

THE “TALE OF SEFER-BEY-ZADE” AND THE “STORY OF YAHYA-CHELEBI AND SHEIKH ABU-L-KHIYYAR IN ÜSKÜDAR”: ON THE QUESTION OF THE GENRE “İSTANBUL HİKAYET”

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My article on “Namik Kemal’s novel *Ali-bey’s Adventures* (19th century) and the Turkish *Tale of Sefer-bey-zade* (17th century)” (Vasilyeva 1999: 221–225) deals with the work of 17th century Turkish prose entitled “Sefer-bey-zadenin hikayeti” a copy of which is kept in the National Library of Russia with the call number TNS 140. The work can be dated to the second half of the 17th century, even though the “Tale” refers to an earlier period in the reign of Sultan Osman II (1618–22). The main characters represent an urban environment: the 40-year-old householder Sefer-bey-zade, his stepson, barber’s apprentice; the handsome 16-year-old Hüsn-shah; and *hanym-efendi*, the 25-year-old widow. The plot is based on a love affair initiated by the widow and eventually ruining her.

This paper intends to describe another work of the same genre, i.e. the Istanbul *hikayet*, comparing it with the “Tale of Sefer-bey-zade”, and identifying both their common genre characteristics and individual features.

The “Story of Yahya-Chelebi and Sheikh Abu-l-Khiyyar in Üsküdar” is described in *Catalogue des manuscrits turcs [de la] Bibliothèque National* (Blochet 1933: 95, Supl. turc, No. 913). A copy of this work is held in the collection of translated works, mainly containing bilingual manuscripts with original Turkish texts and their French translations made by students of the Capuchin College in Istanbul between 1731 and 1745. The “Story of Yahya-Chelebi and Sheikh Abu-l-Khiyyar in Üsküdar” was translated, or more exactly, put into French by Étienne Le Grand in 1731 under the title “Aventure suprenante arrivée à Scudar, ville d’Asie, vis-à-vis Cons[tantino]ple.¹ Traduit du turc dans le

¹ Étienne-Antoine-Mathieu Le Grand (d. 1784) served as a dragoman in Tripoli and Aleppo. He possessed a small collection of Oriental manuscripts; a number of them are kept in

collège des Capucins de Constantinople par Étienne Le Grand, jeune de langues”. Copying of the Turkish text was completed on 10 *djumada al-ahir* 1143, i.e. 21 December 1730. *Unvan*-heading on the first leaf, *divani* writing, framed text 21 x 15.5 cm, 11 lines on each page, 32 leaves in Turkish, 28 in French; Turkish flapped binding.

Narrators of tales and tellers of stories, and arbiters of destinies, have it that in the days of Sultan Selim-khan the Second, may the Creator's grace be with him ... by the Castle of Seven Towers in the city of Istanbul, inside the gates called Narly and known as the Ulem Gates, there was a fine fellow, a tanner whose name was Yahya-Chelebi. In the whole world he has [only] his mother to obey and submit to; also he was well-experienced in tanning and engaged in this craft; and he was a man of very strong frame and a picture of courage; and he had a comrade and bosom-friend named Mehmed-Chelebi who lived in Üsküdar. Sometimes [Yahya-Chelebi] visited him in Üsküdar [to spend] some days in pleasure and love.²

This introduction to the story gives the historical date through the personal name of Sultan Selim II reigning between 1566 and 1574, referring the action to the past. Furthermore, the Valide-jami which was built in 1583, is mentioned in the story. Thus this year provides the earliest possible date of the work, the latest one being the copying date (1730). No wars, campaigns, revolts or epidemics are mentioned, to support more precise dating. I believe however, that the story could have been written within the public “historical memory” of Selim II, i.e. within half a century after his death, namely in the late 16th or the first half of the 17th century.

Moreover, the introductory line also provides the location: Istanbul, the Castle of Seven Towers in the south-western suburb within the Theodosius Walls, often used as a prison for Russian ambassadors; the Narly gates, the southernmost city gates on the coast of the Marmor Sea. “The suburb accommodated slaughterhouses and hundreds of tanneries polluting the air” (Petrosjan 1986: 170). Such is the home place of the main character, the currier Yahya-Chelebi.

Our attention is immediately attracted by the similar introductions to the “Story” and the “Tale”: traditional references to mythical “narrators” followed by the historical date “linked” to the Sultan’s name, and the location – an Istanbul district related to the city gates, and the main character’s name and social status (occupation). Compare with the “Tale”:

Narrators have it that in the past days, in the blessed times of Sultan Osman-khan, by the Gates of Kum-kapy, there was a fine fellow whose name was Sefer-bey-zade. He

Bibliothèque nationale de France and in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. (For this information I am grateful to Francis Richard, the chief keeper of the Collection of Oriental manuscripts in Bibliothèque nationale de France.) Durin the five years spent in Istanbul Le Grand prepared three more expositions of historical, poetic and legal works.

