

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CRANE IN TURKISH FOLK SONGS, AND “GINE DERTLI İNILIYORSUN”

Turna Sembolünün Türkülerde ve “Gine Dertli İniliyorsun” Ezgisindeki İfadesi

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Abstract: *Türkü are orally-transmitted songs based on Turkish folk literature, and are generally anonymous. Drawn from local culture, the symbols occurring in türkü are used to draw parallels between emotions, thoughts and events in human life and those in nature.*

In türkü, the world of nature gains meaning in the eyes of the singer, who shares feelings such as sadness, grief of separation, loneliness etc. through images from the natural world. Finding reflections of his or her mood in nature means sharing it with nature, thus lessening the pain. The beliefs, adventures, traditions, history and geography of the Turkish people find meaning through such symbols.

This paper will examine the symbol of the crane in türkü in general, and in particular, the song Gine Dertli İniliyorsun (“Once again, you sigh in grief”). The crane is assumed to symbolize the god of the sky, and is considered holy. Being a migratory bird, it is mostly used as a symbol for the taking and bringing of news. In addition, it occurs as a symbol of longing, a confidant, a lover of freedom, a cry, abundance, prosperity and beauty.

The song Gine Dertli İniliyorsun is of the semah genre. Religious in content, semahs share certain unique melodic and rhythmic as well as literary characteristics. “Gine dertli iniliyorsun” will be analyzed in terms of melody and rhythm as well as literary structure, and the relationship between the crane and the bağlama will be examined. In addition, the meaning of the “yellow crane” symbolism unique to this türkü will be explained.

Key words: Music, Symbol, Crane, Song.

Özet: *Türküler, Halk Edebiyatının sözlü geleneğinden doğan, ağızdan ağza yayılarak yaşatılan ve genellikle yaratıcısı bilinmeyen ezgilerdir. Türkülerde yer alan semboller; insan hayatını içeren duygu, düşünce ve konuları, tabiat olaylarıyla eşleştirmek için kullanılmıştır ve kaynağını yerli kültürümüzden almaktadır.*

Türkülerde, doğa varlıkları türküyü yakanın bakış açısına göre anlam kazanmaktadır. Ezgiyi yakan kişi, duygularını; üzüntüsünü, ayrılık acısını, yalnızlığını doğa varlıklarıyla paylaşır. Kendi ruh hâlinin doğa varlıklarında yansıdığını görmek, türküyü yakanın acısını doğayla paylaşarak dindirmesi anlamına gelmektedir.

Türk halkının inancı, edebî zevki, yaşam macerası, gelenekleri, tarihi, coğrafyası, sembollerle anlam kazanmıştır.

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Bu bildiride, "Turna" sembolünün, Türkülerde ve "Gine dertli iniliyorsun" adlı ezgideki ifadesi ile ilgili bir çalışma yapılacaktır. Turnanın, gök tanrısı temsil ettiği var sayılmış ve kutsal olarak kabul edilmiştir. Türkülerimizde, göçmen bir kuş olduğu için daha çok haber götürüp getiren bir sembol olarak kullanılmıştır. Bunun yanında bazı türkülerde; hasret, özlem, dert ortağı, özgürlük sevdalısı, avaz, bolluk, bereket, refah ve güzellik sembolü olarak da kullanılmıştır.

"Gine dertli iniliyorsun" adlı ezginin türü semah'tır ve semahlar dinî içerikli ezgiler olup, melodik-ritmik ve edebi yapı bakımından kendine özgü karakteristik özellikler gösterirler. "Gine dertli iniliyorsun", melodik-ritmik ve edebi yapı bakımından analiz edilerek, Turna-Bağlama ilişkisi hakkında açıklamalar yapılacak ve Turna sembolünün diğer türkülerdeki ifadesinden farklı olarak, ezgideki "sarı turna" sembolünün neyi temsil ettiği anlatılacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Müzik, Sembol, Turna, Türkü.

Türkü are orally transmitted and usually anonymous songs originating in Turkish folk literature. Drawn from local culture, the symbols occurring in turku are used to compare emotions, thoughts and subjects from human life with events in nature. Elements from nature gain meaning according to the viewpoint of the singer, who employs them as metaphors for his or her emotions such as sadness, separation, loneliness etc. Seeing one's own mood in nature means sharing the pain with nature and thus lessening that pain. The beliefs, literary taste, lives, traditions, history and lands gain meaning through these symbols.

