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**Stereotypical Expressions in Early Ottoman Literature.
Sunrise and Sunset**

Abstract

The classical Ottoman epic poetry disposed of a great variety of stereotype expressions which caused that the poetic style was extremely ornate and sublime. This paper deals with two expressions used to describe the sunrise and sunset, which were very popular in Turkish poetry, not only in Anatolia but also in Central Asia. The main reason the use stereotypical expressions and clichés was to evoke unusual images or associations with colorful and wonderful creatures of nature. Most of these stereotype expressions were borrowed from Persian poetry, but they underwent often a transformation leading to their simplification and to make them more appropriated to the Turkish literary tradition. Examples chosen from well known literary works to illustrate the expression of sunrise and sunset testify a richness of stylistic means like similes and metaphors.

Most of the works devoted to Turkish (Ottoman) epic poetry tend to concentrate first and foremost upon analysis of their language and their literary themes. In the case of rhymed works, meanwhile, the academic literature usually dwells on issues of prosody. To date, the Ottoman epic canon has not been the subject of any comprehensive study focused on its style and typology. The odd critical edition of an epic text may, apart from offering a general overview of the work, set out some comments concerning the style or rhetorical figures employed, but a fuller synthetic elaboration of these matters will become possible only once we have at our disposal a larger number of critical editions based on manuscripts. Yet we can, for the moment being, endeavour a treatment of the early Ottoman period basing on the works published to date,

essaying some general and more detailed conclusions and describing the defining traits of the style¹.

Analysis of the stylistic devices used in epic works of the early Ottoman epoch should enable us to identify all the original Turkish stylistic traits which hereto went unmentioned in literary works or in editions of individual epic texts. The poetic idiom of the early epic works – belonging to the *divan* canon, shaped as it was under the strong influence of Persian literature – was not marked by the same stylistic elements as were characteristic of Turkish folk stories or of popular literature. The epic works designed to popularise Sufi ideas and to cultivate the *gazawat* spirit were written in simple poetic or prosaic forms, and their authors made use of a style rooted in the folk literary tradition – they were raconteurs as well as writers, so they strove to reach their listeners via traditional stylistic means.

The romantic stories of chivalry, love, and adventure displayed a somewhat different set of characteristics, albeit they also drew upon folk tradition. The style of these works derived significantly from the Persian originals providing the basis for the Turkish translations or, more accurately, adaptations. Despite this derivative relationship of the Turkish renditions to the Persian originals of the epic works, the Turkish adaptations ended up differing considerably from their literary predecessors, the key difference lying in simplification of the Persian rhetoric and in use of a poetic idiom appropriate for the Turkish literary tradition.

My comments concerning the style of Turkish epic poetry of the pre-Ottoman and early Ottoman periods are drawn from analysis of selected poetic and prosaic editions such as *Battalname*², *Danişmendname* by Arif Ali³, *Düstur-i Enveri*⁴, *Varka ve Gülşah* by Yusuf-i Meddah⁵, *Işkname* by Mehmed⁶, *Hüsrev ü Şirin* by Şeyhi⁷, or *Hurşidname* by Şeyhoğlu⁸.

I have considered the poetic language of these works from the perspective of the use of stylistic devices. A comparison of the styles used in the individual works has enabled identification of a distinct artistic style which emerged in Anatolia and remained prevalent between the 13th and the 15th centuries. The stylistic devices under discussion

¹ Stylistic aspects of Old Ottoman literature are discussed at length in articles prepared by me for a number of conferences: Tadeusz Majda, *Characteristics of the Early Anatolian Turkish Epic Poetry*, in: *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Theoretical Problems of Asian and African Literatures*, ed. by M. Galik, Bratislava 1983, pp. 347–355; Tadeusz Majda, *Characteristics of Early Turkish Style (13th–15th Centuries)*, in: *Problemy Języków Azji i Afryki. Materiały II Międzynarodowego Sympozjum*. Warsaw–Kraków, 10–15 November 1980, ed. by St. Piłaszewicz, J. Tulisow, PWN, Warsaw 1987, pp. 223–231.

² *Battalname*, ed. by Yorgos Dedes, Harvard University 1996.

³ I. Mélikoff, *La geste de Melik Danişmend. Étude critique du Danişmend-nâme*, vol. I-I, Paris 1960.

⁴ *Düsturname-i Enveri*, Istanbul 1929.

⁵ Yusuf-i Meddah, *Varqa ve Gülşah*, ed. by Grace Martin Smith, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1976.

⁶ S. Yüksel, *Işk-name*, İnceleme-Metin, Ankara 1965.