² Translations from Turkish have been italicized in this article.

was a householder. And then this Sefer-bey-zade, whom we are talking about, was so fine and daring that many times [treated] Yanychar aga's [officers – word illegible, O. V.] away from their service and made them spread the prayer carpet, and even he stowed oars in Bostanjy's³ boats (i.e. the yanichars had to pray for life when meeting him, and the police could not control him).

While Yahya-Chelebi used to cross the Bosphorus from the old city to the Asian district of Istanbul for rest, Sefer-bey-zade and his mates would cross the Golden Horn every day to sit in a *meykhana*⁴, buy some wine there to "arrange a *medjlis*"⁵ at home at night.

The timing, location, the names of the main characters and description of their ways are followed by the main action. As the plot of the "Tale" is described in detail in my article on "An unknown 17th-century Turkish tale",⁶ only a brief summary is given below.

Once Sefer-bey-zade saw in a barber's shop a handsome boy, a barber's apprentice, and wished to adopt him. Obtaining permission from the barber and the boy's mother, and giving them splendid gifts, Sefer-bey-zade brings the boy to his place. In the evening, he "arranges a *medjlis*" and gives Hüsn-shah a girl. In the 3–4 months to follow, Sefer-bey-zade takes Hüsn-shah to the barber's shop in the morning and back to his place in the evening, each time "arranging a *medjlis*" with a new pretty girl for Hüsn-shah every night. Once there comes a *hanym-efendi* with whom Hüsn-shah falls in love. They spend 20 nights together. One night both were drunk and quarrelled. Hüsn-shah struck the woman so that her nose bled. The pretty woman swore vengeance. Sefer-bey-zade hears the oath and urges the boy to stop seeing the woman. Hüsn-shah is sick at heart, "crying in lonely places". Sefer-bey-zade proceeds with his entertaining. About five to ten days later Hüsn-shah receives a letter from the *hanym-efendi* asking him to visit her a week after. He comes gladly but the pretty woman makes him drunk and beats him. Sefer-bey-zade comes to his aid. On the ground floor, he and his mates fight the gang led by the Hungarian Yusuf, evidently invited by the *hanym-efendi* to deal with Hüsn-shah. Recognizing Sefer-bey-zade, the gang takes to flight. The woman begs for mercy, offering all her wealth. Nevertheless Sefer-bey-zade kills her and her two maidservants. Sefer-bey-zade and Hüsn-shah take refuge in Egypt, engaging in commerce, and six years later return to Istanbul, buy several shops in the Egyptian market and live together as father and son.

Now let us turn to the content of the "Story":

³ *Bostanjy* 'chief constable'.

⁴ *Meykhana* 'public house'.

⁵ *Medjlis* 'assembly, meeting of friends; here: a banquet, party'.

⁶ Vasilyeva 1992: 5–15; see also Vasilyeva, 1993: 143–155.

And one day again, in accordance with custom, he wished to go to Üsküdar to visit that same friend Mehmed-Chelebi. He provided his mother with stores of food and drink, gave [her] a gurush⁷ for expenses, kissed her tenderly and asked her permission to travel to Üsküdar; his mother gave the permission obtained, and so he stood up and left.

After a joyful meeting and some rest the friends, instead of going “to the meyhana to have a drink and forget their sorrows” as usual, went to the wedding of a friend of Mehmed-Chelebi’s, with “those present rendering them honour and respect”.

At the time of the night namaz, everyone followed the bridegroom to the holy mosque, and after the night prayer returned to the bridegroom’s place according to Islamic custom ... They came up to the wedding place. Everyone, including the imam, stayed at the gate. After the prayer, when the bridegroom was brought to the room of the bride’s farewell ritual, they drank the sherbet and everyone [left] for home. Yahya-Chelebi and Mehmed-Chelebi stayed there, along with some neighbours, went in and soon arranged a medjlis ... and got merry.

And when their heads were flushed with wine and their reason softened, the friends changed into singing nightingales and the cup-bearer said: “... There is no more wine, not a drop, what will you drink then?”

Yahya-Chelebi volunteered to bring wine from the meyhana, “his zeal flaring up”, and walked the deserted and dark streets to the sea coast where the public houses were by the Valide-jami mosque.

On the way back he saw far away a lantern carried by a young servant. He was followed by a grey-bearded elder with a staff in one hand and beads in the other. The elder was praying for a visitor that night, to break feast on the occasion of his 80th birthday. Yahya-Chelebi thought him a holy sheikh who would certainly be angry seeing him with wine. He “shook like an autumn leaf” and tried to hide himself but failed because the sheikh “looked in such a manner that he could see a black ant”.

