

## GEOGRAPHY IN THE FOLK SONGS OF WESTERN BLACK SEA REGION

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### ABSTRACT

Turkish Folk Music pieces taking their names from the people, containing the value judgment adopted by the people and mostly based on the true stories throughout the history of a region are one of the constituents of the culture which ensures the conveyance of culture from generation to generation in a spoken or written manner as a part of the tradition and allows the new generation to maintain the culture. The Folk Songs which is a substantial constituent of our spoken cultural heritage are the works of art which let us to comprehend the interaction between the physical and social conditions of the region and the people and which describe the people.

In this study, 98 Folk Songs taken in the repertoire of TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Association of the State) those compiled from the settlements in Western Black Sea Region have been reviewed. Initially, the songs have been classified in accordance with their themes and the geographical features they contain. Afterwards, the reflection of the natural, socio-cultural and economical features on 98 Western Black Sea Region folk songs has been construed with a geographical point of view. The literature with regard to the subject in this context has been examined in details and also the cultural background of the locals.

In the Western Black Sea Region incorporating various cultural features, the folk songs contain local geographical features to a considerable extent. In addition, they constitute integrity with the local and national culture. In the Western Black Sea Region folk songs; geographical formations, climate, vegetation cover, wildlife, hydrographic features, migration, absence from home, transportation, traditional apparel elements, housing features and means of living come to the fore as the story line. Moreover, the lifestyle, customs and traditions of the locals differ from region to region and it can be observed that such fact is reflected in the lyrics of folk songs to a considerable extent.

**Keywords:** Cultural Geography; music geography; Western Black Sea Region; Folk Songs; local folk culture.

### INTRODUCTION

Geography in the Folk Songs of Western Black Sea Region is a cultural geography study. In 1952, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions [1]. The initial definition about the culture has been made in 1971 by the British anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor. Tylor's definition of culture is "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by an individual as a member of the society" [2].

Culture, comprising material and moral values, is one of the key facts constituting the nations. Language, manners and customs, beliefs, arts and literature are the cultural values of a society flowing from past centuries [3].

Each generation causes changes on the culture taken over as heritage and adds new constituents into it. Cultural geography, therefore, examines the spatial varieties in terms of the spatial functioning of the cultural groups and the society; it lays emphasis on the description and analysis of the ways of modulation or preservation of the language, religion, economy, administration and other cultural facts depending on geography. The facts having a wide variety such as non-material cultures including folklore, cultures, folk songs, fairy tales, beliefs-superstitions, habits, linguistic features are being passed from one generation to another as a part of the tradition. Those also have a geographical distribution and they are being examined by the geographers [4].

Carrying out researches on the reasons and results of geographical distribution and spatial differences of cultural activities or the similarities they represent in different places is amongst the subjects of study of cultural geography. Compiled folk songs being a substantial element of our intangible cultural heritage can also be considered within the music geography which comes into sight as a sub-field of the cultural geography.

Music geography has started developing as a sub-field of the cultural geography trying to understand the environment by means of the harmonious sounds. Folk songs are influenced by the cultural and social factors of the originating geographical environment. When such feature of the folk songs is taken into consideration; it becomes apparent that there is a connection between the physical and social events and the geography subjecting the interaction *inter se*. In fact the folk songs; along with the social realities, historical events, and personal love stories; is not a fact other than the sound of thoughts of the people who are influenced by different features of the geographical environment and accordingly gain experience. The sounds, along with the tangible cultural heritage, occupy an important place in understanding the environment. However the sounds in music geography are being used as a tool for defining the environment [5].

The people who develop a spatial perception in line with their manners, knowledge, beliefs, experiences, etc. give meanings to the physical and social factors in their minds. By that means, they develop an identity for the natural environment they live in and create the cultural landscape. Each society can form its environment to the extent of its experiences. Therefore, different civilizations have been formed in similar environments. Compiled folk songs telling the true folktales are important tools in understanding the spatial perception of the people and the reflection of such perception on the landscape.