⁷ *Poemat irański Hüsrev-u-Şirîn w wersji osmańsko-tureckiej Şeyhî*, ed. by A. Zajaczkowski, Warsaw 1963.

⁸ Şeyhoğlu Mustafa, *Hurşid-Nâme (Hurşid ü Feraḥşâd)*, Hzl. Hüseyin Ayan, Erzurum 1979.

occur in most of the epic works under discussion and extend to all levels of the language – lexical, syntactic, rhythmic, euphonic, and intonational. Use of a given stylistic device was dictated by the artistic requirements and standards of the work, but also by the work's intended aesthetic and ideological function. Consideration of the selected works indicates that, apart from their ideological concept, the principal functions of early Turkish epics lay in their expressive and impressive functions, and – seeing as the majority of epic works were propagated and passed on orally, be it by way of storytelling, reading, or melorecitation – the language employed was of a kind suited to such a medium.

Certain repeated formulae, stereotypical and idiomatic expressions, tropes, and rhetorical figures all played important roles in Turkish epic poetry.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss a number of selected stereotypical expressions and clichés which, for all the frequency of their occurrence, yet have to be collected, classified, and clarified.

For these purposes, stereotypical expressions are commonly used figures denoting a situation or a subject. They fill an important function in the stylistic convention referring to an entire series of works produced in a given time. Recurrence of the same stylistic devices and of established literary norms across a larger body of works testifies to the existence of a literary convention. With a view to illustrating the significance of stereotypical expressions and clichés in early Ottoman epics, I cite examples of such expressions which occur most frequently in verse works, in love poems: descriptions of sunrise and of sunset as well as of the various times of day.

As regards stereotypes describing sunrise and sunset – the coming of the day, the falling of night – their role in literary works approximates that of motifs and images, particularly of what are known as free and static motifs not associated with the narrative strand, with the cause-and-effect structure of the story. They occur most typically at the beginning of the chapter (*meclis*)⁹, and their intended function is that of an interlude or of a device easing the transition to another theme of the narrative. Such a pause may also serve to specify the time of day in which the events about to be described are unfolding, thus setting the scene for the listeners and helping them to follow the tale.

Poetic descriptions of sunrise and sunset often refer to a standard stock of metaphors and similes, with numerous variations of certain typical elements. And thus, the night and darkness are often likened to birds of dark plumage, such as ravens and crows (*zağ, karga*), and daybreak – to a dove (*güvercin*) or a peacock (*tavus*). Descriptions of the sun also draw upon this ornithological stock, regularly referring to a bird with golden wings (*altun kanatlu kuş*).

⁹ *Meclis* – a literary session, a chapter of a poetic work.

Hüsrev ü Şirin

- 2839 *felek tâvûsu çün terk itdi bâğ*
maslahat eyledi gülzâra zâğ
 “When the peacock of the heavens (horizon, sun) left the (terrestrial)
 garden, the raven attacked the rose garden (day)”
- 2840 *bu zâğuñ kıldı perri ‘âlemi pür*
büridi bir yumurda açdı biñ diir
 “And the raven’s feathers filled the world (with darkness)
 the egg cracked and thousands of pearls (stars) spilled out”
- 2841 *budur hûd âşiyân-ı dehriñ işi*
ki geh tâvûs geh zâğ olur işi
 “It is the work of the very nest of the world (time) that one time it is
 the work of the peacock (day), and another of the raven (night)”
- 2842 *pes ol tâvûslar cevelân yirinden*
yuvaya tutdılar yüz birinden
 “Then these peacocks (having risen) from their places (the world)
 circled and took their nests one after the other (end of the day)”
- 2843 *çü almışlar idi eyyâmdan kâm*
gice yirlü yirinden kıldı ârâm
 “When (finally) they had enjoyed the day to their contentment, the
 night came, took its place and (all) grew quiet”

Gülşehri, Şeyh-i Sin’an

ol karañu gece hayli çün geçer
gerü güneş su yüzine od saçar
yine gir altun kanatlu kuş erer
daneleri dam üstinden derer
 “When the dark night passed entirely,
 the sun again scatters fire on the waters
 and the golden-winged bird draws near again
 and gathers the grain (pearls) from the roof (heavens)”

Hurşidname

- 2020 *çü girü tonını degşürdi ‘âlem*
‘abîr ü müşke gark oldıydı âdem
 “When the world changed its robes again,
 people (humanity, the world) sank into scents and musk”

- 2021 *gügercin kaçdı karga per bırakıldı*
hevâ kâfurına 'anber bırakdı
 “The dove (day) flew away, the raven left its feather (night)
 on the camphor air (white, day) ambergris (dark, night) fell”

The coming of the twilight and of night is often compared to the attack of a hostile army of Negroes (*zengi*) or of ravens. The examples cited here are not from Ottoman poetry, but from that of the Golden Horde, from *Hüsrev ü Şirin* by Qutb¹⁰.