However the sheikh was very glad to see Yahya-Chelebi and invited him to his place. He made no reproach for the wine but, seeing the point, let Yahya-Chelebi take it to his friends provided he came back. Yahya-Chelebi agreed, secretly deciding to stay with the sheikh forever. He said to himself: “I will be free from immoral debauchery, serving [him] for the rest of my life and finding happiness in this and the future life.”

Yahya-Chelebi brought the wine to his friends, saying that he was tired and would rest at Mehmed-Chelebi’s but actually going back to the sheikh. And so they started for the abode.

The gate was opened by a youth with a silver candlestick. Yahya-Chelebi saw a room “unparalleled anywhere in the world”: with seats on all sides “and a

⁷ Gurush ‘Turkish piastre’.

pool in the centre – a pool filled with clear water ... with the fish whirling [in the pool] and flowers alongside". Yahya-Chelebi was amazed at the splendour because he expected a Dervish cell. The sheikh, aware of his amazement, explained that he brought the visitor to his home instead of the abode, regarding Yahya-Chelebi as his heir (son) because "*sheikhs have a spiritual rather than natural child*". The sheikh changed into royal robes, "*coming resplendent in gold and silver and sitting down with Yahya-Chelebi*". Maidservants laid the table with tasty and fragrant viands on delicate porcelain plates.

The sheikh persuades Yahya-Chelebi to become his spiritual heir and join the society of the elders who can divine the heart's desire of their visitor. Seeing the abundant gold, silver and jewellery, Yahya-Chelebi wondered whether the sheikh was a "*sorcerer or magician? If he intends to kill me, why then? All the clothes on my body cost 30 akches*".⁸

The sheikh guessed his thoughts and offered him wine. So Yahya-Chelebi stopped thinking. The sheikh said: "*Hey son, why so sad? Come out like a rose!*", giving him sumptuous clothes and making him drink more wine. Maidservants played the *saz*.

At the sight of this splendid *medjlis*, Yahya-Chelebi was even more wonderstruck, thinking: "*The mirror image of sheikh is the image of shaitan.*"

The sheikh offered him a maidservant for choice. Eventually yielding to persuasion, Yahya-Chelebi chose a Circassian. Then the sheikh gave him five thousand gold coins and promised to invite the *kadi-asker* (!)⁹ in the morning, to draw up the deed for all his property since he wished to become a hermit.

When Yahya-Chelebi was completely intoxicated, the sheikh ordered his bed made and sent him to bed with the girl. All his carnal desires vanished as soon as the girl said:

"Hey jigiti, your life hangs by a thread ... Why would you destroy your future life for mere pleasure?" ... He sobered up instantly, regaining his reason and shaking as [if in] the autumn.

The girl promises to save Yahya-Chelebi, so they get up, go down the stairs and approach a hole in the wall. They can see "*a narrow and dark dungeon*" with fifteen prisoners lying tied hand and foot. The door of the dungeon is opened by the servant who had carried the sheikh's lantern. The prisoners cry out:

We are bound and imprisoned here, some for 15, some for 14 and some for 13 days. The sheikh-efendi asked each of us here for the night, giving clothes of thousands in silver, and five thousand gold coins and a choice of eight maidservants. And now we are thrown [into this dungeon], starving and robbed of [all] the money each of us had.

⁸ Akche 'a small coin'.

⁹ Kadi-asker 'a supreme judge'.

The servant replied that the sheikh put them to the test they failed, hence the prison. Then he dragged out one prisoner.

Yahya-Chelebi and the girl, whose name was Maymuna, returned to bed in their room. Yahya-Chelebi faked complete intoxication and Maymuna persuaded the sheikh who came to see them that the boy was not ready to be bound yet. The tormenting sheikh was followed by the servant holding knives like a butcher and dragging the miserable prisoner with his mouth bound. The servant

bared his breast down to the navel and, with the poor wretch's eyes open, and his brain in his head and his soul in his body, plunged the knife, halving him breast to navel. The ruthless villain made a shahid of the meek Muslim ... took his liver and cut out his heart to hand to the sheikh ... And that, sheikh in appearance and shaitan in essence, took the victim's heart in his hand, slowly poured out the blood and then took the heart in his mouth and swallowed it all, and ... lapped up a cup of wine ... and, cutting the muscles, gobbled like a pig.

