



SIMILAR GENRES IN THE ORAL LITERATURE OF TURKIC PEOPLES

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the similar characteristics of genres based on exaggeration and imaginary fabrication in the oral traditions of Turkic peoples. These include lof in Uzbek folklore, lap in Karakalpak oral literature, qaravelli in Azerbaijani folk tradition, yalanlamalar among the Turks, and kalp in Kyrgyz folklore. Although today these genres have merged into other genres and continue to “exist” in various forms, scholarly research and examples demonstrate their historical commonality

Although at certain times lofs are performed on stage by entertainers and askiyachi, in other cases they do not require two lofchi, a stage, or an audience. That is, anyone, anywhere, can narrate a lof as if telling a joke, saying, “the first lofchi said this, and the second lofchi replied that.” Therefore, although folk entertainment art played an important role in the gradual development of lofs, today the dramatic aspect of lofs has largely lost its essence.

The lof genre exists under various names in the oral traditions of most Turkic peoples and shows similarities and historical commonality with the group of tales known as “forty lies.” In fact, lofs are characteristic of world folklore in general, since no nation’s oral tradition is free from exaggeration and imaginary fabrications. The adventures of the famous character Baron Munchausen, Gulliver’s Travels, and the depictions of Pantagruel and Gargantua are among the finest examples of exaggeration and fantasy in world literature. As a result of our research, we have identified genres and examples among Turkic oral traditions that are identical to Uzbek folkloric lofs.

In Karakalpak oral literature, lof is called “lap”, and a lofchi is called “lapgoy”. Karakalpak lofs are presented on pages 77–87 of volume 84 of the multivolume collection “Karakalpak Folklore”. Karakalpak lofs have been scarcely studied; only the article titled “The Significance of Studying the Lof Genre in Karakalpak Folklore” by J. Berdimuratov, a master’s student at Nukus State Pedagogical Institute, is noteworthy as one of the first scholarly studies of the lof genre in Karakalpak folklore [1;93]. The researcher states: “By their genre nature, lofs are very close to jokes (anecdotes). However, the strong use of exaggeration distinguishes lofs from jokes. Lofs are mostly performed by professional performers and are mainly found in the repertoire of askiyachi and entertainers” [1;93]. At the end of the article, the titles and inventory numbers of 24 lof examples published in “Karakalpak Folklore” are listed. The examples mainly consist of lofs narrated by Umirbek Laqqi.

In Kyrgyz oral literature, a genre close to lof is called “kalp” (qalb, qalbaki). In the Kyrgyz-Turkish explanatory dictionary, kalp is defined as follows: “Kalp: false, untrue, a distorted form of reality. If the people speak, they do not speak falsely (proverb). When truth is in one’s hand, what need is there for lies?” [2;1944].

In Kyrgyz oral literature, kalps are considered an independent genre, sometimes surviving in the form of fairy tales. In the “Encyclopedia of Kyrgyz Literature”, kalp (qalb, qalbaki II [a]) is defined as: “A poetic form that presents something created in the realm of human imagination, unbelievable to the mind, as if it were real, and is considered one of the ancient examples of folk oral creativity. Kalps exist as an independent genre but also appear within other genres, blending into them and creating a beautiful harmony” [3;102]. The same source explains that kalps are not widely spread in Kyrgyz oral culture because the genre lacks a distinctive melody and a fixed thematic framework.

In Azerbaijani folklore, a genre similar to Uzbek lofs is known as “qaravelli”. Qaravellis were studied monographically as an independent genre by Azerbaijani folklorist Tahir Oruchov [4;56]. The qaravelli genre “appears as independent narratives situated between fairy tales and short stories. Some qaravellis, narrated on critical and satirical themes, resemble long fairy tales, while others are based on unbelievable false events.” Another Azerbaijani scholar, Professor A. Nabiyev, in his book “Azerbaijani Folk Literature”, presents qaravellis under the name “lies” and states: “One of the minor genres of folk oral literature is lies. Lies narrate events that did not happen and could not possibly happen” [5;102]. Some Azerbaijani folklorists consider qaravellis to be a type of fairy tale or the introductory part (prologue) of a fairy tale. Similarly, Turkish folklorist Pertev Boratav regarded Turkish oral narratives resembling lofs, known as “yalanlamalar”, as the introductory part of fairy tales [6;40–59]. Turkish researchers recognize “yalanlamalar” as the art of finding and narrating unbelievable lies, performed by folk minstrels (bakhshi). Turkish folklorists such as Pertev Boratav, Erman Artun, Ali Duymaz, Munir Jarrahoğlu, Akman Ayub, Ismail Abali, and Janan Kokis have conducted various studies on this genre. Regarding yalanlamalar, Turkish folklorist Ali Duymaz states that their distinctive features in Turkish oral tradition are lies, imaginary fabrication, and exaggeration, which differentiate them from everyday lies; the lies in yalanlamalar function as a mysterious bond connecting the minstrel (ozan) and the listener [7;107].

It is evident that lofs and lof-telling are widespread in the oral traditions of Turkic ethnic groups and world peoples. Some examples of these genres attract attention due to their striking similarities.

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