

# The Interethnic and Interreligious Values in Turkish and Crimean Legends

**T**he present paper examines interethnic and interreligious values in Turkish and Crimean folk legends. The folklore of both Crimea and Turkey has a multicultural background, which makes both corpuses of texts suitable for research. In the course of the study, a wide range of published Turkish and Crimean legends were reviewed and analysed. There are two deeply-rooted tendencies in the studied legends. First of all, the interethnic and interreligious relationships can be described as ghastly and cursed. Thus, antagonists in the legends are often from ethnic minorities or strangers in relation to domestic ethnic groups. However, if the texts are analysed thoroughly, we can see that there are important sacred cultural values at the core of the legends, including values of life, health, and divinity.

## Legends as material for studying cultural values

Legends can be regarded as more suitable for this research than myths or fairy tales. I argue elsewhere that legends could be considered as a phenomenon which came into existence earlier than myth and other prose narratives (Zherdieva 2013, 2007). Legends could be seen as the first stage in the formation of myths. When mythological systems had been developed, legends continued their existence in parallel with the myths without any contradictions. Legends were adapted to monotheistic religions as well, being on the periphery of new mythologies. Legends still exist in folklore and continue to produce new forms in modern cultures. Being flexible and changeable, legends can include mythological components from different cultures and times. While myths sanctify universal values, legends are mostly connected to particular places, people and events and include more concrete values. At the same time, however, they have fragments of ancient myths. The notion of

*the other* is not the main subject of myths; what is most important is the presentation of the idea of sacred values. Legends, on the other hand, are a good source of ethno-mental features because they absorb traditional collective values more effectively.

## Crimean and Turkish legends: characteristics of the texts

Crimean legends are a unique collection of texts that deserves to be extensively researched. The interest in Crimean legends started at the end of the nineteenth century. The legends were published in order to attract tourists to Crimea. Non-professional folklorists basically did the fieldwork and arranged the publication of Crimean folklore. Therefore, the principles of classification of the collected material are obscure, and the national origins of legends are not indicated either. There are many nationalities living in Crimea; thus, there are Crimean Tatar, Greek, Armenian, Karaite, Ukrainian, Russian and Soviet Crimean legends. Most legends were collected in their original language, and were later translated into Russian. The properties of legend texts were influenced by the translators/collectors' professions and their cultural environment. Some scientific expeditions were supported by the Communist Party, which aimed at a cultural integration of all nationalities. Folklore had to be edited according to the ideological demands of the time. Texts were censored, and most probably many of them were not published. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Crimean legends became a commercial product, and the editors lacked a scientific approach. Thus, publications combined legends from different periods of time and from diverse cultures. References to the original sources were seldom included, neither were commentaries on the legends

offered. Most of the Crimean legends are partly folklore and partly literature. They were edited according to the time they were published; consequently, their texts generally reflect not only authentic cultural values but also the editor's values.

Turkish legends comprise a voluminous body of folklore material. The collection and publication of Turkish legends started only in the 1940s, but from the beginning was scientifically based. Collections were made basically by folklorists and philologists in the course of their academic work. The collectors often indicated when, where and from whom legends were gathered. There are many collections of Turkish legends from different regions of Turkey, such as Konya, Hatay, Malatiya, Trabzon, Ordu, Dimerci, Sivas, Istanbul, Çukurova, Urfa, Afyonkarahisar, Izmir, and 'The Legends of Anatolia', which is collection of Turkish legends from different places in Turkey. There are Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Jewish, and Greek populations in Turkey, but in contrast to Crimea we have access only to Turkish legends. The folklore of different nationalities living in Turkey has largely not been translated into Turkish; some legends of ancient Greece were retold by Turkish sources, and only one book of Kurdish legends is available in Turkish (Yücel 2003). Most probably, due to the language barrier (they were not translated into English), Turkish legends did not become a commercial product. Thus, Turkish legends have not been edited for ideological and commercial purposes: they were not in that sense rewritten by their collectors.