The main constituents of folk songs are lyrics and music. The events experienced by the people, the influences of such events and their traces in the society are mentioned in the lyrics of folk songs. Such events may either be historical events or natural disasters such as flood, fire and earthquake. Those are told within specific rules and extents. Various rhythms and music patterns are preferred depending on the contents of the lyrics expressing the event or the emotions [6]. Subject facts add emotional intensity to the folk song which is constituted with verbal expressions.

The folk songs, with regard to their themes, may mention emotions or situations between a few individuals such as love, homesickness, separation, longing for meeting, reproach, etc. they may as well mention the social matters which concern the majority such as migration, making sail, war, social injustice, bride wealth etc. Therefore, it is possible to find out the socio-economic features of a society and their reflections on the socio-cultural life by means of folk songs.

Turkish folk music, as is evident from its name, is a widely esteemed music genre originating from the society which depicts the public and defines the public whereas it is influenced substantially by the physical and social features of the originating region. Turkish folk music is closely associated with the physical geographic features and the social life whereas there is a close relation between the terms of Turkish folk music and geography. This relationship becomes more evident when we consider both the distribution of the geographic words and the similarities and difference in musical features depending on districts and regions. It is believed that the differences arising from spatial (geographical) features lie at the bottom of such similarities and differences [7]. The folk songs reflecting various examples of folklife and cultural heritage of the people have emerged as products which represents the people's reactions against various natural and social events. In this respect, Folklore has a multidisciplinary structure which may be discussed by branches such as music, folk literature, geography and sociology.

### **RESERCH AREA**

Western Black Sea Region defined at the First Turkish Geography Congress which was held in 1941 constitutes the research area. That part has different land structures varying in short distances. The rugged topography of Northern Anatolian Mountains forming several mountain chains running parallel along the coast line of Black Sea from North to South and the tectonic sourced depressions between those mountains, deep valleys, ridges, slopes constitute the characteristic morphology of the area. This circumstance causes the natural environment constituents such as climate, flora, soil structure and stream features as well as the socio-cultural and economic features to differentiate in short distances.

There have been substantial local similarities, differences and interactions between the contents of 98 pieces of works which have been taken into the repertoire of TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Association) from 9 different districts within the subject area and the geographical conditions of the area.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In this study, 98 pieces of works originating from the settlements within Western Black Sea and taken into the repertoire of TRT have been analyzed. Initially, the works have been sorted according to their themes, then the geographical patterns they contain have been listed on a table created by using Microsoft Office Excel 2013 and they have been categorized according to their natural and social subjects after the words used in the works and their frequencies of use are determined. Finally the reflection of natural, socio-cultural and economical features on 98 Western Black Sea folk songs in total has been interpreted from a geographical point of view. In this context, the literature with regard to the subject has been searched and the experiences of the locals have been referred to when necessary.

### **FINDINGS**

In the folk songs, it is possible to come across several natural and social geographical features of the originating districts or regions. Just as the cultures have emerged as a consequence of the geographical living environment, the folk songs being a constituent

of that culture have been formed and emerged under the influence of the geographical environment [8].

The folk songs being one of the common memories of the society and being sung with particular melodies are unique sources for having an idea about the spatial interaction, value judgments, perceptions, joys, longings, valor, etc. of a society in a random environment.

In this study subjecting the compiled folk songs of Western Black Sea region, 12 of the 98 folk songs being analyzed are quite common at the present time. There is a large audience familiar with such songs throughout the country. One of them is a folk song of Kastamonu called “*Çanakkale İçinde Aynalı Çarşı (In Çanakkale stands the Mirror Bazaar)*” which tells the story of the defense of motherland. As can be understood from the lyrics of the song as:

*Çanakkale İçinde Aynalı Çarşı,  
Ana Ben Gidiyom Düşmana Karsı.  
Of Gençliğim Eyvah.*

*In Çanakkale stands the Mirror Bazaar,  
Mother I set forth against the enemy,  
Oh, my youth, alas!*

*Kimimiz Nişanlı Kimimiz Evli,  
Kimimiz Nişanlı Kimimiz Evli,  
Of Gençliğim Eyvah,*

*In Çanakkale there is a cypress tree,  
Some of us are engaged, some of us married,  
Oh, my youth, alas!*

the ones going away for the defense of motherland were formed by engaged and married individuals who left behind their beloved ones expecting their come backs. The song called “*Sivastopol Önünde Yatan Gemiler (The Ships Laying Before Sevastopol)*” which also belongs to Kastamonu district treats the subject of war.