Folk poetry contains many symbolic natural elements. A significant portion of these living things are birds, significant for their ability to fly (Zariç, 2011, p.102). These are divided into various categories such as sea and water birds, birds that live in the cities or in nature, pets, game birds, scavengers, etc. The Turks, enriching their pre-Islamic beliefs with Islamic lore as well, were inspired by and utilized birds in many different cultural realms, from architecture to folk dances, costumes, and gravestones, as well as oral and written traditions like sayings and proverbs (Ceylan, 2003, p.35). Some of these birds, such as cranes, storks, swallows, geese and ducks, are migratory birds.

In the years following the establishment of the Turkish republic, two elements inspired the work of folk poets. One was playing the saz, and the other was traveling. In this context, poets saw a parallel between themselves and migratory and calling birds: Just as birds announced the changing seasons, the traveling poet-minstrels brought news and spoke of joy, happiness and love. Among all the migratory birds, the most mentioned in folk poetry and most focused upon by folklore researchers are cranes. Occurring in many regions and holding a special place in many cultures, cranes appear as a motif in Turkish clothing, rugs and kilims, needlework, over doorways and cradles; nearly everywhere (Aytaş, 2003, p.14).

The crane is a large bird, larger than a stork. Its body is 50-55 cm long, and stands 110-120 cm tall, with a 220-245 cm wing span. Its body is dark gray; the back

of the neck and cheeks are white, the front of the neck and back of the head are black, and the crown is brilliant red. It has a long neck and legs, a short tail, and a thick, straight beak. It usually frequents planted areas and fields around wet areas.

The Turks believed that the crane represented the Sky God, and therefore considered it a sacred bird. Identified with freedom, peace and well-being in countries where it is known, the crane has acquired a sacred identity (Atılğan, 2010, p.2). The Başkırtı considered it holy, and believed that it helped them in battle (Koçak, 2012, p.64). In Chinese culture, the crane is an extraordinary creature, believed to be the embodiment of a sorcerer or a beautiful woman. In Asia the crane is believed to have the longest lifespan of all the animals, even hundreds of years, and drinking its blood is believed to extend life. Cranes are blessed birds, intelligent, always acting appropriately, scattering fortune, wellbeing and hope. They fly in a set order. They are saddened by evil acts of men, and sometimes lose their way because of them. To cause a crane to lose its way or disturb it is considered sinful. In Anatolia, it is believed that to hunt it will bring disaster to the hunter. It is a symbol for the beauty of girls. In mythology the crane is known as a proud bird that mates for life; when they lose their mates they are said to leave the flock forever.

The crane is much used as a symbol in türkü. As a migratory and wandering bird, it is mostly assigned the duty of a bringer of news; they sometimes also serve as a partner in the sadness of those in exile and missing their homelands and loved ones; sometimes of the poet. In reality the crane neither brings nor takes news, but the folk poet employs the crane as a friend, as a superior being, and as a comforter. In Alevi and Bektashi culture the crane is considered an auspicious creature, and is mentioned respectfully. The 15th-century poet Şah Hataî takes the powerful trumpeting voice of the crane as that of Ali, and thus sees the crane as a precious and holy bird. The bird plays an important role in Alevi-Bektashi folklore, and represents Ali (Arslanoğlu, 2001, p.33). In Shiite belief, Ali, the nephew of the Prophet Muhammed, is also the first of the twelve imams.

Cranes take on a variety of forms in folk poetry.

A. In some türkü from various areas, the crane is asked to take news to a lover or to the homeland of the poet.

1. Below are the lyrics of türkü collected from Muharrem Ertaş of the Kırşehir region:

Red headed crane, if you go to my land	Allı turnam, bizim ele varırsan,
Speak of sugar, cream, honey	Şeker söyle, kaymak söyle, bal söyle
If someone asks about me	Eğer bizi sual eden olursa
Tell of a lover with head hung low and ashen face	Boynu bükük benzi soluk yar söyle

The melody of the line in which the poet calls out to the crane is as follows:



In this musical phrase, the melody begins low and ascends, further emphasizing the call to the heavens, and the 32nd note motifs in the last syllable reinforces the lyrics in which the poet sends news.

2. Below are the lyrics of a türkü collected from İbrahim Bakır of the Yozgat region:

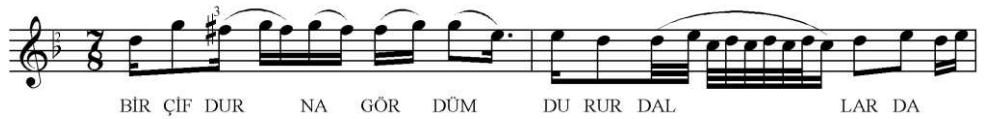
I saw a pair of cranes, roosting in the branches
If you love God, do not stay long on the road
In our land there are people awaiting you
Cranes, go straight to our lands

Bir çift turna gördüm durur dallarda,
Seversen Mevlayı kalma yollarda.
Sizi bekleyen var bizim ellerde,
Doğru bizim ele gidin turnalar.