The girl decides to escape with Yahya-Chelebi; she puts on men's clothes, takes two bundles of her belongings, and they escape by the garden gate, using her keys. They come to Mehmed-Chelebi's place and rest for a while in the guest room. Then Maymuna persuades Yahya-Chelebi to try crossing the Bosphorus. This is not an easy task however, with "*boats ashore, all the gates in Istanbul locked and Bostanji-bashi watching the district. Seeing a boat before dawn, they will sink it together with the people sitting [inside].*" Approaching the coast, they saw a burning candle at sea – in a fisherman's boat. They urged the old man to take them across to the Akhor-kapy gate. Actually they had to get to the Narly-kapy (i.e. 10 km or 5 gates farther). Paying a gold coin for each gate, they arrived at the Narly-kapy.

It was time for the morning *azan*, so the gate was open and they went to the town. They rested and ate at Yahya-Chelebi's place, and then Yahya-Chelebi felt a longing for Maymuna. But she urged him to deal with the sheikh first, making a plan of Yahya-Chelebi and his mates killing the man.

Yahya-Chelebi took the 500 gold coins offered by the girl and went to Üsküdar to see Mehmed-Chelebi and tell him what had happened. Mehmed-Chelebi said: "The sheikh is well known in this vilayet as he become faithless. Killing him is a great gazavat. For your sake especially, I am prepared to give my soul and head in these circumstances." The friends went to the *meykhana* to see two friends of Mehmed-Chelebi's and, after the night *namaz*, the four set out for the street where Yahya-Chelebi had met the sheikh the night before. The sheikh and his slave came. The sheikh invited the four young men to his place and they accepted the invitation. Passing the cemetery, the friends stabbed the slave. The sheikh rebelled at this but, recognizing Yahya-Chelebi, understood everything and asked for mercy. Yahya-Chelebi promised to spare him if the sheikh released

the prisoners, renounced man-eating, gave away his property and kept the secret. When they came to the sheikh's place, prisoners and maidservants rejoiced in the story. They took as much as they could of the sheikh's property, killing and throwing him into a pit. Yahya-Chelebi

spent that night at Mehmed-Chelebi's, and when the morning come, went to Istanbul, brought the news to Maymuna about the end of the sheikh ... Maymuna said: "Lay up food, invite the imam of your block and your friends, [we shall have] a short wedding, getting married under the law of shariat, and with me you will attain [the goal of your] desires."

This was Friday night. "On that blessed night they attained [the goal of their] desires."

Some days later Maymuna told him that the sheikh gained his riches by murdering the poor wretches and seizing their property. He ate their hearts to cure his sickness: he could not sleep without it.

They took the sheikh's property and money,

without mentioning it to anyone. Yahya-Chelebi took to his craft again, never abandoning curriery and living a peaceful and comfortable life for the rest of his days.

Deriving the desired moral admonition from this story, you will avoid misfortune ... May everyone seeing the world with an eye eager for exhortation be happy, obeying God's will.

At first glance the plot of this "horror" story is only similar to the love-criminal "Tale of Sefer-bey-zade" in one major point – the murder motif. A closer examination however, indicates an in-depth similarity between the two works.

CHARACTERS AND PLOT

While only one main character is mentioned in the introduction both to the "Tale" and the "Story", subsequent action reveals three.

The "Tale"

1. Sefer-bey-zade, a 40-year old householder, later a merchant (living with his mother), scaring the whole town;
2. His adopted son Hüsn-shah, a handsome boy of 16 (having his mother only), apprentice and heir to a master-barber;
3. The pretty *hanym-efendi*, a rich widow of 25, offered by Sefer-bey-zade to Hüsn-shah.

The “Story”

1. Sheikh Abu-I-Khiyyar, 80 years old;
2. His future adopted son Yahya-Chelebi, a strong young man (living with his mother), a tanner;
3. Maymuna, a Circassian maidservant given to Yahya-Chelebi by the sheikh.

The two lists demonstrate an obvious similarity between the main characters: the elder man, the younger man, the younger man’s woman. Also obviously similar are the motives of the orphanage, adoption and the father giving a woman to his son.

While the male characters both in the “Tale” and the “Story” are distinctly individual, there is a significant similarity between the women: initially intended for the joys of love only, they appear sharper, more resourceful and craftier than their lovers, whom they soon override.

The “father – son – daughter-in-law” pattern with the related adoption motif is, in the course of events, replaced by another and more important functional pattern, and another action. In both works, two of the three characters are positive (Sefer-bey-zade and Hüsn-shah; Yahya-Chelebi and Maymuna), and one is negative (the *hanym-efendi*; the sheikh). This “moral” division contradicts the initial “categorization” of characters. The negative characters are rather presented as positive at the beginning; showing their true nature only later (the werewolf motif). Pursuing their insidious schemes, they eventually threaten a positive character (Hüsn-shah; Yahya-Chelebi). The other (Sefer-bey-zade; Maymuna) renders assistance, saving the former from imminent death. One positive character (Sefer-bey-zade; Yahya-Chelebi), with his friends, accomplishes retribution by killing the evil werewolf; even though first promising not to do so (oath-taking and oath-breaking), and seizing the property of the victim (the victor’s due).

