the past the practice of shamanism existed along with differant regions in India, Australia, North and South America, among Eskimos and American Indians. A shaman is a magician and a medicine man. He is an intermediary between the sacred and profane. He tries to establish contact with the supernatural world by means of ecstatic experiences. In such an experience his soul leaves his body and ascends to the sky or descends to the underworld in order to contact the evil spirit which has captured the soul of a person, making him sick. The shaman takes the soul back by means of some incantations or by offering an animal sacrifice or by fighting with the evil spirits.

The future shaman is selected either by the gods or by the souls of the shaman's ancestors. Following this divine selection, the candidate exhibits some neurotic behaviors, becomes absent-minded, dreamy, loves solitude, has prophetic visions and sometimes seizures. These sicknesses are considered to be signs of shamanic profession. No matter how the future shaman is selected, he will receive a two-fold teaching: ecstatic and didactic. This education includes learning 1) Shamanic techniques, the names and functions of the spirits, the mythology of the society, symbolism, incantations and secret language; 2) Ecstatic dreams, trances. This

instruction is given either by a master shaman in a real initiation ceremony or by spirits in a dream, which is the equivalent of an initiation ceremony. In such an initiation ceremony the future shaman should experience suffering, death and resurrection –the symbolic pattern which is observed in all initiation ceremonies. Only after that ordeal does the candidate become a shaman and is recognized as such by his community. He cures his own sicknesses first and the cures those of others in the community. Curing the sick is the main function of a shaman, and this means a great deal for primitive societies. The shaman, by fighting against evil forces gives hope to the society by assuring that a man among them is able to meet with the demons and evil spirits which surround their world. Thus, the shaman makes the terrifying unknown known and accountable. This is a very comforting feeling for primitive men.

Shamanism is a cultural phenomenon, but several studies have put forward a theory that shamanism is also a neurotic condition called "arctic hysteria." This illness is caused by extreme cold, long nights, a lack of vitamins, etc. It is quite possible, if this theory is accepted, that when a shaman moves to the sunny climate of Turkey, the lack of vitamin D is eliminated and the shamanism would not survive. A new type of artist, the minstrel, assumed the function of the shaman.

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Turkic Folk Romance

Outline

The characteristics of the folk romance, *hikaye*.
The forms of the folk romance.
The minstrel, the teller-singer of *hikaye*.
hikkaye as performance in a coffee house.
Hikaye characters.
TV and the end of *hikaye* performance in coffee houses.
Happy ending of *hikaye*.
Audience influence in changing plots to have happy endings.

Introduction

The Turkic folk romance which is called "hikaye" in Turkey, has a cross-cultural dimension. It is known not only in Turkey, but in Azerbaijan, Iran, in all of the Turkic republics of Central Asia, that is Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and in Chinese Turkistan. The genre is called *dastan* or romantic *dastan* in the Turkic republics, the same name given to the epic.

The folk Romance form *hikaye* is a long oral narrative which blends prose narrative (the main element) and folk song, interspersed here and there in the romance. A singer-teller-minstrel, an *ashik* carrying a *saz* in his hand or on his shoulder, faces an audience, narrates a love story and sings the songs. A *Hikaye* performance may last two to five consecutive evenings, depending upon the time allotted for the performance, the place, the audience and, of course, the mood of the performer. The name of the romance couples the name of the hero and heroine, such as Kerem and Asli. Every component of the romance may change, but the name remains constant. This is in contrast with the epic form, which is named only with the name of the hero.

The first romance teller "aşıks" (not the minstrel *aşık*, but the romance teller *aşık*) came to Istanbul from Azerbaijan after 1830. The first folk romance *hikaye* were published in lithograph in Istanbul after the 1860s. There is no doubt that the *hikayes* in lithograph lived in the oral tradition before their publication.

