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WATER-THEMED TÜRKÜ IN TURKISH CULTURE



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ABSTRACT

A basic requirement for human life, water also appears as the subject of Türkü as well as other genres of Turkish music, in which it relates to various events in life. Following are the stories of several water-themed Türkü:

Some türkü have to do with actual floods and similar events in nature. The song titled “Go and Call Han the Shepherd,” involves a girl named Sara who threw herself into a flood to rescue one of seven carpets she had woven, and drowned. Her mother was moved by her grief to sing the song. Such sudden and unexpected losses take form as a class of songs known as ağıt, or lament. Some laments commemorate suicides, some of which are by drowning. A new bride who could not bear the treatment she received from her in-laws after her husband was taken into the army, fell into a depression and drowned herself along with her baby in the river. The lament is now known as “Gelin Ayşe” (Ayşe the Bride).

“Karakoyun” (Black Sheep) is the name of another melody which is played in order to guide cattle and sheep. A shepherd who is a master of the kaval (shepherd’s flute) falls in love with the daughter of the tribal chieftain, and uses the beauty of his playing to win her over. Her father agrees to the marriage on one condition: The shepherd must keep the sheep – which have

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been fed salt – from drinking solely by playing his flute. The shepherd succeeds, and her father consents.

Another theme is that of a boy who falls in love with a girl going to and from the well for water, including flirting, eye contact, etc. Finally the family does not consent to the marriage, leaving them to grieve.

Key words: Music, Culture, Song, Water.

TÜRK KÜLTÜRÜNDE SU TEMALİ TÜRKÜLER

ÖZ

İnsan hayatının temel gerekliliklerinden biri olan su, Türk müziğinin diğer türlerinin yanında hayattaki farklı olaylara değinen Türkülere de konu olmuştur. Su temalı bazı Türkülerin hikâyeleri şöyledir:

Bazı türküler yaşanmış seller ve diğer tabiat olaylarını konu alır. “Gedin Deyin Han Çobana” adlı türküde dokuduğu yedi kilimden birini kurtarmak için kendini sel sularına bırakıp boğulan Sara isimli bir kızın hikâyesi anlatır. Annesi kızının acısıyla bu türküyü yakar. Bu tür ani ve beklenmeyen ölümler ağıt olarak bilinir. Bazı ağıtlar, kimisi boğularak gerçekleşen intiharlardan sonra yakılmıştır. Kocasını askere gittikten sonra kocasının yakınlarından gördüğü muameleye dayanamayan bir yeni gelin buhrana düşer ve bebeğiyle birlikte kendini nehre atarak intihar eder. Bu ağıt “Gelin Ayşe” olarak bilinir.

“Karakoyun”, sürü ve koyunları gütmek için çalınan bir başka melodinin adıdır. Kaval ustası bir çoban, aşiret reisinin kızına âşık olur ve kavaldaki maharetini sergileyerek kızın gönlünü çalar. Kızın babası evlenmeleri için bir şart koşar: Çoban –tuzla beslenmiş- koyunların su içmesini yalnızca kaval çalarak engelleyecektir. Çoban bu işi becerir ve kızın babası bu evliliğe razı olur.

Bir başka temada bir delikanlı, kuyudan su taşıyan bir kıza âşık olur. Cilveleşmeler, bakışmalar başlar. Sonunda aileler evliliğe izin vermez ve sevdalıları kederleriyle baş başa bırakırlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: Müzik, Kültür, Türkü, Su.



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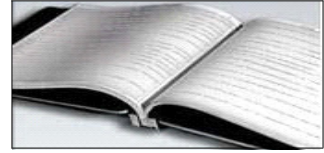
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Türkü are folk poems that occupy an important place in Turkish folk music. Generally comprising slices of life; and containing such subjects as nature, religious belief etc., they are usually sung by people who have gone through a common experience or by relatives of one who has died. According to their local styles and subjects, *türkü* may be referred to by other names such as *deyiş*, *semah*, *zeybek*, *halay*, *karşılama*, *teke zotlatması*, *hora*, *bar*, *ağıt*, etc.

