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THE NEW CRIMEAN VARIANT OF *THE TALE OF ASHIQ QARIP* AT THE *MEJUMA OF QATIQ*

Introduction

The *Karaim Turks* are a Turkic people group who accepted Judaism at the period of the Khazar Empire (600–1000 AD) (Togan, 1988: 397). These people, known as the Karaim or Karaim Turks, having been mainly settled as small communities in Lithuania and Poland until recently, are also dispersed around many countries like Ukraine (the cities of Galich³ and Lutsk), Turkey (Istanbul), Australia (Sydney), USA (New York), France (Paris) and others (Adamczuk: 2003).

The Karaim language⁴ is a Turkic language belonging to the Kypchak group, in turn a member of the Western branch of the Turkic language family (Tekin: 1989). The texts at hand give us an understanding that this language was influenced by the Bulgar, Khazar, Uz, Pecheneg, and Kypchak dialects (Zayançkowski, 2003:315). During the time of World War II, there were three dialects of the Karaim language: Troch (Trakai), Galich-Lutsk, and the Crimea dialects. The latter have been under a strong influence of the Tatar since long ago. At the same time, due to the trade and political relations between the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire, these dialects can also be said to have been influenced by the Ottoman. Moreover, since the Crimea dialects of the Karaim language show a number of Oghuz elements, they even seem to be a form of the Anatolian Turkish (Radloff, 1896)⁵.

The Karaim literature of the past centuries was comprised of only the religious literature. The prayer books and the translations of the

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⁴ In this study we use the term *Karaim language* to refer to both the Turkic group starting from the Khazar Empire period including those professing Karaism, and the Turkic language spoken by them.

⁵ This information is found in the introduction volume named “The Dialects of the Crimea”.

Torah made to carry out the religious duties of the Karaim Turks attract attention. Among the oldest examples of the prayer books published in the Karaim Turkic with the Hebrew characters in 1528–1529 in Venice, there can be found worship described in the Crimean Karaim. With the creation of the first Karaim publishing house in 1731 in the Crimea, numerous books on deity were printed.

The language of the religious book translations into the Karaim language mentioned above seems to belong to an old stage. These archaic structures of the Karaim language at present must originate from the fact that the prayers are said in the Karaim Turkic. Thus, reading the prayers in Turkic preserves the phonetic, lexical, and syntactic features (Zajackowski, 1996: 13–20).

This study uses the historical-geographical comparative method to find the episodes and motifs according to “The Motif Index of Folk Literature” prepared by *Stith Thompson*.

1. The *Mejuma* in the Crimean Karaim Literature

There are collections of Karaim Turkic folk literature brought together in a form of *jönk* notebooks. These collections contain records of examples from the Crimean Karaim oral literature tradition, and have a different structure from the simple notebooks, that is, they are bound at the top of the sheets. The author of the collections’ title, *Mejuma*, is anonymous. The *Mejumas* are comprised of mainly prose writings, for example, fairy tales, heroic poems, narratives; and various kinds of Turkic folk poems, like *türkü*, *koşma*, *mani*, *divan*, *semai*, and tongue twisters, *tekerleme*. Apart from that, these collections are also devoted to the important events in the lives of the Crimean inhabitants.

The *Mejumas*, important in being passed down from generation to generation among the Karaim Turks, were practically found in every family’s personal library. The narratives, fairy tales, *türkü* from the collections that were titled after the family’s name, are read after evening meals to the younger Karaim Turks of the family. Evening meals and family gatherings were viewed as a first step to claim the cultural identity and succession by the people groups living as minorities in the 19th century.

The *Mejumas* were written with Hebrew characters, and were unreadable to the younger generations not knowing this system. Presently the *Mejumas* are found in libraries in St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Yevpatoria

and Lithuania; or private collections. Approximately ten *Mejumas*, composed of fairy tales in prose gathered in the 1960s in the Crimea, are found in the private collection of Yusuf Sulimovich (Dubinski, 1994: 231–234).

The *Mejuma* published by W. Radloff at the end of the 19th century is of an importance since it is the first unreligious text in the folk literature; and the first published text of the oral literature (first publication of 1888; reprint of 1896). Another text book recorded around Bahchesarai in 1903–1904 is *Kyljy Mejuma*⁶.