The heroes of the early folk romances in Turkey were all born and lived in Azerbaijan cities. For example Kerem, in the story of Kerem and Asli, *Aşık Garip* in *Aşık Garip and Şah Senem*, *Kurbani* in *Kurbani and Perizat*, and *Abbas* of *Tufargan and Peri* were born respectively in *Hoy*, *Tebriz*, *Karabağ*, and *Tufargan*, all cities in Azerbaijan. The dates and the origins of the heroes make it safe to claim that the origin of Turkish folk romance was Azerbaijan which was geographically and historically a part of Iranian culture. In fact, the earliest reference to a romance is found in Iranian literature, which played the same role as France did in Europe in creating and disseminating the romance. *Chares of Mytilene* (in the third century B.C.) in his *History of Alexander the Great*, reports the love story of *Odatis and Zariadres*, who fell in love with each other in a dream. *Homartes*, the king and father of *Odatis*, refused to sanction their marriage despite the desire of his daughter, who expressed her feelings by offering a bouquet of flowers symbolizing the selection of a husband to *Zariadres*, a foreigner. Because of *Homartes's* disfavor, the couple escaped his territory and married. The teller-singer of the Iranian folk romance and epic was

called Gosan in the Parthian Empire (150 B.C -254 A.D.). The title of the Turkish minstrel, "ozan", derived from that word Gosan. (See Başgöz, From Gosan to Ozan) We find in the love story of Odatis a major motif of the Turkish folk romance hikaye, that is falling in love in a dream. (For the Folk Romance in Contemporary Azerbaijan, see Başgöz, İlhan, Turkish Story Telling Tradition in Azerbaijan, Iran)

The folk romance is also known in Arab countries. Chapter 8 of *Kitab al Fihrist* by Ibn al Nadim (ca.935-990 A.D.) reports the the name of *passionate lovers* (uşşak, plural of aşık) before the Islamic period and the early period of Islam. There were books about the *historical tradition of these lovers*. (Dodge 1970, p.719) In Ibn al Nadim's usage, "passionate lovers" refers to tribal minstrels called *aşıks* and "historical traditions" refers to the biographical legends or stories (romances) of these minstrels. Al Nadim enumerated the title of forty such books. The Arab romances mixed the poetry of the minstrels and their loves, real or legendary. It should be noted that the structure of some Turkish romance include poetry and the life story of minstrels.

As we go towards the Central Asia we find the romance form among all the Turkic republics. There the romance assumes more heroic themes because of the strong heroic epic tradition in the area. In Azerbaijan and the countries adjacent to Azerbaijan, even in Crimea, the Turkish folk romance hikayes such as Kerem and Asli, Aşık Garip and Şah Senem survived. The Turkmen, the Kazakhs, and the Uzbeks also have other romances which are not known in Turkey. My selections of romance from that source are Kozi Körpöş, Gül And Bilbil, Sayat and Hemra, and Şirin and Şaker. The Turkish folk romance Tahir and Zühre was recorded in Chinese Turkistan and published by Jarring Gunnar in 1973. (See, Jarring and for the Turkish variant: Başgöz, Hikaye p. 125)).The sources of the plots, of course romanticized and somehow changed, of the Turkic romance are: (i) the biography of historical figures; (ii) historical events; (iii) the life story of minstrels; and (iv) the classical romance called masnawy which was written in verse by well known Persian, Arab and Turkish poets in all Muslim countries. Such classical romance books did not only influence the Turkic folk romance, they were also published in Turkish and Persian translation several times.

The plot of the Turkic folk romances consists of love and adventures of a young couple who fall in love with each other. Multiple obstacles and dangers which separate them are all overcome and in the majority of the romances the couple reunite and marry happily, but some of the romances end tragically with the death of the hero and heroines. (Başgöz, Hikaye pp. 16-17)

The romance tradition informs us that, in the past, all romances had a tragic ending. But the audience did not like this, and one day, during the narration of the *hikaye Kerem and Asli* , which ended tragically, a young man took a pistol and pointed it to the narrator and said " If you kill the hero I will kill you." Since that time romances were transformed and always had a happy ending.