### The concept of 'the other'

The notion of *the other* appears in ancient cultures and still functions in modern societies. It is a product of certain characteristics of the human mind, which include a need to structure the world (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 132–66; Lotman 1996: 175). Binary oppositions such as ours/theirs, cultural/uncivilised, safe/dangerous and ordered/chaotic can actually be encapsulated by one pair of notions: profane/sacred. The border at which they meet is highly charged; the notion of the sacred is closely related to the concept of pollution and the cursed – both should be separated from profane things because both the sacred and the cursed can harm people. Connection with world of *the other*; blaming *the other* for all negative things that happen in a society, labelling *the other* or its mythologisation as idiotic and ignorant, are common tendencies in folklore. *The other* may belong to various categories, as outsider, ethnic other, religious other or cultural

other. It is interesting to mention that besides the above-mentioned, Crimean Soviet folklore contains the notion of the *class other*; as for example, in the dichotomy between the poor and the rich, nobles and commoners. One must also acknowledge the ideological context of editions of Soviet Crimean legends. When the old pre-revolutionary texts were rewritten during the Soviet period, their emphases were changed and in what had been initially Crimean Tatar legends the Tatar protagonists themselves were transformed into antagonists. However, any further discussion of otherness would distract too much from the central theme of this paper and will therefore not be included in the present article. The subject deserves separate research, which I have undertaken elsewhere (Zherdieva 2010).

At all cultural levels, the notion of *the other* is opposed to the idea of hospitality, as when a stranger is under your roof you cannot harm him because he is under the protection of God. According to the Old Testament, the stranger actually can be associated with God. It is safe to say that the motif of the deity coming to a village to check up on its people's hospitality is the most popular among Turkish legends. Infraction of the laws of hospitality in Turkey and ingratitude for hospitality in Crimea lead to serious punishments: often people are turned to stone by God in order to emphasise how important it is to behave well to your guests.

### Interethnic values

Legends, preserving the rudiments of ancient myths, can include the motives for abhorrent events. In the Turkish legend of 'The Bath of Three Brothers', one woman comes to the baths with her twin babies where they are brutally killed and tortured by a gang of armed robbers (without national specification). They cut off the woman's breasts and put them to the mouths of her killed children. Every year, on the day of the slaughter, people cannot visit the baths because horrible cries and moans are heard there (Akyalçın 1998: 43). The story may carry traces of old agricultural ceremonies, but in a modern cultural context the tale of the atrocious murder of the woman and her children seems more to be about the intolerable behaviour of bandits. In this legend, the narrator does not make any national distinctions, but there is some national marking in the following legend: in the Turkish narrative of 'The Girl's Trap' a Turkish girl is kidnapped by Armenians shortly before her wedding. They hide her in a cave, kill her, and cut

up her body. Two days later the dog of a local shepherd finds one part of her body. Following this event the cave is known as 'the Girl's Trap' (Özen 2001: 219–20). It is possible to suggest that tearing the girl's body into pieces reflects the remains of an ancient initiation rite, when boys and girls who attained marriage age were killed in pretence in order to be ritually reborn again. The fact that in this instance the rite is done by *the other* may be explained in the following way: when the rite becomes irrelevant, the stories about it are told with disapproval and its performance is attributed to the other. The other can also be thought of as a shaman and magician, so that it is understandable why exactly they perform the rite. It can be compared to the case of Medea in Greek mythology; she was a princess from Colchis and thus the outsider in relation to the Greek culture, who was known as an enchantress and was said to have dismembered the body of her brother and scattered the parts on the ground or in the sea. She also kills Pelias by telling his daughters she has the power to give him his youth back by cutting him up and boiling him in magic herbs. She demonstrates this magic procedure on an old ram which becomes young and jumps out of the pot. The girls cut their father into pieces and throw him into the pot, but Medea does not awaken him to life and youth again. Thus, in the example we again can see the rudiments of an initiation rite being performed by a stranger.

Horrible events are found also in the Crimean Greek legend called 'The Flooded City'. In the legend, an Italian city near Feodosiya is shown to be devilish and cursed. The Italians, strangers to the local Greeks, seem very mysterious. Their city is enclosed by high walls, and strange things are happening there. The truth comes to light as it turns out that the Italians have been abducting the Greek women and making soap out of them. Being terrified, the Greeks flood the city and it sinks into the sea, forming the gulf where the inhabitants of Feodosiya can still see not only beautiful streets with gorgeous buildings, but also copper boilers, in which wrinkled old women are floating (Kondaraki 1883: 35–8). The Italians are outsiders in Crimea; so in legends they often became antagonists. There are no remnants of myth in this legend. It contains an image of absolute inhumanity. The Italian as *others* are depicted as inhuman beings and are completely negated.