A basic requirement for human life, water also appears as the subject of *Türkü* as well as other genres of Turkish music, in which it relates to various events in life. Following are the stories of several water-themed *Türkü*:

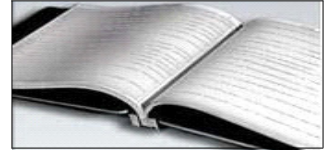
Ağıt (laments) sung about a death in which water plays a role, are usually sung by relatives of the deceased on the occasion of a sudden or unexpected death. They may be of either the *kırık hava* (metric song) or *uzun hava* (free-meter song) type.

1. The story *Arpaçayı* (Barley Creek), one of the first laments sung at a death, and in the voice of a mother who has lost her daughter in a flood, takes place in a place called Mugan, where the *Arpaçayı* meets the Kars River. Its story is as follows:

“Once there was a village in the area known as Mugan. The rich lord of that village had a girl named Saran. She was tall and slender with shining blond hair; so beautiful that all the young men of the village were smitten with her. In addition to her beauty, Saran was also very capable. She milked the sheep and cows, rode horses, and wove the most beautiful, colorful kilims.

“There was a shepherd who looked after Saran’s father’s flocks. His name was Han. He was also a tall, attractive, brave young man. One day Han the shepherd brought the sheep into the pen for milking. That day, Saran was milking the sheep. And when the two youngsters’ glances met, the sparks of love in their eyes burst into flame in their hearts and they fell in love. But it was for naught; she was the daughter of a lord, while he was a poor shepherd. Han the shepherd buried his pain in his heart; he buried it, but eventually he could bear it no longer and told his old grandmother. The old grandmother spoke to Saran’s mother about it, but what could she do? She turned to the old woman and said, ‘Han the shepherd is an honorable young man; he’s well worthy of my daughter, but if the lord catches wind of this, he’ll fly into a rage and kill us both!’

“In order to gain the lord’s acquiescence, the old women gathered the most respectable people in the village together and had them ask him for Saran’s hand on Han the shepherd’s behalf. At first the lord became angry and objected, but in the end, said, ‘Fine, but on one condition. I’ll allow my girl to be engaged to that shepherd, but they will not see each other; and Han the shepherd will not come down into the village from the mountain pastures.’



“They told the lord’s words to Han the shepherd and Saran, who answered, ‘That’s okay, what’s seven years? It will pass like a dream.’ That’s what they said, but spending seven years apart was easier said than done. Saran sat at the loom with her sisters and wove a carpet for each year. At the end of the seven years, they had woven seven carpets. As the villagers awaited the wedding day with joy, Saran went with her sisters and mother to Arpaçayı to wash the carpets. As they washed them, the weather became stormy, lightning struck and the sky rumbled. The creek flooded and washed away one of the carpets; Saran dove into the creek to rescue her dowry and was carried away. Eventually they pulled her, dead, from the water. Seeing her daughter’s corpse, Saran’s mother sung this lament:

Tell Han the shepherd to go,
Let him not come to Mugan
If he comes, he will be devastated

Gedin deyin Han Çobana
Gelmesin bu el Mugan’a
Gelse batar nahak gana

The floods took my tall girl Saran
Took her far away

Apardı seller Saramı
Bir uca boylu balamı

Arpaçayı swelled and overflowed
The flood took my Saran and fled
Her three sisters’ eyes are full of tears

Arpaçayı aşdı daşdı
Sel Saramı aldı gaçdı
Üç bacının gözü yaşlı

The floods took away my Saran
My hazel-eyed girl

Apardı seller Saramı
Bir Ela gözlü balamı

Arpaçayı is never cool
Its waters are never cool
And there can never be a girl like Saran

Arpa Çayı serin olmaz
Aman sular serin olmaz
Saran gibi gelin olmaz

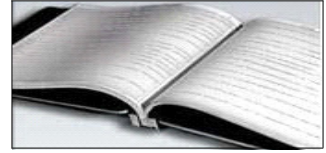
The floods took away my Saran
My hazel-eyed girl

Apardı seller Saramı
Bir uca boylu balamı

This was her cry for her daughter, but it is unknown whether the shepherd was alive or dead (TURHAN-DÖKMETAŞ-ÇELİK, 1996:36).