The Turkic romance is narrated in a coffee house to a male audience. In that space, the romantic-idealistic love motif is changed and replaced by a sexual love narration, in order to please the male audience. Furthermore, in a *hikaye* performance the romantic love story may turn into a discussion of daily political and economic problems.

In the rural areas of Eastern Anatolia, where winters are severe and the community has no other means of entertainment, the *hikaye* narration was the only artistic entertainment which the people can attend for the price of a couple of glasses of tea, which is a very cheap ticket for such entertainments.

The revolution in communication technology, especially the invasion of television into coffee houses has ended the tradition of oral *hikaye* narration. Today, *hikaye* recordings are only to be found in archives in Turkey and in the Turkish Archive of Indiana University, Bloomington Indiana. The reader will find a romance Ashik Garip and Shah Senem recorded during performance in my book *Hikaye Turkish Folk Romance as Performance Art*, Indiana University Press, 2008, pp.30-69.

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Folk Tales

Outline

The study of folk tales in Turkey; the context of the folk tale.

Human and animal characters in folk tales.

The Turkish folk tale tradition and its relationship to the folk tales of the Arab world.

Important folk tale collections in Turkey.

Overview

The folk tale is an internationally known prose narrative genre. It is always told in Turkey by a female artist. Women find an opportunity to show their creativity by telling, retelling and recreating folk tales in innumerable performances. Men consider these as simply an old granny's lie.

Folk tales have stable formal features which are very useful in defining the genre. Things happen three times in a true folk tale. The king has three daughters, the hero faces three roads to follow, uses his sword three times, etc. Folk tales begin and end with an oral formula: heroes and heroines always reach their goal and live happily ever after. These stylistic features are very stable, rather like narrative laws, and define the genre. The introductory remarks, which almost reveal the context of the plot, warn the audience that the events, the characters and human behaviors should not be considered objective reality, as the following sample shows: 'Once upon a time when the camel was a street crier, the donkey was a barber, my mother and father were babies I used to rock their cradles'

Folk tale characters are not presented to us by their personal names, they do not live in historical time or in a specific geographic place. They are nameless farmers, fishermen, girls, thieves, giants and midgets. They live in an imaginary society where, just by taking one step, a human being may reach India; the hero becomes a seed, a tree growing branches in a second, and so on. Despite the fact that such heroes live in such an imaginary world, they represent the whole society in which they live.

The farmer is our neighbor, the fisherman is very much like the person who sells fish in the nearby market, and furthermore they are from the social classes which we recognize in our own society. The folk tale characters include not only human beings but animals, such as camel, donkey, fish, pigs, supernatural creatures, jennies, flying witches and demons all of which represent human beings.

Folk tales, like other folklore genres are narrated in the evening, when the daily work stops, when children are about to go to bed, as a valuable form of entertainment which lasts not more than an hour or so. The folk tale teller, like the romance artist, always finds a way to include her own personal and social problems and her views on many of the social and economic issues of her family or community.

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Discussion

Did you believe the supernatural characters in folk tale in your childhood?

What is the function of the beginning formula in folk tale?

How does the female narrator of folk tale impact the folktale characters and plots?

Humor, Jokes and anecdotes

Outline

The important place of humor and jokes in human history.
International character of jokes. Jokes and human psychology.
Anecdotes and jokes related to minorities, to religious and tribal communities, to individual character.
Interpretation of jokes.
Dirty and obscene jokes.
Oldest Turkish manuscript of anecdotes and jokes.
Anecdotes about the heroes Nasreddin Hoja and Bektashis.
Freud's theory of jokes.
Turkish humorous characters: Nasreddin Hoja, Bekri Mustafa, Incili Çavuş
The life of Nasreddin Hoja and the main topics in his jokes.
Religious feelings reflected in Nasreddin Hoja's anecdotes.
His life in anecdotes.
His attitude toward Ottoman literature and Ottoman politics.
Hoja and Timur the Lame.
International themes in Turkish jokes.
The spread of Nasreddin Hoja's jokes as far as China and the various names given to him: Molla Nasreddin in Azerbaijan, Apandi in Chinese Turkestan, Masurdine Joe in the United States of America.