In every corpus of legends there are always narratives about the breaking of unwritten laws and the concomitant punishments for these, and sometimes an ignorant person represents another ethnic

group. Thus, in the Turkish legend of 'The Vanished River', an Armenian woman wipes her child's lower parts with wheaten bread and throws it into a river. The river cannot stand this outrage and disappears (Sakaoğlu 2003: 67–8). In the same book there is also the legend 'The Mother and Her Child Who Were Turned into Stone' (Sakaoğlu 2003: 56–7), where a mother washes her child's lower parts with camel's milk. God turns both the mother and her child into stones. There is no specification of the nationality of the heroine in this legend.

The motif of the holiness of milk is more ancient than the sanctity of bread. According to James Frazer, the commandment 'not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk' is actually older and more important than the moral version 'Thou shalt do no murder' (Frazer 1919: 111–64). J. Frazer described many taboos concerning the handling of milk among ancient societies, explaining this as exemplifying the principle of sympathetic magic:

Even after the milk has been drawn from the cow it is supposed to remain in such vital connexion with the animal that any injury done to the milk will be sympathetically felt by the cow. Hence to boil the milk in a pot is like boiling it in the cow's udders; it is to dry up the fluid at its source. (Frazer 1919: 118)

Thus, if something happens to the source of milk, the whole tribe could starve to death, and this could be worse than the murder of one person. In the Turkish legend, the woman who uses milk for washing her baby can be considered a major offender. This is why God turns her and her baby into stone, and in the second legend where bread is defiled the punishment results merely in the disappearance of the river.

Bread as a symbol of food demands respect. There are many examples in mythologies around the world of people being punished for acting disrespectfully towards it. For example, the famous tale of Hans Christian Andersen, 'The Girl Who Trod on the Loaf' is about a girl who falls underground and is turned into a bird for misbehaving towards bread. There is also the Turkish legend 'The Minaret of the Ulu Mosque', in which a rich man makes a donation for the building of the Ulu Mosque. Everything is fine until he refrains from picking up a piece of bread on his way home. Eventually, he becomes bankrupt and ends up as a boiler man in one of the city baths (Rızvanoğlu 2008: 92). Poverty is the punishment merely for leaving bread on the ground.

In the examples analysed above, the sacredness of bread and milk is more important and ancient than the binary opposition between us and the others, and it is not necessary to regard the lawbreaker as the other.

In the legends, lascivious behaviour also is imputed to *others*. 'The Legend about Ani's End' tells the story of the Armenian King Ani, who demands that every woman from his kingdom has to spend her first wedding night with him. One husband does not agree with this condition and kills the king (Tatar 2006: 56–9). In another legend, 'The Fish Lake', a Turkish wife is seduced by an Armenian man. As a punishment they are turned into a lake full of fish. When the Russians come to the village, they fish in the lake, and die after eating their catch (Sakaoğlu 2003: 223–4). The trace of ancient totemism can be seen in the legend. People turned into fish and the prohibition on eating the fish is evidence of primitive beliefs. The Russians in the legend are outsider others who die because of ignorance of the local laws.

In the Crimean legend 'The Castle of Dishonour', people from a foreign country (there is no specification of which one) build a brothel in Parthenit city. Every year in May men from different foreign lands come and spend the summer there. At the end of each summer all the girls are decapitated and new ones are

found. This outrageous action is prevented by God when on one occasion nuns from the local convent are kidnapped and brought to the castle. God sends an all-devouring fire to the building (Kondaraki 1883: 55–8). It is emphasised many times that the people are not from Crimea because the legend needs to tell didactic story but cannot use people from local nations for the antagonists. The abhorrence lies in the fact that it was nuns who were brought into the brothel.

There are legends in which two nations are involved in a war. In the Turkish legend 'The Cracked Gate', the Greeks invite forty Armenian warriors to assist in fighting a war. Armenians help them to win the war, and are rewarded with forty Greek women. When the women become pregnant, they and their husbands are ordered to be killed. One woman unveils the conspiracy. She and her husband decide to run, but all the gates of Istanbul are closed. The woman curses one of the gates, wishes it would crack and it does so (Duman 2010: 215–16). This legend concerns the relationship between the Greeks and the Armenians, but it has been retold by a third party, the Turks, as its toponym has Turkish origin; 'Çatladıkapı' ('the Cracked Gate'). Çatladıkapı is a district on the European side of Istanbul. It is very questionable that this name, which refers to such a terrible crime existed in the etymology of Greek



The handprint on the porphyry columns in the south-east corner of Hagia Sophia.