2. The *Mejuma* of Qatiq and the Tale of Ashiq Qarip

2.1. The *Mejuma* of Qatiq

In our study we deal with the *Mejuma* of the Qatiq Family⁷. This *Mejuma* was taken by Yuri Polkanov and handed over to Henryk Jankowski, who kindly provided us with a copy of this text.

The text at our disposal is an A4 photocopy of the 20,5 x 16 cm original *Mejuma*. Every sheet has 5 to 26 lines, at an average 22 lines per sheet. The pages are numbered 1 to 206. The *Mejuma* comprised of 206 sheets lacks Sheets 106 and 107. The photocopy output on some sheets lacks the upper lines of the *Mejuma*. For these reasons we were unable to read the whole of the text.

The information on historical background is found on Sheet 160, Lines 7 and 8 with data in Hebrew. Every letter in Hebrew, as in Arabic, has a correspondence with numbers. Considering this system, we were able to calculate the date of this text, which is 30 July, 1808¹⁰, which shows it is older than the *Mejuma* published by Radloff.

There are 42 folk songs (*türkü*), 36 romantic folk poems (*semai*), 9 heroic folk poems (*divan*), 2 tongue twisters (*tekerleme*), 7 narratives (*mesele*), 13 poems, and 1 comedy in the *Mejuma of Qatiq*. The longest narrative is *the Tale of Ashiq Qarip* with insertions of folk songs found between Pages 25 and 97 of the *Mejuma*.

⁶ PhD thesis by Gülayhan Aktayeva at Adam Mickiewicz University. Out of 649 pages of the *Mejuma* 23 are missing. Ashiq Qarip's *türkü* is recorded on Pages 153-157. *The Tale of Ashiq Qarip* is documented on Pages 506-626. The head part of *the Tale* is missing.

⁷ Henryk Jankowski, "The Contents of Katyk's *Mejuma*", *Tjurkskaja i Smežnaja leksikologija i leksikografija*, (in print). 160/7 האדמה אשר תהתיים 160/7 הגזרים ביום שו לאיול 160/8 בשנת ות בקע תתאריך.

2.2. The Tale of Ashiq Qarip

This tale is of romantic genre. Tales of this kind are called folk tales (*halk hikâyesi*) in the Anatolian area; while their narrators – *meddah*. The main story lines of these tales are love, heroes, etc. loaned from Indo-Persian, Islamic-Arabic and All-Turkic tradition (Alptekin, 2002:18). This kind of oral tradition bears different names among the various Turkic people groups: e.g., *epos* and *erteki* in Turkmen; *dastan* and *hekaye* in Azeri; *tool* in Tuvan; *halk dastany* in Uzbek; *anyz, tarihi jyr, epos* in Kazakh; *dastan* in Kyrgyz; *kobaioyr, jyr* in Bashkir; *annatmak* in Gagauz, *kay çörçök* in Altay Turkic; *nymah* in Khakass; and *mesel* in Karaim language.

The Tale of Ashiq Qarip was known among the Turkic groups in Anatolia, the Balkans, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and East Turkestan, both in oral and written tradition (Alptekin 2002: 214). *The Tale of Ashiq Qarip* was based on a true story of a real *ashug* (poet) named Qarip (Boratav, 1988). PhD thesis by Fikret Türkmen (1974) presented at Atatürk University in 1972. There have been many articles and books on *the Tale of Ashiq Qarip* published in Turkey and other countries. One of them is an article by Fikret Türkmen (2005), and the other – by Irina Driga (2007).

The longest narrative of *the Tale of Ashiq Qarip* is recorded on Pages 25–97 in the *Mejuma of Qatiq*. Every page starts with “*Ashiq Qarip*”, and the non-final word in a sentence finishing the previous page is repeated at the beginning of the following. *The Tale* ends with these words: *bu meselege Aşiq Qarib dirler, buni oquyanlar temaşa qalırlar, ve bunu yazanga Baruh Mangubi dirler. Fam ve nişlam*; out of which we learn the author – Baruh Mangubî.

The prose passages of *the Tale* are called *mesel*, and songs are called *türkü*. The songs are written in quatrains, all of which have eight syllables a line, and overall have 210 quatrains.