Overview

The joke, an exciting topic of study for psychology and social sciences, plays an important role in individual and social life. Sigmund Freud, who divides jokes as tendentious and non-tendentious, attributes the former the role of expression of thoughts that society usually suppressed or forbade. The non-tendentious joke to Freud gives pleasure to individuals.

To Mary Douglas, the joke affords opportunity for realizing that an accepted pattern (of social life) has no necessity. Its excitement lies in the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective".

Turkish folklore has a large corpus of jokes and anecdotes which can be divided into some categories: Jokes dealing with 1. A group of people, peasants, city dwellers; 2. ethnic and religious groups (Albanian, Arab, Kurd, Negro, saints, and prophets and; 3. historical figures such as Nasreddin Hoja, and Bekri Mustafa. In all, joke discharges nervous energy, helps to eliminate tension from individual,, provides an important means for peaceful operation of social life.

Hundreds of jokes in Turkish folklore are clustered around the personality of Nasreddin Hoja who lived in the 13th Century in Turkey. His jokes are known almost everywhere in the Old World and in Africa, the Middle East, Russia, Central and East Asia, in Europe and the Balkan Countries.

He is called Molla Nasreddin in Azerbaijan, Apandi in China, Hoca Nasr in Kazakistan and Mazurdine Joe in the United States. Nat Schmulowitz, one of the leading analysts of the Hoja tradition, says: "Humor appears to be the most fashionable infectious disease in the world for which medical science has neither found nor sought a cure. In his era Nasreddin Hoja helped to spread the benign germ

or germs which seem to have survived seven hundred years.... During this long period the Nasreddin humor germs radiated out from the village Hortu (today Nsreddin Hoja village, Basgoz) Akşehir, Turkey, into practically all the four corners of the earth. (Albert Rapp, **The Joe Miller of the Near East**, p. 5)

The corpus of stories attributed to him portrays the man as a village imam, a role that combined the function of a judge, teacher and a preacher who had difficulty making ends meet.. He travels to villages to peddle eggs, pickles and fruits. The earliest manuscript of his jokes is dated 1482 and includes just 43 anecdotes. For some reasons unknown to us his personality attracted jokes from many cultures, and today the number of jokes reaches 391, collected in a single book published in 1926.

His jokes deal with the religion, authority figures, his relation with his family, classical literature, his donkey, the justice system, poverty and food shortage. In all these anecdotes Hoja is seen first as a supreme optimist. Nothing, literally nothing – whether sickness, natural disasters, business failure, domestic quarrels, or unbearable political oppression– can depress this man of peasant stock: One dark evening, Hoja saw a black figure swaying to and fro in his yard. "Bring my bow and arrow, he said to his wife, I believe there is a burglar." He shot three times at the figure. The next morning his wife saw that Hoja's cloak, which she had washed and hung on the clothes line, was pierced and ruined. She screamed at him, "You see what you have done? It was the only clothes you had to wear to the mosque." Hoja responded, "I think we should be thankful to God. Just imagine what would have happened if I were in it.

The largest category in the early manuscripts Hoja deals with the religion, that is religious beliefs, rituals, places of worship, teachers and students of religion. Hoja's religious belief is close to the religion of the Muslim mystics and may be called the heterodox Islam which opposes the Muslim orthodoxy which interprets the Holy Book Kur'an literally. An example of such anecdotes: The Hoca waqs walking one day in the street. Eating roasted chickpeas. Children approached him asking for some. The Hoja said "Should I give you the way God does or the way human being do?" They replied, "God's way." he orthodox one The Hoja gave some of them plenty, others little, and still others none. The children reply "Hoca effendi this is not fair." "But this is the way God distribute things and wealth."