2. The second lament of a death in which water plays a role, was sung for a girl named Ayşe who committed suicide by throwing herself into the Kızılırmak River. This türkü is also known by the name Gelin Ayşe (Ayşe the Bride); its story is as follows:

Ayşe’s husband had gone away as a soldier, and her mother-in-law Nazife did not give her a moment’s peace. One day she made up a story and told her husband, and had her daughter-in-law beaten. Growing weary at her mother-in-law’s abuse and angry at her unjust beating at the hands



of her father-in-law, Ayşe lost her senses. She took her baby lying in its crib, pressed it to her breast, and threw herself into the raging waters of the Kızılırmak River. Ayşe's early death together with her young baby was an event that the people of the region could not easily forget (ALTIÖK, 2003: 21).

The black tent threatening to come down
Her breast of mother of pearl
Does a woman dive into the water
Because of a beating from her father in law?

Kara çadır eğmeyinen
Göğsü sedef düğmeyinen
Adam kendin suya mı atar
Kayınbaba döğmeyinen

Aman Ayşe, my purple violet
The mountaintops are misty, Ayşe
I went down to the riverbank
I may never come back, my Ayşe

Aman Ayşe'm mor menevşem
Dağlar başı duman Ayşe'm
İndim ırmak kıyısına
Geleceğim güman Ayşe'm

My Ayşe's green chest
Opened for the first time
She never leaves my mind
who was taken away by the water

Ayşem'in yeşil sandığı
Daha elin değdiği
Hiç aklımdan çıkmıyor ki
Kapılıp suya gittiği

The black tent with forty columns
The girl with the white neck and wrists
The bride Ayşe went to the water
With the tender babe in her arms

Kara çadır kırk direkli
Beyaz gerdan ak bilekli
Gelin Ayşem suya gitmiş
Kucağı körpe bebekli

3. The tune called Karakoyun has a special free-meter melody with no lyrics, which only the sheep can understand. The story of Karakoyun is has been told in the small towns of Eastern Anatolia for years. The creek in the song's narrative has a very important place. The story goes:

“Once there was a burning love between a Yörük shepherd and the daughter of a tribal chieftain. The young man wracks his brains but knows he cannot openly speak of this love of his; the girl thinks and thinks, but can't imagine letting such a piece of gossip reach her father's ears. So the shepherd tells of his love to his flocks through his flute; and hearing the bewitching sound of the flute, the girl understands the shepherd's feelings for her and they are filled with excitement. The girl now understands the language of the flute as if it were speaking real words. One day on the mountain pastures with the flock, the shepherd falls upon thieves. They tie him up; and want to steal the flock. But try as they might, they can't make the flock move. The shepherd says, 'It won't work, if I don't play the flute, the flock will go nowhere, untie my hands and I'll make the