One of the common folk songs in the region treating the subject of imprisonment is “*Mapushane Çeşmesi Yandan Akıyor (The Fountain of Prison Flows Sidewise)*” which belongs to Kastamonu district and another one is “*Mapushane İçinde Yanıyor Gazlar (The Gasses Burn in Prison)*” which belongs to Bartın district. The mentioned folk songs address the longings of the ones serving their sentences.

The countrywide known piece which addresses bravery and has become an identification of Bolu called “*Benden Selam Olsun Bolu Beyine (My Salutations to the Governor of Bolu)*” also belongs to Kastamonu district. The line “Valor has been lost whence guns were invented” has become a common phrase.

One of the famous folk songs compiled in Western Black Sea which address longing for meeting is the work called as “*Beyaz Giyme Toz Olur (Don't You Wear White, Dust Stains the White)*”. Again the folk song called “*Kiraz Aldım Dikmeden (I Collected Cherries from Saplings)*” which belongs to Bolu district also addresses love and homesickness. In that folk song, the following lines provides clues about the places where this particular area is in socio-economical interaction with;

*Tütün Aldım Hendekten,  
Halime'm Hekim Gelir Devrek'ten,  
Hekim Buna Neylesin,  
Halime'm Yangınımız Yürekten,*

*I bought tobacco from Hendek  
My Halime, the doctor is on the way from Devrek  
What would the doctor do about this,  
My Halime, the fire is on its way from the heart*

“*Karadır Kaşların Ferman Yazdırır (Those Dark Eyebrows of Yours)*” is a very well-known work which belongs to Zonguldak district. The following lines of that folk song allow us to make inference about the dominant vegetation of the region;

*Ormanlardan Aşağı Aşar Gezerim,  
Nazlı Yarı Kaybettim Ağlar Gezerim.  
Ormanların Gümbürtüsü Başıma Vurur,  
Nazlı Yarin Hayali Karşımda Durur,*

*I stroll down the forests,  
I lost my delicate love I cry and I wander.  
The rumble of the forests hit me in the head,  
The vision of my delicate love stands before me.*

In this study, the folk songs of Western Black Sea Region are initially sorted according to their main themes (Table 1). As a consequence, it has become apparent that 43 of the works directly adopt the theme of love. In addition to this, there are 24 more works which are indirectly about love. Accordingly, 68,4% of the folk songs are gathered around the subject of love. In the folk songs analyzed within the research area, there are also examples of subjects directly about the social life and engraved in the society such as imprisonment, divorce, forced marriage, drowning, etc. The number of works compiled about the subjects such as patriotism, homesickness and bravery are rather limited.

**Table 1.** Main themes in the folk songs

Themes			
Love	<i>f</i>	Social	<i>f</i>
Love	43	Divorce	1
Love and Reproach	2	Story of the Bride	1
Separation and Longing	8	Difficulties in Life during Youth	1
Secret Love	1	Henna Ceremony	1
Impossible Love	2	Imprisonment	3
Unrequited Love	3	Forced Marriage	1
Longing for Meeting	4	Marriage of the Lover with Someone Else	1
Desire for a Lover	1	The Worries Gotten for the Beloved	1
Addressing to the Lover	1	Drowning	1
Forbidden Love	2	Social Life	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	Fury Against the Tax Collector	1
<b>Patriotism/Homesickness/Bravery</b>	<i>f</i>	Satire	1
Military Service/ Defense of Motherland	2	Lullaby	2
Requiem for the War Goers	1	Fun/Joy	2
Homesickness	1	Desire to Get Married	2
Homesickness and Being Apart from the Lover	1	Religious	4
Bravery	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>98</b>

As is known, the interaction between human and environment constitutes the subject of study of geography. Such interaction reveals itself in some folk songs. Human is a social creature, however lives in a physical environment. Humans get influenced by such environment to an extent and mostly form it in accordance with their own needs and desires based on experiences. Humans try to alter the nature within their capacity and to customize it on one hand while complying with the nature on the other hand. Such interaction forms the cultural landscape.