Constantinople. In the legend, the Greeks are shown to be very cruel and their acts as unethical.

It is usually difficult to find the same legend told by different sides among published texts. Luckily, there is the legend about the capture of Istanbul which does have variants in both Crimean and Turkish versions.

The Crimean Greek legend 'The Shadow' portrays the Turks as very cruel people. According to the legend, Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror ordered every person who was hiding in Hagia Sophia to be killed, so that he would be able to pray there in silence. The sultan enters the cathedral, where dead people are lying on the floor and he stumbles over the corpses. His hand is mired in human blood. He presses this hand to one of the columns (the print of which can be still seen there). The sultan starts to pray but he is interrupted by an old Orthodox priest who commences to reverence his Lord. Mehmed commands him to be bricked up into one of the walls, but the priest disappears, and his voice from nowhere says: 'I will come back when Sophia becomes ours again' (Marx 1917: 50-3). It is more than understandable that the siege of Istanbul was tragic for the Greeks, so they mythologized Mehmed as a figure of pure evil. Since the capture of Istanbul was very important for the Turks, on the other hand, Mehmed was mythologized as a hero who was able to perform miracles.

in order to perform *abdest*, but is not given any. As a punishment, the saint prays for the disappearance of the whole Armenian village (Sakaoğlu 2003: 93-4). The plot may be considered as underlining religious differences. *Abdest* is essential for Muslims, and the heroine, who puts obstacles in the saint's way, is identified as Christian in order to intensify the tension between the groups. Nevertheless, the plot can be regarded as a universal theme, describing the refusal to perform moral actions. In the legends, both women die in spite of the fact that the Turkish woman does a virtuous deed. It is obvious that she dies because she broke the taboo, and the holiness of the event is desacralized.

To understand the implications of the blood in the river, one more legend should be mentioned. This is the Turkish legend 'The Namaz Strait' (Alpaslan 2006: 21). While one woman is secretly praying at night, she is suspected of being unfaithful to her husband. He follows her and furtively watches her perform *abdest*. When the woman realises she is being observed, she takes her child and drowns herself in the river.

In the three legends, the heroines are women. It is known that it is not necessary for a woman to go to the mosque for prayer. Women should be separated from men and there are rigid restrictions on who can

### Interreligious values

In a similar fashion as concerning interethnic relationships, it may seem that there is a conflict between representatives of different religions in the legends. However, universal cultural values are mostly placed in the forefront of these narratives.

There are two Turkish legends about respect and disrespect for *abdest* (a ritual Islamic ablution performed before praying). In one legend, 'The Bloody Spring', a woman lets a saint pass her on the way to a spring so the saint is able to perform *abdest* at the right time. For this the saint awards her with an endless supply of food. The woman is forbidden to tell her husband about this, but nevertheless she does so and therefore dies. When it is time for *abdest*, the water in this river becomes red like blood (Alpaslan 2006:13). In another legend 'The Place to Tread', a saint asks an Armenian woman for water



The legends and interreligious relationships.

enter a mosque; for instance, menstruating women. Perhaps the blood in the river of the legend 'The Bloody Spring' depicts menstrual blood. A menstruating woman was considered dirty; sometimes she was not even allowed to enter her home during her time of menstruation, and needed intimate cleansing in the river. In the present legend, the mythologisation and fetishisation of blood can be understood as a fragment from an old myth which concerned the sacredness of *namaz* (also *salat*, a formal Muslim prayer that has to be performed five times a day).

One more example of interethnic values is found in legends about converting to Islam. The legend about the miracle of spring arriving in the middle of the winter is very popular in Turkish accounts. The legend concerns a year of bad harvests in different villages. When animals begin to die, one rich Armenian/Greek/non-Muslim proposes marriage to the most beautiful girl in the village in exchange for hay for the animals. The critical point of this offer is that the girl has to convert to Christianity. Thus, the main heroine must choose between the rescue of her village and the sanctity of her beliefs. The girl starts praying to God. In one version of the legend, all the animals turn into stone (Sakaoğlu 2003: 44–5), in others, an incredible miracle happens: spring arrives in the middle of the winter (Tatlı 2005: 40–4; Özen 2001: 206; Çebi 2001: 63–8). It has to be mentioned that the more significant the value of a legend, the more incredible is the corresponding miracle. Thus, in the related legends, the denial of Islam is described as something so intolerable that God has to intervene with an impressive miracle. Usually in legends in which a character has to choose between his life and the life of his people, he chooses the people and thus his death makes him a hero. In this legend, the choice between faith and the life of the people is not solvable without the assistance of a miracle.