Then he turned his face to the sky and cried " You see even children do not like your justice, Hoja plays dumb, in some jokes, risks looking foolish in a difficult situation, and extricates himself through a clever response. For instance, some people who were criticizing Hoja's wife said to him, "Your wife goes out visiting too much." Hoja answered, "Lies and slander! If she went out visiting people so much, she would have come to my house too."

Hoja encounters authority figures such as kings, beys, janissaries and even Tamerlane (1336-1405), the ruthless Mongolian king in a small number of stories. For some historical reasons, Tamerlane became the target of such anecdotes after the 17th century. In these jokes, Hoja is seen as a cultural hero who challenged and punished unjust authorities. Such verbal insults, obviously satisfied ordinary folk. One day, Tamerlane, who was sitting next to Hoja, became angry at him and asked, " Hoja effendi, it is clear that you are not far removed from a donkey." " You are right my sultan," The Hoja said." Only a couple of yards."

The Nasreddin Hoja collection of jokes includes several stories dealing with his donkey. The animal is his faithful business associate in buying, selling, and taking goods to the market place. When the Hoja's wife died, he did not show any sign of grief. When his donkey died Hoja began to cry prompting someone to respond, "Hoca, when your wife died you did not shed any tears, but you are crying for an animal, shame on you." Hoja replied, "You are right, but when my wife died, you all came and consoled me, promising that you would fine me a younger woman to marry.. But not a single promise when my donkey died."

Nasreddin Hoja has been elevated to the level of a national hero. Some of his jokes present challenges to nearly every component of the Turkish social and political system, and they question, by means of absurd humor, many fundamental aspects of human relations, ridicule the established rules and traditions, expose folly in human character, defy authority, display mistrust for the ways that social and individual lives operate. One day he gave an earthen jug to his daughter to bring water from a fountain, and slapped her face, "don't brake it." "Hoja," his friends asked, "She did not break it, why did you punish her?" Hoja said, "What is the use of punishment after she brakes it?"

Reading

Başgöz, İlhan and Pertev Boratav. *I, Hoca Nasreddin, Never Shall I die*. Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications, no. 18. 1998.

Downing, Charles. *The Tales of the Hodja*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Douglas, Mary. Jokes, *Man* no.3 pp.361-386. 1968.

Discussion

Read Boratav- Başgöz book and select the anecdotes which make you laugh and try to find out why you respond by laughing.

What are the basic characteristics of Nasreddin Hoja's jokes?

What pattern do you find in Hoja jokes dealing with the authority figures?

Legends

Outline

Form and topic of legend.

Classification of legends in general.

Religious legends and their origin in Turkish Epics, in Islam and in the legends of saints in Ancient Greece and Rome.

Legend as a subject of belief.

Overview

William Bascom defines legends as a prose narrative which may take place either in today or recent or remote past whose characters are human beings and it is believed by the teller and listeners. (Bascom, William 1965)

Some aspects of this definition should be challenged. Legend is not necessarily entirely in prose; we know Turkish legends which blend prose and poetry. Furthermore, some people may believe that legend is the expression of truth, even though some, especially educated, people do not believe it.

The legend is a short folklore genre which is very hard to define. It has no fixed structural form, no specific formal device, no language of its own. This teller may report using his own language, and make it a very short while others may even make it a long story. However, there is a core which can be accepted as a common denominator: legend is formed around a belief. A snake falls in love with a girl, and brings valuable jewelry to please her. This belief may or may not be accepted as truth, but legend is formed around such beliefs. The International Society for Folk Narrative Research proposes the following classification system for legend which facilitates legend research:

Legends are related to the creation of the universe, historical legends, legends of supernatural beings, religious legends. To this classification should be added one more item: the legends of fear found in contemporary industrial societies.