Do not pass by our land
Cranes, give my greetings to my loved ones
When you arrive safely at your destination
Cranes, give my greetings to my love

Fazla gitmen bizim ele varınca,
Selam söylen eşe dosta turnalar.
Sağ selamet menziline varınca,
Benden yare selam edin turnalar.

The melody of the line in which the poet first mentions the cranes is as follows:



The poet, seeing the pair of cranes in the tree, is excited, because the girl he loves is awaiting news from him. The syncopated four-count beginning of the phrase, followed by the four-count repetition of the same notes, lends strength to the statement that he has seen a pair of cranes. But the syncopated four-count motif and following notes in the next 7/8 motif express his surprise at seeing the cranes on the branch. The 7/8 meter and makam structure of the türkü further reinforce the meaning of the words.

The line in which the poet asks the crane about his love has an ascending melody, and after an insistent pause at the top of the scale, it descends again to the tonic. The melodic structure in the phrase fits the song's 7/8 rhythm.

C. In some türküs the poet shares his troubles with the crane.

1. Below are the words of a türkü collected from *Âşık Dursun Cevlâni* of the Kars region.

Were you here yesterday, or did you come today	Dün mü burda idin, bugün mü geldin
Don't sing forlornly, you've pierced my breast	Ötme garip bulbul, bağrımı deldin
I've left my wife, and remained here	Eşimden ayrıldım, ben burda kaldım
Foreign hunters have shot my crested crane	Yâd avcılar vurdu telli turnamı.

The melody of the line where the poet speaks to the crane is as follows:

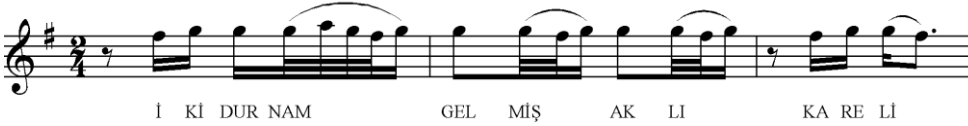


The straight, simple descending pattern corresponds to the poet's sharing of his grief with the crane. The 4/4 rhythm and uninterrupted pattern of the notes show the poet's grief and fit the words harmoniously.

2. Below are the lyrics of a türkü by *Sille'li İbrahim* from the Konya region:

Two cranes have come, black and white	İki turnam gelmiş, akli kareli,
I asked them where one of them was from	İkisine sordum biri nereli,
His mood was black, like mine	O da bencileyin, bahtı kareli.
My red-headed crane, come, look at my state	Allı turnam, gel, halime bak benim,
An arrow has pierced deep into my breast	Bir ok değdi yüreğime pek benim.
My crane, why are you staying in Çukurova	Turnam ne yatarsın Çukurova'da?
Your chicks are missing you in the nest	Yavruların seni arar yuvada.
I'm in exile, but my heart is in my homeland	Kendim gurbet elde gönlüm sılada.

The melody of the line in which the poet mentions the cranes is as follows:



The first verse says that both the cranes were black and white, but one of them was in a “black” mood. The melodic structure is appropriate to the meaning of the lyrics. Starting low and ascending until the end of the 3rd measure, then remaining around the high note with various motifs, the melody expresses a cry of grief, and unhappiness. The 4- and 6-beat motifs, fitting into the 2/4 meter, emphasize the poet’s sharing of his grief with the cranes.

In the songs of folk minstrels, such poems containe such subjects as advice and warnings, and faith; in zeybeks, themes of bravery, rebellion against injustice, heroism and patriotism; in semahs, religious subjects; in karşılamas, dance; in bozlaks, an emotional cry; in songs of exile, themes of separation, exile and longing; in laments, the subject of death and loss.

The title of this paper, Gine Dertli İniliyorsun, is the name of a semah. The semah is a ceremonial dance form of worship performed in Alevi-Bektashi communities, accompanied by music. The turning dance is performed by men and women together in religious ceremonies known as a *cem*, to songs sung in Turkish with saz accompaniment. The word *cem* means “gathering.” It also has the connotations of ceremony, custom, and way or road and is used by members of various religious orders for various types of music-accompanied zikr and dance. The semahs, solely the realm of Alevi-Bektashi communities, is present everywhere these communities live. Semahs have been collected from the provinces of Sivas, Erzincan, Malatya, Urfa, Çorum, Tokat, Maraş, Ordu, Giresun, Muğla (especially Fethiye), Antalya, Denizli and the Aegean region in general (Eke, 2009, p.128).