According to Islam, it is easier to become Muslim than it is to convert Judaism, for example, but there is no opportunity to abjure this religion. The legend of 'The Forty Brothers' tells of a latent censure for a change of faith. A Turkish man falls in love with a Greek woman. He has vowed to never have children if God helps him to marry the woman. However, her father does not want her to marry due to the difference in their faiths, but he makes a condition: if she bears him forty grandsons, he will accept her as Muslim. The man forgets his vow and accepts the conditions. The woman turns to Islam, but after their wedding she cannot become pregnant. Her husband visits a dervish who teaches him a special prayer after

which the woman gives birth to forty children. However, the man has a bad dream, following which the forty children die. They are buried on a mountain in one grave, on which a stone cradle is put. Now this is a holy place. Unfruitful women come to the place and rock the cradle. It is believed that this will help them become fertile (Şentürk and Gülseren 1996: 12). Prima facie, it seems that the children die because the man's oath was broken, but we can also assume that the reason is God's disapproval of the woman's renouncing her faith. The legend is connected to a particular place – the grave of forty babies – who may have died due to an epidemic. Christians and Muslims started to tell different legends about the place, and what we have as a result may be a combination of the stories.

There are two more examples of religious conversion both in Turkish and Crimean legends. In the Turkish legend 'The Fortress Which Cut off Food', Christian monks in Istanbul secretly convert to Islam. They write a letter to Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror with information about the seizure of Istanbul. It is written that if Mehmet builds a fortress near to the Anatolian stronghold, it will cut off the possibility of bringing food to Istanbul from the Black Sea and Istanbul will surrender (Duman 2010: 134–5). A similar example is found in the Crimean legend 'How Vladimir Conquered the Chersonese'. The heathen prince Vladimir receives a letter with a hint of the seizure of Chersonese from an Orthodox priest. There is a water supply pipe near to the walls of the Chersonese, but Vladimir cuts it off and the city is left without water. In order to rule the city, Vladimir adopts Christianity (Taran 1968: 30). The monks in the first legend and the priest in the second can be considered as mediators of the will of God.

### **The universal value of the holy**

Holiness has carried equal importance in the above-mentioned ancient and modern expressions of value. This value is often not differentiated across the different religions and thus Christians and Muslims can regard the sacred places and people of the other religions as holy for themselves as well. There is less conflict between religions when it comes to the holy and thus, in this case, it is worth underlining the difference between the meaning of the words 'religious' and 'sacred/holy'.

There are many legends about holy people, who are revered by all religions and nationalities in Turkish legends. In the legend 'The Sheikh Cabbar', one



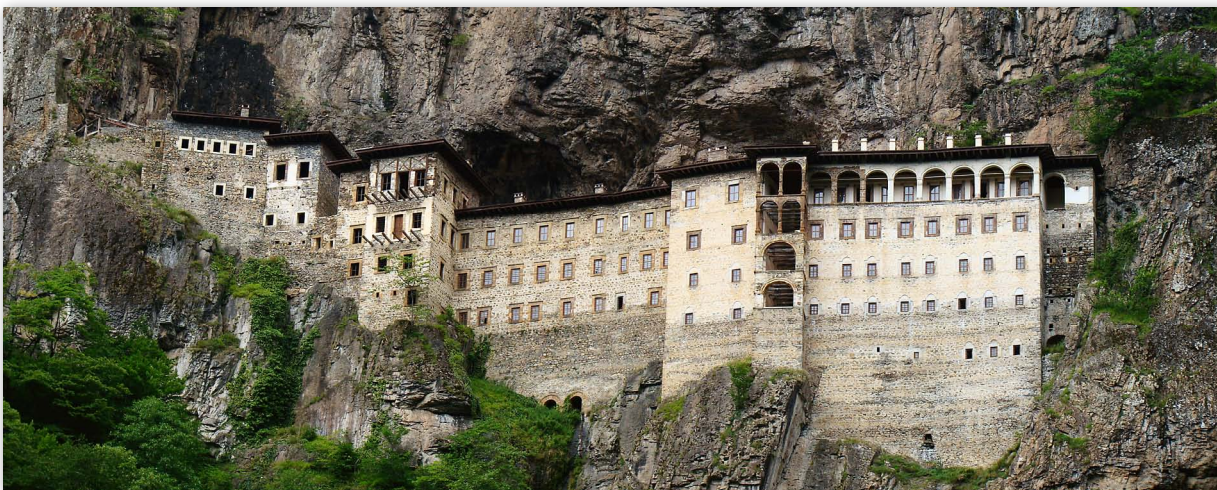
The Cathedral of Saint Vladimir.