Legends related to religious people like prophets and saints, etc. found in every religion are called *menkabe* in Turkish folklore. Ilhan Basgöz examines the origin of legends in ancient Greece, Christianity and Islam, and the dissemination of *menkabe* in the old world of Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Reading

Başgöz, Ilhan. "The Origin and dissemination of miracles" Unpublished article.
Knappert, John. *Islamic Legends*. Leiden, E.J.Brill. 1985.

Proverbs.

Outline

Historical origins of the proverb in Turkish society.
Proverbs in epic narration; versification of proverbs by classical poets.
Proverbs in Turkish folk romance.
Proverb studies and Turkish nationalism; proverbs with contrasting themes.
Similarities in Turkish, Persian and Arab proverbs.
The social function of proverbs. Proverbs and social change.

Overview

A Proverb, usually, is a short sentence which contains[??] rhetorical arts and stylistic embellishments. But shortness is not a universal characteristic. There are long and dialogue proverbs.

Here is an example of such a proverb: I have caught a thief. -Bring him home my son.- he does not come my father.- Then you come home. -He does not let me come either. Shorter or longer proverbs sum up a situation: "One swallow doesn't make a summer" recommends a course of action: "Don't buy a house, buy a good neighborhood" criticizes a value or behavior, as does "He spills blood and says I drink the apple cider".

Since the publication of Archer Taylor's seminal book on the subject, paremiology scholars have focused, on national character to extrapolate the norms, values and world views found in proverbs. This analysis should be questioned, first because many cultures and nations have the same proverbs, and, second, in every culture there are proverbs which contain conflicting messages. If one proverb reflects the national values, another should not. Furthermore, norms and values correlate with social change; that is to say, when the values change in a society the proverb message also changes.

The proverb is not an independent form of folklore. It is always used to help the conversation. That function is indicated by the way it is described in many cultures: "A proverb is the torch of conversation" (Bosnian); "a horse to conversation" (Yoruba); "salt to speech" (Arabic); "a star to speech" (Hebrew).

Internationally, the proverb is valued very highly. The Turks say: He who does not listen to proverbs bumps into either a dirty pig or a difficult road. The "ancestral word" (proverb) is not found in the Muslim holy book, The Kur'an, but runs neck in neck with it in value. Proverbs in daily usage are believed to be aids in reconciling tension and conflict between individuals and communities. Many proverbs in Turkish culture, as in others, stereotype other groups, like the Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Bosnians, Greeks and Bulgarians. Such ethnic slurs are aimed more strengthening the majority culture than ridiculing minorities.

Reading

Taylor, Archer. *The Proverbs and Index to Proverbs*. (This book is a classic study of proverbs in general, not just Turkish proverbs.)

Başgöz, İlhan. Proverb Image, Proverb Message and Social Change, *Turkish Folklore and Oral Literature*, ed. Kemal Silay. pp. 267-287.

Boratav, Pertev. Quatre-vingt quatorze proverbes turcs du XV^e siècle resté inedit. Oriens 7, 1954 p. 223-234. (In French).

Discussion

Select some proverbs from your own culture and try to correlate them with the values of your own family and community.

Do you use proverbs often in your conversation? If not please explain why not.

Find the book called *Poor Richard's Almanac* on the internet to discover how proverbs and proverbial expressions influenced the housewives of early America.

Riddles

Outline

The basic forms of folk riddles.
Classical riddles as an individual creation and folk riddles.
Riddles in prose and verse.
Riddles as performance and their impact on the creation of new riddles.
Function of Turkish Riddles.

Overview

A riddle is a highly structured question whose answer is hidden in the text and must be found by the guesser. In Turkish folklore, riddle texts are rarely presented to the audience ending in a question mark, but as a statement, such "an underground golden ball". A Beet.

In a performance situation, the participants understand that this is a question whose answer should be guessed. The majority of Turkish riddles are two line rhymes: A black chicken, its belly ripped open: A chestnut. However, there are riddles which include stylistic elements such as alliteration, inner rhyme, rhythm, symmetry and consist of several sentences.