The summary of *the Tale* is as follows. Ashiq Qarip lives with his mother, father and sister in the city of Tebriz. After his father dies he sees a beautiful girl in his dream and falls in love with her. Her name is Shah Sina and she lives in the city of Tbilisi. Ashiq Qarip takes his mother and sister there. At the same time, Shah Sina also dreams of Ashiq Qarip and falls in love with him. The hero and his family work at the house of the girl. Ashiq Qarip wants to marry Shah Sina, and sends the Padishah himself to the girl’s father to settle the match.

However, the father wants bride price for his daughter. Since Ashiq Qarip does not have it, he goes to Halep and starts working at a coffee house. There he plays the *saz* (a musical instrument), and sings *türkü*. He also helps a merchant named Shah Levent. The latter goes back to his country and lies that Ashiq Qarip died, he also wants to marry Shah Sina. The girl sends a note of her planned wedding to Ashiq Qarip through another merchant, Yakup Hoja, after which Ashiq Qarip manages to come right to the wedding ceremony. He competes with another *ashug*, and wins. He reveals himself to Shah Sina. At the end of *the Tale* Ashiq Qarip marries Shah Sina, and Shah Levent marries Ashiq Qarip's sister.

Folk stories can be studied through different methods. In this study we do research on the story according to its episodes and motifs according to 'Historical and Geographical Method' in Folklore.

2.2.1. The Episodes of the Tale of Ashiq Qarip

In accordance with the method of study the episodes and motifs of the folk stories, the episode arrangement is the following: 1. The family of the hero; 2. The birth of the hero; 3. The naming of the hero; 4. The education of the hero; 5. The love affairs of the hero; 6. The meetings of the hero and his beloved one; 7. The departure of the hero to alien places; 8. The intention of the hero's beloved to marry another one; 9. The return of the hero to his motherland; 10. The ending (Alptekin, 2002: 87–89).

2.2.3.1. The introduction of Ashiq Qarip's family

There are an old man, his wife Han Zühre, their daughter Gülli Han, and son Ashiq Qarip living in the city of Tevrüz. The old man gets sick one day and dies. Qarip is introduced as a child of a poor family.

2.2.3.2. The love affairs of Ashiq Qarip

Ashiq Qarip once sees a man with a white beard in his sleep who names him his intended one: a Shah Sina of the city of Tbilisi; he then leaves her portrait on Ashiq Qarip's bed. Seeing it, Ashiq Qarip falls in love with Shah Sina. The same night Shah Sina also sees the same old man in her sleep who says that her intended one is Ashiq Qarip. He leaves the portrait of Ashiq Qarip on Shah Sina's bed as well. Two parts of the *Mejuma of Kyljy* connected with Ashiq Qarip's dream are missing. The dream seen by Shah Sina in this *Mejuma* is the same as in *the Mejuma of Qatiq*.

2.2.3.3. The departure from Ashiq Qarip's country

Ashiq Qarip goes to the city of Tbilisi accompanied by his mother and sister in order to find the girl he saw in his dream and fell in love with. This episode, being a part of the story recorded by Radloff, is missing in the *Mejuma of Kyljy*.

2.2.3.4. Shah Sina found by Ashiq Qarip

Ashiq Qarip and his mother and sister start to work at the Shah Sina's house.

2.2.3.5. The characters' falling in love with one another

Ashiq Qarip meets Shah Sina. Shah Sina also falls in love with him.

[*The meetings of the hero and his beloved one*]

2.2.3.6. Ashiq Qarip's proposal to Shah Sina

The *padishah* asks the hand of Shah Sina for Ashiq Qarip from her father. Shah Sina's father wants three hundred wallets of silver as bride price. In order to gain this money, Ashiq Qarip estimates, he will have to work for seven years and three months.

2.2.3.7. The departure of Ashiq Qarip to a foreign land

2.2.3.7.1. The places visited by Ashiq Qarip

Leaving his place to go to a foreign land, Ashiq Qarip travels in the direction of Halep.

2.2.3.7.2. Ashiq Qarip's money earning

Ashiq Qarip works as a coffee maker at Azil Pasha's in Halep. He becomes his partner. The number of the visitors of the coffee shop increases in a short time period. Ashiq Qarip earns money both by coffee making as well as by bringing and selling goods from India and Yemen. In a short period of time he saves a lot of money.