Armenian calls out to his saint for help. The saint comes and asks why he was called. When he gets an answer, he becomes angry. He says: ‘There is the local Turkish saint Cabbar Dede. Why did you not ask him for help and make me travel long way from Baghdad to Turkey?’ (Kavcar 1990: 52–5). In another legend ‘The Salih Sheikh’s Church’, when a well-respected sheikh dies, both Turks and Armenians want to build a mosque and a church near to his grave. The Armenians manage to do this and it becomes a place of worship both for Muslims and Christians (Yavuz 2007: 256). In the legend ‘The Cebrail Hoca’s grave’, a very respectful Turkish teacher entrusts his students shortly before he dies: ‘Let every woman, both Turk and Armenian, visit my grave’. Various rituals are performed on his grave: Armenian women put bread on the grave and pray, whereas Turkish women visit the grave on Fridays for lighting candles and making wishes (Yavuz 2007: 262). In another legend, ‘The Grave of the Priest from Bolu’, a famous Orthodox priest dies. Muslims and Christians are willing to carry his coffin. Then, the dead priest rises from his coffin and points to the Muslims (Yavuz 2007: 281–2). All these legends are told by the Turks, and though a peaceful interaction between Islam and Christianity is accepted, the dominant religion here is Islam. In this case, it is preferable to compare legends of different people about one place, which is possible in the Crimean material.

The legends about holy springs and the graves of the saints are widespread in Crimea. Potable water is a vexed issue in the region; because of this, every spring becomes a sacred object for all nationalities. In the legends, springs are believed to have healing power, if not reviving properties. The values of health and life are universal for everyone, so a spring can be a pilgrimage centre for different nations. As an example, Savupulo’s spring in Simferopol is revered by both Christians and Muslims, and the place is mentioned in different legends. Christians believe in the healing properties of the water due to the legend about a Greek who recovered his sight by washing his eyes in the water of the spring. The grave of Saint Salgir Baba, which is near the spring, explains the sacredness of the water for Muslims.

There are legends about Christian holy buildings which are accepted by Muslims as sacred. A good example of a holy place for different religions is the Sumela Monastery. There are a lot of legends that demonstrate its holiness for both Muslims and Christians. The Christian version of the legend concerns the transference of the Icon of the Virgin Mary from Athens onto the Melá Mountain in Trabzon and foundation of a monastery there by two monks who dream at the same time about this transference. When Turks come to the monastery, they try to break, burn and sink the icon but cannot succeed (Tatar 2006: 39). According to the Turkish version of





Sumela Monastery.

the legend, when one Ottoman *padishah* is staying near the Monastery, he orders his men to open fire. He wants to knock down the cupola of the church, but nothing happens to the building: cannonballs cannot reach it. The *padishah* understands that this is a holy place that cannot be destroyed. He orders the cupola to be plated with gold, but as the priests object, they decide to use silver instead (Tatar 2006: 37). There is a pool with holy water inside the monastery. Both Muslims and Christians can be healed there, but Muslims sacrifice animals after the recovery (Gedikoğlu 1998:108). This is one more example of importance of the value of life, health and the holy without religious distinctions.

One more legend is about a Christian holy place which is also sacred for Muslims. The Turkish legend of ‘The Church in the Sati Village’ tells a story of a non-functioning church. One man decides to take two bricks from it to repair his home. In the night he dreams of an old man who comes and asks him to bring those bricks back, but the man does not attach importance to this. The next night the same old man comes in his dream and that time very wrathfully threatens to put out his eyes if he does not bring back the bricks. The man feels violent pain behind his eyes, wakes up and immediately takes the bricks to the church. Thereafter, nobody has touched the building (Yavuz 2007: 251). In this legend, fear of others’ holy place is stronger than fear of one’s own.