Riddling is a performance which usually takes place on winter evenings, with the participation of two teams. One team poses the question while the other is supposed to find the right answer. If the second team does not find the answer it is ridiculed and penalized. The penalty may be symbolic, such as the income of a city or the key of a treasure. It may also be a real punishment. The loosing team may be asked to prepare some food for the next meeting.

Riddling today is just a means of entertainment, but riddles played important roles in the past. Among the *Bektashi*, a heterodox Muslim order, a novice who was about to participate in the order, was asked several questions in the form of riddles. Among the Gypsies in Turkey, the bride at the door of the bridal chamber would be asked some riddles. The failure to answer them correctly would result in very serious consequences. The groom would be prevented from entering the bridal chamber. It was said that if a criminal on the gallows could correctly answer a difficult riddle (called a "neck riddle"), he would not be executed and would be pardoned. Two authors, İlhan Başgöz and Andreas Tietze collected and published the largest riddle book in the world, which included 12,000 riddles (see below, in the recommended readings).

Reading

Tietze, Andreas and İlhan Başgöz. A Corpus of Turkish Riddles. California University Press Folklore Publications, no. 22. Introduction.

Başgöz, İlhan. The Functions of Turkish Riddles, Journal of the Folklore Institute, II/2, 1966 p. 132-147.

Discussion

What is the connection of riddles and tabu?

Do you ask riddles from your friends if you do write down some of them.

Do you punish your friends when they fail to guess them?

Onomastics: The Study of Names.

Outline

What is reflected in names.

Who selects the names for Turkish children: father, mother, relatives, doctor, nurse, guests.

The linguistic origins of personal names.

Social and political sources of Turkish children's names: Ancestors, military men, historical figures, artists, football players.

Rituals in naming a child.

How the name changes within a social context.

Turkish nationalism and name changes.

Overview

A name bestowed upon a child is a symbol which discloses, by means of a special language, a set of values, individual wishes and social relations. The female name Yeter ("enough," meaning, "no more girls") transmits a message containing social values, namely the undesirability of having female offspring and the low status attributed to women.

It further reveals that the name itself is the subject of a magical belief which is expected to make the next baby a boy. The right to select a name in all families in Turkey follows, with surprising tenacity, the paternal line. This right and privilege is granted only to the husband and the husband's parents and relatives, male and female. The mother and the mother's relatives are almost completely excluded from enjoying that privilege.

Together with relatively recent social changes –especially the rise of urbanization and education in the larger population centers and cities– the mother has begun to have some rights in the selection of a child's name. Among intellectual bureaucrats with higher education, the husband and wife select the name together. The existence of doctors and nurses among the name selectors is a relatively new pattern of social relationships. The name source –that is where the names are selected from– display similar trends. Among traditional village communities, the source follows the same pattern which is seen in the name.

However, today some new sources have emerged. The names of the doctor or the nurse who help the mother to deliver the baby, teachers, popular singers and football players, historical figures, and respected politicians are increasingly given to babies. I found several instance of babies being named "Jeyar" following the showing of the series "Dallas" on Turkish television, and "Kennedy" in an eastern Anatolian city after the tragic death of the president.

Thus the name is not a meaningless tag but rather it reflects the culture of the previous generation and the social context of a society.

Reading

Başgöz, İlhan. The Meaning and Dimension of Change of Personal Names in Turkey. A case Study of Personal Names in Turkey. Turkish Folklore and Oral Literature, Selected Essays of İlhan Başgöz, ed.

Kemal Silay. 1998: 201-216.

Başgöz, İlhan. Names and Society. A case Study of Personal Names in Turkey. In the same book: 216-231.

Discussion

Who selected your name? How do you relate this selection to the structure of your own family?

Do you like your name? If you don't, what name would you select for yourself and why?

What are the most common names in your community?

Folk Theatre

Outline

Forms of Turkish Folk Theatre.
The shadow theatre *Karagöz* (The Black eye)
The *comedia dell Arte* (*orta oyunu*), and *kukla* (Puppets).