2.2.3.8. A plot to marry Shah Sina off to another man

Seven years and three months pass by since Qarip left for a foreign land. Meanwhile, nothing is heard from Qarip for six years. At that time Shah Levent asks Shah Sina's hand from her father. The father orders him to wait for the completeness of the term given to Qarip, but also wants three hundred wallets of silver from Shah Levent. The latter also goes to a foreign land to earn money, and comes to Halep where he manages to do it. Qarip sends a letter to Shah Sina and presents to her family through him. However, Shah Levent burns the letter, and spreads the news that Qarip died.

2.2.3.9. Ashiq Qarip's finding out about Shah Sina's intended marriage to another one

Shah Sina manages to pass the news to Qarip through a merchant named Yakup Hoja. Qarip starts preparations for his come-back at once.

2.2.3.10. *The return of Ashiq Qarip to His Home Country*

Qarip took the money he earned and saying goodbye to his friends starts his journey. He faces different adventures on his way back. Khyzyr (a saint) helps him.

2.2.3.11. *Wedding Ceremony*

Ashiq Qarip appears just on the last day of the preparations for the Shah Sina and Shah Levent's wedding. He comes with his *ashug* clothes on to the wedding. Competing in rhyme-making with other *ashugs* he wins. He reveals himself to Shah Sina. Ashiq Qarip marries Shah Sina, while his younger sister Güllü Han marries Shah Levent.

2.2.4. **The Motif Structure of the Tale of Ashiq Qarip**

The motifs of *the Tale* were analyzed according to Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature*.

C.422.3. *Hiding one's personality*

Ashiq Qarip hides his personality from his mother and younger sister. Ashiq Qarip hides his personality at the wedding.

C.751. *Ban from doing certain things at certain time*

The father of Shah Sina does not give 7 years 3 months to anybody.

C.755. *Fulfilling a task at a certain time*

Ashiq Qarip collects the bride price of three hundred wallets of silver in 7 years 3 months.

D.800-D.899. *Possessing magic things*

Ashiq Qarip takes a golden basin from Khyzyr.

F.900-F.1099 *Extraordinary events*

Ashiq Qarip and Shah Sina find portraits of one another under their pillows on waking up.

F.1063. *Dream*

Ashiq Qarip sees an elderly man with white beard in his dream who tells that Shah Sina is his intended one.

A dervish enters Shah Sina's dream and tells her that Ashiq Qarip is her intended one.

H.11.1. *Telling the past from the beginning*

Ashiq Qarip tells his past to the Waters of Araz.

The mother, sister and beloved one of Ashiq Qarip tell the past to Yakup Hoja.

H.12. Revealing oneself through singing

Ashiq Qarip reveals himself by singing.

H.148. Expressing desire in a form of a poem

Ashiq Qarip tells his mother about his intention to go to a foreign land in a poem.

Ashiq Qarip tells the Waters of Araz of his desires in a poem.

Ashiq Qarip tells a madrasah teacher of his desires in a poem.

Shah Sina tells her mother of her desires in a poem.

Ashiq Qarip tells the White Girl of his desire in a poem.

Shah Sina tells Ashiq Qarip of her desire in a poem.

The mother of Ashiq Qarip, his sister and beloved one tell Yakup Hoja of their desires in a poem.

Conclusion

The comparison of the episodes of *the Tale* and the other *Mejumas* shows their similarity to one another. In this story there are different names of cities (*Tebriz, Tiflis, Halep, Hint Yemen*), places (*palace, mosque, coffee house, madrasah*), people (*Hoja, ashug, servant, coffee maker, merchant, religious leader – softa*), descriptions of social life, some traditions, plays.

The motifs of answers in rhyme forms and religious motifs are frequently used in *the Tale*. The golden cup, an elderly helper, and dreams, and supernatural situations belong to the fairy tale elements. The most important motifs are the religious elements of the Islamic tradition, such as: God (Allah), Sacred book (Kuran-ı Kerim), namaz, making a hajj, ablution, mosque, paradise, Hyzyr, paradise maidens, etc.

Written in 1808 *the Mejuma of Qatiq* is the oldest text about *Ashiq Qarip* at our hand. Its further study will provide the social sciences with important data of the social and religious elements of the Karai of the early 19th century.

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