Thus both works have a common “mainspring” for the plot – a positive character killing a negative one in just punishment for his actions and intentions actually threatening the positive character. The only difference is that a positive character in the “Tale” takes vengeance for the other, while the main character of the “Story” avenges himself but with the assistance (planned by) the other positive character.

This is naturally the case of typically fairytale characters – the hero, his assistant and his antagonist – and a typically fairytale plot – killing the antagonist as killing evil. Moreover, in the best fairytale traditions, the “Story” ends with a wedding, while the characters of the “Tale”, on returning to Istanbul from Egypt, “each took a Muslim girl”.

With all the folklore backgrounds, characters in both works are very realistic. In the "Tale" they are particularly interesting in terms of their social status in Istanbul. Sefer-bey-zade is both a rich householder and a merchant worth "80 purses of akche"¹⁰. He terrorizes both the *yanychars* and the police. The reader is gradually informed that "there was no one in Istanbul who did not know Sefer-bey-zade", that no one was bold enough to look him in the face, and that the Hungarian Yusuf and his mates, recognizing him, took fright and fled. "Grass would not rise where Sefer-bey-zade's foot trod" – says a barber's client, warning his friends that coming there was dangerous. All these suggest a marginal element. And yet he is not like the thief Chalak in Nabi's poem "The Good City". Sefer-bey-zade is a gang leader, a mafioso terrorizing the citizens. Quite obviously however, the author of the "Tale" never intended a negative meaning, nor did the readers regard the character as negative.

Hüsn-shah first appears as just a handsome boy driving the barber's client mad, like a character from Belig's poem "Bereber-name" or numerous *shahrengizes* – urban eulogies. Hüsn-shah, "unrivalled for beauty in Istanbul at that time", was even introduced to Sultan Murad IV (1623-40) among other handsome boys. In the course of events, however, he somewhat diverges from the stereotypical behaviour of a pretty boy: adopted by Sefer-bey-zade, he appears as a grown-up man of traditional sexual orientation. On the other hand, his quarrel with the *hanym-efendi* starts from a reason somewhat strange for a he-man: they disagree as to which is more handsome. Hüsn-shah is young and rather silly, fickle and wilful. He is also overruled by his father and the *hanym-efendi*.

The *hanym-efendi* breaks the female character standards. She is an independent and handsome widow with no children and a fortune left by her father and husband, a "Muslim hetaera" of sorts, wishing to enjoy life and maintain her dignity. Her distinctive feature is perfidy beyond realistic limits. This is rather reminiscent of the "Stories of 40 Vizirs", "The Parrot Book" or other translated Arabic and Persian collections than fairytales.

Note that, for the "Tale" reader, the names of two characters in the "Tale" might sound similar to the fairytale *bey-zade* and *shah[zade]*, while the anonymous *hanym-efendi* would be associated with the fairytale girl-women *kыз*, *khatun*, *kadyн*; the word *khanum* (*hanym*) also appears in Turkish popular fairytales (Tsvetnovich-Grjunberg 1967: 452).

The most fairytale character for both works is the vampire sheikh, whose image is common in Turkish fairytales. This is a combination of despotic *padishah*, evil *dev*, and man-eating dragon (*ajderkha*). This essentially fairytale character is described in a very naturalistic manner, suggesting the author's

¹⁰ One purse (*kise*) contains 60,000 *akches* or 500 *gurushs*.

source either in real events or underlying historical memories, rather than in folklore tradition.

The two remaining characters in the "Story", Yahya-Chelebi and Maymuna, are very plausible. On the other hand, sharp maidens are common in Turkish fairytales, using cunning and quick wits, and marrying well. In addition, they sometimes assist the young main character. Girls in men's clothes also appear in fairytales (Stebleva 1986: 7, 12–13).

The plot of the "Story" provides some analogies to the fairytale of Ahmed the Fingerless, where three (!) girls assist the *shah-zade* against his father *padishah*, seeking to destroy him. The tale ends with the evil *padishah* killed and the main character married to the three assistants (Smirnov 1975: 245–248).

Describing the "Tale", V. D. Smirnov wrote: "The story is related in the old fairytale spirit" (Smirnov 1896: 38), meaning above all "description of Turkish everyday life and morals". My previous study of the "Tale" suggests that "the plot or the time and place of action, or the characters cannot be described as fairytale or based on folklore". But now, given an opportunity of analyzing both works, I rather believe that the plots embodied in essentially fairytale characters are in part constructed in a "fairytale" scheme that was familiar to the reader since early childhood and then forgotten, though still intimate and intelligible.

Even more intimate and intelligible for the reader are the actual events and realities of life in Istanbul underlying both works.