In Western Black Sea having a rugged and mountainous terrain structure, the terms expressing the morphologic structure such as mountain, mountain top, peak, rath, cliff edge etc. have found a place for themselves in the folk songs. Amongst such terms, the word mountain is in the first place with a frequency value of 8. In the folk songs, the mountain has sometimes formed an obstacle against reaching home and/or beloved ones and sometimes formed a shelter against hazards.

Beyond any doubt, the plants take the most important place in the relationship of human beings with the natural environment. Because the plants are being subjects to direct or

indirect consumption by humans with their roots, bodies, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Therefore, humans have tried to know as many plants as possible within the natural environment they are living in. The most common physical elements available in the folk songs of the research area being plants (82 *f*) is a substantial indicator of that fac. Just as the plants, one of the natural environment elements available in the life of humans is animals. Even though its importance is diminished by the agricultural way of living, hunting has always been available in every period. Besides, breeding animals and making use of the products derived from them such as meat, milk, wool, honey, etc. have created an important place for animals in human life. The animal species has a frequency value of 33 in the folk songs. The horse being the most important mount which contributes to reaching the beloved ones by means of its speed is the animal species which is mentioned the most (7 *f*) in folk songs (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Physical geography elements in the folk songs

Physical Elements							
Plant	<i>f</i>	Plant	<i>f</i>	Climate	<i>f</i>	Animal	<i>f</i>
Tree	1	Poplar	2	Hail	1	Lion	1
Hemlock	2	Celery	1	Frost	1	Horse	7
Hawthorn	3	Chestnut	1	Smoke	3	Quail	1
Pear	1	Cherry	1	Snow	1	Ovine	1
Quince	1	Rosehip	1	Cloud	1	Pigeon	1
Almond	2	Oak gall	2	Ice	1	Rooster	1
Pepper	1	Violet	1	Dead of Winter	1	Scorpion	1
Nightingale	5	Oak	3	Dry Land	1	Crow	1
Pine	1	Yellow Rose	1	Wind	1	Eagle	1
Meadow	4	Willow	3	Dust	1	Calf	1
Flower	3	Forest	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	Water Buffalo	1
Grass	3	Grass	2	<b>Geographical Formations</b>	<i>f</i>	Goose	1
Branch	4	Cotton	1	Mountain	8	Cat	2
Walnut	1	Apricot	2	Mountain Top	1	White Horse	1
Thorn	2	Cypress	2	Lowlands	1	Sheep	1
Mulberry	1	Fruit	1	Plane	2	Bird	3
Apple	4	Leaf	1	Cave	1	Lamb	2
Plum	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	Rock	3	Herd	2
Hazelnut	1	<b>Hydrography</b>	<i>f</i>	Sand	2	Ox	1
Rose	8	Brook	2	Black Stone	1	Fly	1
Fig	1	Sea	1	Alluvium	1	Sparrow	1
Squash	1	Creek	3	Peak	1	Crane	1
Carnation	2	Flood	1	Rath	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>
Straw	1	Turbid Water	1	Slope	1	Physical Others	37
Violet	1	Water	6	Cliff Edge	1	<b>Physical Total</b>	<b>202</b>
Currant	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>		

In the folk songs, the hydrographic elements such as water, creek, brook, streams and springs (14 *f*) and climate elements such as snow, dead of winter, hail, dry lands, wind and clouds (12 *f*) have been mentioned as well.

In the folk songs, the constituents of the social environment such as social issues, clothing, furniture, professions, environment and road draw attention. Belongings or tools amongst such elements constitute the most common group with a frequency value of 76. Axe, bowl, music instrument, cradle and chest are the prominent terms. It is also possible to have an impression from the folk songs about the food culture within the research area.