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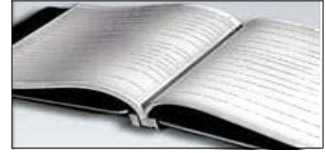
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flock move.’ They untie the shepherd’s hands. He takes the flute into his hands and plays a plaintive tune, and the flock slowly begins to walk. At that moment, the chieftain’s girl, who was sleeping in the tent, hears the sound of the shepherd’s flute. She understands that he’s in danger, and tells the people around her. The Yörüks all run at once to where the flock is, and seeing them, the thieves immediately flee. After that the villagers, seeing that the girl understands the sound of the flute, realize that there’s a secret relationship between her and the shepherd. This makes the girl’s father think most of all. He calls the shepherd to him and says, ‘The sound of your flute is plaintive, is that what you used to draw my girl to you?’ The shepherd answers, ‘I don’t know, maybe so. I drive my sheep to pasture with my flute, I guide them with it. If necessary, I can even make my sheep wait thirsty at the edge of the water and not drink a drop.’ At this, the old Yörük says, ‘Let me give your flock salt to lick, and then you take them to the water. If you can make them wait at the edge of the water without drinking, I’ll give you my daughter.’ The shepherd is sure of his flock. He’s only worried about Karakoyun (Black Sheep), who is very excitable and green. They feed salt to the sheep for three days with no water. As the flock runs eagerly toward the water, the shepherd suddenly changes the tune he’s playing on the flute. At that, the flock stops in its tracks. But the thing he greatly fears takes place. Karakoyun continues toward the water. The shepherd then plays even more plaintively; it’s a plea to Karakoyun to obey his will. At this, the Yörük lord and the people of the tribe grow excited. As the tune grows quicker and even more insistent, Karakoyun begins to slow his pace. He stops, turns back, and looks at the flock. The sound of the flute makes him forget his thirst, and he returns to the flock. This deeply touches the chieftain, and he says, “I give you my girl, from now on may you sleep on one pillow, Yörük.” (TANSES, 2005: 28-29).

4. Some türkü include water as a subject in a different way. In the old days in Anatolia, wells and springs were places where young men and women could meet and become acquainted. The subject of girls carrying water from the well in a jug and glancing, talking and falling in love with young men became the subject of folk songs.

The song “Suya gider su testisi elinde” (She goes to the water with the water jug in hand) tells of the hopelessness of a young man who sees a young woman named Fadime going to the well. He falls in love with her, and wants to marry her. Fadime is also in love with him but because of a series of unfortunate events they cannot be together. The young man says that this grief will kill him, and that he’ll go to plead with her mother. (TRT Müzik Dairesi Yayınları THM Repertuarı).



She goes to the water with jug in hand
She's dressed in scarlet skirts around her waist
Aman, my Fadime
I can't go to the water
I can't do without you
My love is now in a foreign land
I won't give you to some other

Suya gider su testisi elinde
Allar giymiş etekleri belinde
Aman Fadimem
Suya gidemem
Sensiz edemem
Benim yarım şimdi gurbet elinde
Vermem seni yadellere ellere

She goes to the water and fills her jug
She comes home and her rose-like face withers
Aman, my Fadime,
I can't go to the water
I can't do without you
This grief doesn't let up, it will kill me
Let me go to her mother and beg her.

Suya gider su testisi doldurur
Eve gelir gül benzini soldurur
Aman Fadimem
Suya gidemem
Sensiz edemem
Bu dert beni iflah etmez öldürür
Varam gidem annesine yalvaram.

5. In some *Türkü*, the swift flow, gushing, pure, reviving, cooling, purifying and life-giving qualities of water are expressed.

In the song “Su Gelir Bulanarak” (The water comes, becoming cloudy), the singer expresses these qualities of water, and tells of the beauty and purity of his love, and how she brings joy and happiness:

The water comes, becoming cloudy
Who can stand it, my love passed swaying
Aman, aman, rosy-cheeked girl, where might I find you
And that when I find you, I might embrace you tightly

Su gelir bulanarak, bahçeyi dolanarak
Buna can mı dayanır yar geçti sallanarak
Aman aman elmalı seni nerde bulmalı
Seni bulduğum yerde de sıkı sıkı sarmalı

The water comes and drops the sand, it makes the grass sprout
My love's eyebrows and eyes give voice to the mute
Aman, aman, rosy-cheeked girl, where might I find you
And that when I find you, I might embrace you tightly



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Su gelir millendirir çayırı çimlendirir
O yarin kaşı gözü dilsizi dillendirir
Aman aman elmalı seni nerde bulmalı
Seni bulduğum yerde de sıkı sıkı sarmalı.

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