The song is also known as the “Turna Semah”(TRT Müzik Dairesi Yayınları). The song was collected in the Sivas region by the singer and saz player Mahmut Erdal. It was composed by the 17th-century poet Karacaoğlan. Its lyrics are as follows:

Once again you sigh in grief
My yellow crane, has your breast been wounded
Though nobody touches you, you sigh
My yellow crane, has your breast been wounded
Is your heart [lit. “liver”] broken

Gine dertli dertli iniliyorsun,
Sarı durnam, sinen yaralandı mı
Hiç el değmeden iniliyorsun,
Sarı durnam, sinem yaralandı mı?
Yoksa ciğerlerin parelendi mi?

The bağlama, with its graceful body and long neck, is sometimes compared to a crane. The most preferred wood for their construction is mulberry, which is yellow in color; the bağlama is seen as a yellow crane. The crane's plaintive cry is compared to the melancholy sound of the bağlama.

Have they tuned you to a foreign tuning [order]	Yoksa sana yad düzen mi düzdüler?
Have they shredded your frets [broken your heart]	
and made you sad?	Perdelerin tel tel edip üzdüler?
Have they drawn your strings [crest] from silver	Tellerini sırmadan mı süzdüler?
My red headed crane, my crested [stringed] crane	Allı da turnam, telli de turnam,
Is your breast wounded	Sinen yarelendi mi?
Has your heart been broken	Yoksa ciğerlerin parelendi mi?

The lyrics employ double meanings to create the metaphor. The crane is a migratory bird, and thus represents exile and those leaving their homeland for foreign lands, who face the difficulties of new conditions and ways of life. The word *düzen* (lit. "order") is also the musical term for the tuning of an instrument. Tuning the bağlama to an unfamiliar tuning would confuse the player, just as people become confused and struggle in a new and unfamiliar order. Each fret of the bağlama is tied on, wound several times around the neck of the instrument. If disturbed, the individual loops become separated and the fret no longer functions. Here the allusion is to the confusion of living in a foreign land. But it can also refer to an expression, "to mess one's hair," to sadden, to cause grief. The long thin crest feathers on the crane's head are called *tel*, literally string (of an instrument) or wire. This may also refer to the tassel often hung as decoration on the end of the bağlama's neck. The same word is used for silver wire used in embroidery, which is traditionally made even today by forcefully drawing the wire through increasingly smaller holes. In this sense, the verb *süzmek*, to "pull through, to strain" is an allusion to pain and discomfort/stress. However the verb also means "to look intently" and together with the word "tel," it also hints at the eye and eyelashes. The word "süzmek" can have either a positive or negative meaning; to look over but also to glower.

Ah, you crazy, flighty heart	Havayı ey, deli gönül havayı,
Before the moon rose, its light flooded the plain	Ay doğmadan, şavkı dutmuş ovayı,
The Turkmen girl drives the camels into file	Türkmen kızı gatar etmiş mayayı,
She turns and goes away, her eyes lined with kohl	Çekip gider, bir gözleri sürmeli,

The flighty heart flits around bereft of common sense, jumping ahead of itself. It yearns for the divine (the Turkmen girl, the thing it cannot have).

In this phrase, the words expressing the sharing of grief with the crane complement the motifs and rhythm. The melody was originally a dance tune as is clear from its rhythm and makam structure. The four- and five-beat motifs in the first measure which ask why the crane is signing, and the motifs in the second meter consisting of fourths and thirds descending to the tonic, lend the song a mystic character.

Yet another line in which the poet mentions the crane is set to the following melody:



At this point, the rhythm and makam change. The words saying the turna is taken as a guide are sung simply and emphatically, in ascending 2- and 3-beat motifs. With its complementary makam and rhythm, the phrase contains a mystic character.

In this türkü, the crane symbol is used in connection with the bağlama because of its color, its shape, and its plaintive voice. The türkü “Gine Dertli Dertli İniliyorsun” is a semah. Unlike other types of türküs, semahs are religious in character. Semahs contain different sections: ağırlama, yürütme, pervaz and niyaz, and consist of at least three of these sections, each of which is in a different rhythm and sometimes makam as well. The semah cannot be performed without bağlama accompaniment. The mating dances of cranes, performed in couples and in groups, and accompanied by their trumpet-like calls, is believed to be the inspiration for the semah danced in the Alevi-Bektashi cems.

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