THE WAY OF LIFE AND EVERYDAY REALITIES

The general routine is defined at the beginning of each work and further developed in the action. The characters (householder, barber's apprentice, currier) are engaged in profitable activities. Even growing rich, they continue "working": Sefer-bey-zade and Hüsn-shah are merchants, and Yahya-Chelebi "*never abandoned curriery*".

Characters in the "Tale" work and pray in the daytime, drink coffee at home or in a barber's shop where every day Sefer-bey-zade takes Hüsn-shah continuing his apprenticeship with the barber, or sit in a *meykhana*. At night (except Fridays, of course) they make merry and drink wine with their friends at Sefer-bey-zade's. This is evidently true for characters in the "Story" but their religious practices are less obvious, and they never drink coffee nor do they drink wine every night.

Islam is known to prohibit wine-drinking. Russian Ambassador P. A. Tolstoj wrote in the early 18th century: "The Turkish people are abstinent ..., regarding drinking as a great sin and shame for an honest person; common people abstain from drinking for fear of public censure as drinking is punished ruthlessly, therefore addictive drinks are not popular" (Tolstoj 1975: 38). As far back as the

mid-15th century, Konstantine Mihajlovich of Ostrovitsy in his "Memoirs of a Yanychar" wrote: "No faithful Turk would drink wine. At the court, both servants and masters drink wine but never when going to war ... However, Christians going to war with the Turks are free to carry wine and drink it without caution" (Mihajlovich 1978: 38–39). Thus Turks never drink wine on the one hand, and drink it on the other, to be punished. The contradiction seems to be resolved as follows: the Greeks made wine and sold it in *meykhanas*; Turks bought it and drank there but more often at home after sunset. This is what the characters of the "Tale" did.

Describing the wedding ritual, the "Story" says that "after prayer ... the people drank the sherbet". The informal part of the ritual represents a friendly binge, probably with a commissioned cup-bearer and a special wine-stock.

The two works also seem to represent a historical adoption ritual. Both Sefer-bey-zade and the sheikh begin their parental duties by giving their son a feast and a woman. The sheikh adds the gift of money but very soon shows his real nature. Sefer-bey-zade with his pure intentions first obtains consent for adoption from Hüsn-shah's mother and master, giving them rich gifts. The sheikh, of course, need not ask Yahya-Chelebi's mother: it was Yahya-Chelebi's business to ask his mother's consent for this important step in life. But he neglected his filial duty and consequently almost lost his life. Hüsn-shah visited the *hanym-efendi* against his father's will, also entailing fatal risk. Both sons neglected their duty to show filial respect and were punished accordingly. Both were very drunk at the critical moment, which also seemed a matter for public censure.

CHARACTERS AND THEIR ACTIONS

Both works are densely "populated" with characters of both sexes, various nations and ages. In addition to the main characters, the "Tale" features: the barber and his clients; Sefer-bey-zade's and Hüsn-shah's mothers and friends; the *meykhana* owner; a young Armenian coming to the *meykhana* to fetch wine and his shop-owning father; Kanly Gevkher, a girlfriend of Sefer-bey-zade's friend, and an old Jewish procuress; the Hungarian Yusuf and members of his gang, each named; Hüsn-shah's women and *hanym-efendi*'s maidservants and slaves; Sefer-bey-zade's slaves and servants.

There are also many characters in the "Story". Among them are: Yahya-Chelebi's mother; Mehmed-Chelebi and his friends; the *imam* performing the wedding ritual and the wedding guests; the sheikh's servant and his slave; his fifteen prisoners and eight maidservants; the old fisherman. In all likelihood, they were all Turkish, as only the heroine is described as Circassian.

The appearance and actions of the characters are often explained in detail. Thus in the “Tale”, there is an Armenian boy coming to the *meykhana* to fetch wine for his father entertaining some visitors, to inform the grieving Sefer-beyzade of Hüsn-shah’s whereabouts and, on his father’s consent, to take Sefer-beyzade to *hanym-efendi*. Hüsn-shah did not follow his father and the barber to the mosque because of a nosebleed and, on his leaving home, a procuress was looming at the door. In the “Story”, in order to bring the main character to the meeting place with the sheikh, the author first “arranged” a wedding and a long binge, and then had to give the reader a long explanation why it was Yahya-Chelebi, a guest, who was to bring wine in the middle of the night – this obvious infringement on hospitality certainly required substantial explanation.

The actions of the characters are described in minute detail, sometimes irrelevant for subsequent action. The “Tale” registers almost every coffee party and Golden Horn crossing. Yahya-Chelebi in the “Story” would, before each routine visit to Üsküdar, ask for his mother’s blessing and provide the *gurush* for expenses, along with sufficient food and drink for the period of his absence. The author seems to emphasize the main character’s good manners. During her flight from the sheikh with Yahya-Chelebi Maymuna dons men’s clothes because of possible pursuit. But the two bundles of her belongings (trousseau?) are difficult to explain. Might the author have emphasized her thrift and efficiency, and material well-being, or merely have used it as a piece of visual imagery?