As a matter of fact the food and drinks group finds a place with a frequency value of 30 and the terms such as honey, clotted cream and milk come to the fore. Similarly the terms about apparels (28 *f*) present important data about the clothing culture within the region (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Physical geography elements in the folk songs

Social and Economic Elements							
Belongings	<i>f</i>	Situation	<i>f</i>	Apparels	<i>f</i>	Profession / Status	<i>f</i>
Axe	8	Plateau	6	Loose Robe (Shirt)	3	Soldier	2
Vessel	7	Earth	4	Kilt	3	Bride	2
Instrument	5	Foreign Land	4	Baggy Trousers	2	Enemy	2
Cradle	3	Prison	4	Shoes	2	Shepherd	2
Chest	3	Village	3	Kerchief	2	Hunter	1
Rope	2	Mill	2	Gabardine	1	Barber	1
Jug	2	Bridge	2	Others	15	Guardian	1
Cup	2	Home	2	<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	Militia	1
Handkerchief	2	School	2	<b>Eating/Drinking</b>	<i>f</i>	Others	11
Dower	2	Bazaar	2	Honey	5	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>
Carpet	1	Docks	2	Clotted Cream	4	<b>Domestic Life</b>	<i>f</i>
Dagger	1	Grave	2	Milk	4	House	6
Others	38	Sub-district	1	Food	2	Garden	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	Bucak (Settlement)	1	Pastry	2	Chimney	3
<b>Road/Distance</b>	<i>f</i>	Mosque	1	Salt	2	Door	3
Road	8	Bazaar	1	Yogurt Drink	1	Pedavra House	2
Foreigner	3	Others	24	Baklava	1	Quilt	2
Far	2	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	Others	9	Shelf	2
Passenger	1	<b>Mine/Energy</b>	<i>f</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	Window	2
Far	1	Iron	1	<b>Jewelry</b>	<i>f</i>	Roof	1
Wire Road	1	Tin	1	Gold	4	Fireside	1
Migration	1	Coal	1	Silver	3	Others	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	Others	3	Coral	2	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Mine</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	Others	2	<b>Social Others</b>	<b>34</b>
				<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Social Total</b>	<b>330</b>

The environments mentioned in the folk songs may help with comprehending the spatial perception of the locals. The type of environments coming to the fore must be examined from a geographical point of view. Transhumance activities having an important place in the Turkish socio-economic life from Middle Asia to Anatolia have found an important place in Western Black Sea (12 *f*) just as in the whole country. The term “gurbet (being away from home)” which has emerged as a cognitive equivalent of the far away environments where the individuals need to live in by being away from their homelands due to various reasons and the term of “road” as a symbol of disengagement from the homeland draw attention as the other terms being mentioned in the folk songs. When the Western Black Sea folk songs are analyzed in terms of geographical closeness and interaction, the folk songs which belong to Kastamonu and Safranbolu districts have similarities both in terms of chorus and in terms of contents. Besides, Kastamonu district having a work compiled about an event in Bolu district is an evidence of the interaction between these two districts. From the folk songs of Bartın, it is understood that the region is in interaction with Kastamonu and Ankara. As a matter of fact, Bartın being the exports pier of the close by districts was able to develop socio-cultural and economic relationships with such districts.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Turkish Folk Music which take its name after the public, includes the value judgment of the people and generally compiled from true folktales is one of the elements which allow the culture to be maintained by the new generations by being passed down from one generation to another as a part of the tradition either in writing or orally. The folk songs being one of the substantial elements of our oral cultural heritage; are the works which allow us to comprehend the interaction between the physical and social conditions of the originating district and the people and also which tell about the people.

Western Black Sea folk songs are formed around the subject of love at the rate of 68,4%. The values such as imprisonment, divorce, forced marriage, drowning, patriotism, homesickness, bravery and religion are the other themes. In the folk songs, the morphologic elements with regard to the natural environment are the factors such as plant and animal species and water sources while the elements with regard to the social environment are the terms about eating-drinking, clothing, environment, domestic utensils as well as the tools and devices being used in daily life.

In Western Black Sea region having a rugged and sectional structure in terms of geography, it is understood that the folk songs have similarities in the general sense, however such similarities become even stronger in the districts which interact with each other in a greater extent.

As a consequence human being as a part of the environment he lives in; actualizes the subjects such as his good manners, knowledge, joy, sadness, enthusiasm, love, bravery, etc. within a certain environment. In other words, a bond is formed between the human and the environment. People give meanings to the environment within the frame of what has been experienced and verbalize what they have in mind by means of the folk songs. The folk songs being an important part of the cultural accumulation of a district from this aspect, may provide the geographers with important tips in reading the cultural landscape.

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