The legends about holy buildings are connected to legends about conversions of churches to mosques. The Hagia Sophia cathedral is sacred for both Christians and Muslims. Being the main church of the Byzantine Empire and the main mosque in the Ottoman Empire, Hagia Sophia is a holy place that

does not need to be transferred from one cultural tradition to another. The building has a strong sacred meaning for both religions. There are Turkish legends about the construction of Hagia Sophia. According to them, while Hagia Sophia was being built, there was a problem with its cupola; it was collapsing all the time. Then, the prophet Elijah came and suggested a solution: the constructors needed to put in water from the Zemzem Spring (holy water from Mecca) and some soil of the Kaabeh. The constructors followed his advice and the building of Hagia Sophia was finished successfully. When Sultan Mehmed conquered Istanbul, he entered Hagia Sophia and swung around the building in the direction of the Kaaba (in some versions this was performed by the prophet Elijah), in this way changing it from a church to a mosque (Önder 1966: 21–3; Tatar 2006: 33–4). Thus, some sources claimed that initially Hagia Sophia had been built as a mosque, and later its conversion was possible.

However, there are some Turkish legends about the impossibility of turning a church into a mosque. The Turkish legend ‘The Truncate Minaret’, describes the obstacles to the conversion of one church to a mosque. After the church became a mosque, an earthquake occurred and its minaret was destroyed. It was decided not to restore the mosque. A new one was built in a different place (Tekin 2003: 52). In the Turkish legend ‘The Great Arapgir Mosque’, the daughter of a Christian priest secretly converts to Islam. She decides to give all of her money to building a church, but her secret plan is to construct a mosque. Everything goes well until she starts to build a minaret. Her father understands her plan and comes to the construction site to talk to her. She is on the roof of



the unfinished building. The girl is so scared that she commits suicide. The minaret is not finished and the building is abandoned (Şentürk 1996: 21). It is interesting to analyse why both legends contain the motif of a broken or unfinished minaret, while there were problems with Hagia Sophia's cupola. The minaret is one of the main features that distinguishes a mosque from a church. Thus it represents the sacredness of a mosque in a focussed way. In the case of sanctuaries, in Christian churches they face eastwards whereas the *mihrab* should be facing in the direction of the Kaaba, which in Turkey is roughly southwards. Thus, the changing of the direction of Hagia Sophia by Mehmed/the prophet Elijah is an impressive miracle. Examples of the transformation of religious buildings are not found in the Crimean legendary.

### Conclusion

This article shows that legends provide good material for investigating interreligious and interethnic values. A small unit of folklore, being flexible and changeable, the legend takes many forms: fragments of old myths, rudiments of primitive beliefs, and at the same time encapsulates modern and ancient notions of *the other*. Putting together two groups of texts from Tur-

key and Crimea creates an opportunity to do a multifaceted analysis. The Turkish material proves to be more ancient and abundant; the Crimean legends, on the other hand, are ideologically censored and edited. There is just the *outsider other* in Crimean legends, not including the Soviet collection of Crimean legends which were adapted. Ethnic and religious *others* are to be found in Turkish legends.

The distinction between one's *own* and *others* is a normal psycho-cultural characteristic of the human mind. This is the reason why there are legends about interethnic and interreligious relationships which sometimes show *the ethnic other* as ignorant, lascivious, cruel, savage, and marking out one's own religion as the only true one. However, upon a closer examination, it is obvious that there is no *us/them* opposition in the basis of the legends; in fact, there is an acceptance of universal values which are sometimes older than the notion of the *other*. These are the values of life and of the holy, which exist in the mythologeme of food, the fetishisation of blood, fragments of agricultural cults and rites of initiation, sympathetic and imitative magic. The value of the holy is universal for all religions, toning down the distinctions between national communities and religions: both Christians and Muslims worship saintly people and their graves



Hagia Sophia.

and the religious buildings of different nationalities. It is essential to remember that the idea of the other has its opposite – the idea of hospitality. There are many legends about the importance of this value among Crimean and Turkish legends. ■

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