SPACE AND TIME

In addition to the actions of the characters, both works feature detailed location and timing.

Location: Istanbul. The “Tale” involves the European part on both shores of the Golden Horn. Various blocks are identified: the Kum-kapy (Sand Gates), the Un-kapan (Flour Market) pier, the Kaba Sakal by the Ahmedie Mosque and Murad-pasha *türbe*, the Shah-zade and Bayazide mosques. Each fragment is properly located.

The main character of the “Story” resides in the Narly-kapy block by the Castle of Seven Towers; this is where he leaves for Üsküdar to visit his friend, and comes back with his bride to stay for the rest of his life. The main action occurs in Üsküdar, the Asian part of Istanbul. In this case the author only indicates the Valide-jami (Mosque of Sultan’s Mother) which refers to the Eski (Old) Valide Camii or Atik Valide Kulliye (Complex) of today; the mosque was built by the architect Mimar Sinan for Nur Banu Sultan, wife of Selim, in 1583. A cemetery is indicated, probably Karacaahmet Mezarlığı, familiar to the Üsküdar residents.

The "Tale" characters cross the Golden Horn and the main character of the "Story" crosses the Bosphorus, to rest with their friends. In this case, the folklore semantic of crossing the waters as "travelling to a strange space" is replaced with the reader's realistic view of the characters' actual travels.

Both works sometimes describe the interior. Thus the "Tale" describes Sefer-bey-zade's place, the barber's shop, *hanym-efendi's* room; and the "Story" describes the sheikh's dwelling place.

The action is both located and timed. Historical time is in both cases related to a certain Sultan. The seasons are omitted but parts of the day indicated. Criminal events occur at night. The "Story" with events generally occurring at night twice mentions the night *namaz* performed 2 hours and 20 minutes after sunset, and once the morning *namaz* (45 minutes before sunrise). Each episode in the "Tale" is related to a *namaz* or a call for one (*azan*) from a *minaret*. An additional dimension involves sunrise or sunset. Thus "*half past four at night*" means "half past four after sunset" not midnight. Midnight and noon, the two astronomical constants, only appear in the "Tale". Of the days of the week only Friday is mentioned. Friday night is the time of critical events in the "Tale", and of the main characters' wedding in the "Story".

The action is slow in the "Tale", occasionally boosted dramatically. The main action follows the pattern: 4 days – a three-to-four-month break – 2 days – a break of "*twenty long days*" – 3 days – a break of five to ten days – one day (Friday) – a week's break – one day (Friday described on 23 out of a total of 54 pages) – a two-day break – a break of six years (Vasilyeva 1993: 143–155).

The action in the "Story" develops leisurely for two and a half days.

It is the difference in the periods of time in the character's life, as reflected in the two works, that prompted our translation of the word *hikayet* as the "tale" in one case and the "story" in the other, accounting for both the purpose of this paper, and the existing conceptual difference between the two genres (tale and story) in modern interpretation.

VISION AND SOUND

Constant reference to parts of the day, precise location and manner of action, and abundant detail, would inevitably provide the Istanbul reader with associative visual imagery. In the "Tale" this is supplemented with colour. For instance, Sefer-bey-zade first sees Hüsn-shah in "*a flame-coloured satin caftan ... a waistband ... with a dagger in his belt ... and a knife, his hands as if of pure white silver*", and holding "*a golden basin*". The "Story", mainly developing in the dark, contains indications of light: a lantern or candlestick held by a servant, or a

candle in the fisherman's boat. In addition, the author of the "Story" is capable, where necessary, of employing vivid verbal imagery:

And that sheikh in appearance and shaitan in essence took his victim's heart in his hand, slowly poured out the blood and then took the heart in his mouth and swallowed it all, and ... lapped up a cup of wine ... and, cutting the muscles, gobbled like a pig.

Visual imagery is supplemented by sound: both works abound in direct speech, and in both works musical instruments are played. Also, there are calls for prayer, permanent in the "Tale" or occasional in the "Story". Both the "Tale" and the "Story" are rich in vision and sound.

READER AND WRITER

Obviously, both the "Tale" and the "Story" were intended for a reader familiar with everyday routine in Istanbul, lower middle-class – craftsmen or merchants.

The "Tale" manuscript contains multiple marginal notes indicative of collective reading in coffee-houses or at home, and positive attitudes on the part of the readers or listeners. There are no such notes in the "Story" manuscript copied in 1730, evidently on commission from the Capuchin College, and handled by the translator at the same time. In my opinion, this work was intended for recitation aloud as well.