The Shadow Theatre *Karagöz*

The technique of performance of *Karagöz*, its origin in Asia and the Middle East. Minority figures, The Shadow play *Karagöz* "The Black Eye" is a comedy which is performed by one single puppeteer. The performer stands behind a transparent curtain and manipulates some puppets which are placed between the curtain and a lit candle. The audience, which is seated before the curtain, does not see the performer but rather just the colorful shadows the puppets cast onto the screen. The audience only sees this colored shadow.

The technique of the performance of *Karagoz*, its origin in the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire. The human and animal characters in *Karagoz*. *Karagoz* as social critique. Minorities such as Armenians, Greeks, Arabs and Persians as stereotyped figures in *Karagöz* theater. The end of extemporaneous *Karagoz* performance due to political censorship in the 1860s. Collection of *Karagoz* play texts. Efforts to revive *Karagöz* theatre and give it new life.

The Turkish shadow play, called *Karagoz* (Black eye), is a comedy which is performed by a single puppeteer, the *Hayali*, who stands behind a transparent curtain and manipulates two or more puppets with his hands. The puppets were made out of camel skin and dyed with vegetable dye. The audience sees neither the man nor the puppets, which are placed between the curtain and a lit candle, but rather their colored shadow which is cast on the curtain. The puppets are stereotyped representations of provincial folks, minorities such as the Greek Armenians, Arabs, Persians, Bosnians, Albanians, disabled individuals, women, objects, animals, genies and other supernatural beings. It is the *Hayali*, who both manipulates the puppets and speaks for them, imitating the local dialects of familiar characters, including women.

Karagöz shadow performance revolves around two stock characters: *Karagöz*, a robust peasant, who speaks in vulgar language. He is uneducated and unemployed, and represents the antiestablishment, always ready to instill disorder into every scene in which he participates. *Hacivat*, the second stock character, is a man of the establishment, educated in the most prestigious religious school. He never misbehaves or pronounces even a word which is slightly vulgar. The play consists of four parts: the Prologue, the Dialog, the Main Plot and the Epilogue.

In the main plot, almost all individuals who represent the Ottoman Empire meet in a boat, coffee house, Turkish bath, business place, or picnic area, display their costumes, music, dance and behavior to express the cultural, ethnic, and business interests and tensions born out of these differences, always in a dialogue which expresses their willingness to live together in peace within the Ottoman Empire.

The origin of the shadow play must be sought in Southeast Asia. The Arabs learned its technique after conquering Asia and called it *Hayal al Zhill*. The Ottomans came into contact with this folk theatre after Yavuz Sultan Selim's Egyptian campaign in 1517, learned how to do it and brought it to Istanbul and gave such performances the name *Karagoz*. What was learned was the technique of this folk theatre. Since the 17th century, *Karagoz* theatre has been performed in major urban centers such as Bursa, Istanbul and Salonica. An Ottoman performer in 1812 visited Greek cities, where he performed this type of show. That is how the Greeks learned the shadow theater genre, which they called *Kartagosios*, and made it the expression of their culture.

Reading

For Shadow Theatre

Tietze, Andreas. *The Turkish Shadow Theatre and the Puppet Collection of the L.A. Mayer Memorial Foundation*. (Introduction). Gebr. Mann Verlag-Berlin, 1979. (See Suppl. Dos. Tietze, for the text of a Karagoz shadow theatre: *The Muddleheaded Night Watchman*, pp. 29-55)

And, Metin. *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey*. Forum Ankara, 1963-64.

For *Karagöz and Comedia dell Arte*, pp. 34-52.

For *Meddah*, pp. 28-31.

For *Kukla* (Puppet Shows), pp. 31-33.

Discussion

What is the origin of shadow play theatre?

Who are the stock characters of Karagöz theatre and what social classes do they represent?

What is the technique of The Karagöz shadow theatre?