- 51v *nitâk kim çıktı ersâ sub(i)h şâhı*
ajundın kaçtı zângilâr sipâhi
 “When the shah of the morning appeared (sun),
 the cavalry of the Negroes fled this world (night)”
- 35 r *nitâk kim subh sü yergâ tuzdı*
karankuluk çârigni urdı bozdı
 “When the army of morning marched into the world,
 the soldiers of the dark were defeated and scattered”

Another oft-recurring image describing the coming of night and of day relies on a personification of the night, with the world changing its clothes, drawing a curtain or veil, or pitching a tent.

Hurşidname

- 1592 *birazdan çün ki bu nûrânî gündüz*
kıya dutdı çevürdi düeneden yüz
 “When the luminous day drew near
 and turned its face from the world”
- 1593 *zemânuñ varlığını yoğa saydı*
zemîn ol matem için kara geydi
 “Nothing thought he of the creatures of this world (life)
 the earth put on dark garments for mourning”

Hüsrev ü Şirin

- 952 *çü gice irdi gerdi perdesini*
ki bîperde kıla perverdesini
 “When the night came and drew the veil
 she left her child (lit. nursed, reared)
 uncovered”

¹⁰ A. Zajączkowski, *Najstarsza wersja turecka Husräv u Şirin Qutba*, Part I. Text, Warsaw 1958.

- 953 *çıkardı perdeden bin perdebâzı
ki kılur her biri çenberde bâzî*
“From beyond the curtain there appeared a thousand musicians (actors)
and each dances in a circle”
- 4214 *çü gök göz yumdı gösterdi kara kaş
çıkardı çarh-ı çiniden kamer baş*
“When the night closed its eyes (went to sleep) and showed
(only) its dark brows (night)
the moon reared its head from beyond the Chinese horizon”
- 4215 *duhânî çâder örtindi zamâne
tumân gönlek geyürdi âsumâne*
“The smoke-coloured tent was spread over the spheres of time
and the sky donned a shirt and sherryvallies”
- 5373 *bürinmiş yir yüzi çetr-i siyâhî
yahu damında kalmış mürğ-i mâhî*
“The earth was covered by a black tent
By God! A moon bird stands upon the roof”

Gülşehri, Şeyh-i San'an

*kara kemhayı çıkarur ruzigâr
kim kızıl atlâs geye gevhernigâr*
“The wind takes the black brocade (night)
the jeweller dons the red satin (sun)”

Another literary device often used in Turkish epic poetry to describe nightfall and daybreak refers to precious stones, jewels, and pearls – most typically to their colours, such as gold, blue, white, black, or red.

Hurşidname

- 1303 *saçıldı hurde-i mînâ cemende
düzildi lü'lü-i la'lâ semende*
“He spilled the red wine upon the meadow
and arranged ruby pearls upon jasmine”
- 1304 *felek geydi kâba-yı lâjverdi
cihân urdı başına tâc-ı zerdî*
“The sky donned an azure cape (sky)
and the world (earth) placed upon its head a golden crown (sun)”

Hüsrev ü Şirin

1553 *koyup gevherlerini hâzin-i Çin*
zümürriüdürce urdu kufl-ı zerrin
 “The treasurer of China hid the jewels
 in an emerald box and closed it with a golden key (sunset)”

5542 *çü gündüz ‘ışkına düün çıkdı cândan*
güneş yâkûti peydâ oldu kândan
 “When the night gave its life for love of day
 from the (jewel) mine the ruby sun emerged”

Stereotypical expressions of the sort described above may occur within a chain of images, or one basic image may be elaborated upon.

Hüsrev ü Şirin

6386 *meger bir subh kim ‘alem gelini*
boyar yüz reng ü al ile elini
 “The morn whose hands the bride of this world
 paints in a hundred colours and scarlet (henna)”

The examples of metaphorical images of nightfall and daybreak cited above derive largely from Persian literature, although much skill has been invested in their apt transposition into Turkish poetry. The image, while borrowed from Persian literature, was usually phrased in a “Turkish way”, and the more sensory images were adjusted to what might be seen in Anatolia. This, in fact, was one of the most common treatments applied in domesticating Persian literature for the benefit of Turkish listeners and readers. Various stylistic and linguistic ministrations enabled translators to – within certain limits – rework the Persian source text, adapting it to the linguistic and stylistic custom of the Turkish sphere and to its habitat. The end result was not so much a translation as an adaptation of the Persian originals.