Of course, the elocutionist played a great role in collective reading, perhaps even greater than the author. The latter was a mere scriptwriter (though probably also the first reciter). He had excellent knowledge of the public segment, the readers and listeners addressed, and may have been one of them. But the reciter was the main person, the director and single actor in this "monologue theatre" or adventure film. The comparison seems appropriate in view of the vivid visual and sound imagery. Obviously, specific genre characteristics governed the author's anonymity.

The idea of corporate author, pure folklore origins of the "Tale" and the "Story" appears improbable both for structural and stylistic reasons, and the realistic timing and location, the specific details of everyday life and morals, the verbal imagery, beautifully metaphorical and hyperbolic. (The "Tale" also contains some philosophical digressions.)

Could it be that the "Tale" and the "Story" were created by the same author? In my opinion, the answer is also negative, primarily because the authors apply different perspectives. The author of the "Tale" would keep away, neither showing sympathy nor assigning blame to the characters. The author of the "Story" also starts with aloofness, immediately breaking neutrality when it comes to the horrible slaughter of the innocent. He expresses his view by referring to the

shaitan sheikh as "faithless" (*bī dīn*), his slave as a "ruthless villain" (*bī raḥm zālim*), and their victim as a "meek Muslim" (*musulmān maẓlūm*) and *shahide*. Moreover, the author uses a pig metaphor dreadful for a Moslem, and the verb "gobble" (*yutmak*) associated with animals, providing a most definite moral evaluation.

LANGUAGE AND GENRE

Differences are also evident on the linguistic level. Thus the author of the "Tale" more often uses the *-ip* adverbial participle extending the phrase to almost half a page, and sometimes the "fairytale" *-miş* form. At the end of a sentence, a verb in the past tense is occasionally followed by embellishments such as *tamam* or *oldum*, best rendered as "well; well then; now". Direct speech is often inverted (the verb moved from the last to the penultimate position in a sentence), which seems typically conversational.

The author of the "Story" would place a verb in the past tense next to a couple of adverbial participial phrases, and then often continue the sentence with an "and" (*vá*). Arabic or Persian loan-words are more frequent here than in the "Tale". Recollect the Persian title of the "Story".

The impression is that the two works were produced both by different authors and at different times: the "Story" is older than the "Tale" (supporting our previous conclusions). In fact, the former's style is more literary and the plot "simpler", more folklore-based, less realistic, less elaborated and detailed. The "Tale" is written in a relatively advanced, new language (Smirnov 1896: 38), with the subject close to real life, similar to that in criminal news. And yet both are the works of a same genre represented in evolution.

On the whole, both the "Tale" and the "Story" are written in a comparatively simple language: despite some (significant in the "Story") Persian or Arabic borrowings, the grammar is neither classical nor sophisticated; and there are occasional conversational elements. Linguistically, the two works represent an independent group between Turkish literary works designed (as V. D. Smirnov puts it) for "top-level Muslim intellectuals" and "literate common people". This can be inferred from our examination of available copies of Turkish imaginative prose works in the Manuscript Department in the National Library of Russia. The main body of old "classical" prose, both translated and original Turkish, both individual and folklore, was already formed by the mid-16th century. The changing economic and political situation, and the gradually extending social basis for the reading public in particular, necessarily brought into being the new characters, style, aesthetics, and genres (Mashtakova 1984; Yakovleva 1976: 107–114).

Among such new, “democratic” genres was the Istanbul *hikayet*. It is deeply rooted in the fairy tale (the plot and some motives, the “prototypes”). The form is based on previous literary tradition (“Narrators have it ...” is a typical beginning for amusing stories; the same applies to the crafty female in the “Tale”, and linguistic features in the “Story”). Other components – the subjects and realities – are taken from everyday life. This is the case of entertaining stories of everyday life and morals in the democratic Istanbul environment, not shunning didactics. Thus the “Story” ends as follows: “... *Deriving the desired moral admonition, you will avoid misfortune ...*” While the first page of the “Tale” manuscript runs: “... *Friends who read this will receive admonition*”. The admonition presumably is: follow the custom – honour your parents and do not drink too much, and when in trouble, destroy evil, and good will be rendered you.

We therefore examined two works of the same genre of anonymous Istanbul *hikayet* with an entertaining plot (criminal romance, everyday adventure) built in a fairytale pattern from actual events, intended for recital among the lower middle classes. The importance of these specimens of the genre in question lies in their obvious literary merits, original style, amusing and lively action, linguistic imagery, and distinctive national characteristics. The existence of two anonymous works suggests a literary tradition deeply rooted in the early origins, tradition itself being the source of modern Turkish imaginative prose.

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