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**RITES FOR THE HOLY VISITS AND FEAST –
RITUALS IN ANATOLIEN GYPSIES**

Visiting places and festal practices have taken place in all societies for very long years. These are the practices directly related to the “holy time and place” concept indispensable to mythology likewise. However, this matter bears qualities beyond myths. Gypsies in Turkey have largely joined into settled life. There are still those partially or wholly living as nomads. Gypsies pursuing settled life vastly pay visits to tombs, graves and other visiting places in their area for visitation purposes as they have adopted the Sunni Islam belief. They also have locations only they visit. In Yusufeli, Artvin, “Hafız Poşa Tomb” is visited by the local gypsies in all feasts without fail. “Cüro Baba Tomb” in Kasımpaşa, Istanbul “Father Evliya Ethem Tomb” in Sulukule, “Toklu Dede” in Çınardibi, “Cıbali Hazretleri” in Küçükmustafapaşa and “Kandilli Hodja” in Tokmaktepe are the vivid examples of some visiting places gypsies in Istanbul show interest today as well as in the past. I would like to present this study based on my own research and experience between the years 1996–2000.

Key words: feast, visitation, gypsy, holy place, holy time.

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**Киелі жерлерге бару және мерекеге арналған ғұрыптар –
анадолы сығандарының рәсімдері**

Қоғамдық орындарға бару мен мерекелік рәсімдер көптеген жылдар бойы адамзат тарихындағы барлық қоғамдарда орын алып отырды. Бұл бір жағынан мифологияға да қатысты деп саналатын «қасиетті уақыт пен жер» ұғымымен тікелей байланысты тәжірибелік амалдар. Түркияны мекен еткен сығандар негізінен отырықшы өмір салтына көшкен. Дегенмен де көшпелі өмір салтын ішінара немесе толығымен ұстанатындар қатары әлі де кездеседі. Отырықшы өмір салтын ұстанатын сығандар зиярат, қабірстандарға және осы аймақтағы басқа да жерлерге зиярат ету мақсатында жиі барып тұрады. Бұл олардың исламның сүнниттік бағытын ұстанатындығымен де байланысты. Олардың тек сығандар ғана барып тұратын жерлері де бар. Артвиннің Юсуфели қаласында жергілікті сығандар өздерінің мерекелері кезінде міндетті түрде “Хафиз Пашаның қабіріне” барады. Қасымпашадағы «Қуро Баба мазары», Ыстамбұлдағы «Әкем Әтхемнің мазары», Сұлукулдағында, Чинардибидегі «Токлу Деде», Күчүкмұстафашадағы «Чибали хазіреттері» және Токмактепедегі «Кандили қожа» зиярат етілетін жерлердің нақты үлгілері. Стамбұлдағы сығандардың бұл жерлерге деген қызығушылығы бұрынғыдай бүгінгі күнде де сақталған. Мақалада 1996–2000 жылдар аралығындағы өз зерттеулер мен тәжірибелеріме негізделген нәтижелер ұсынылды.

Түйін сөздер: мерекелер, зиярат, сығандар, киелі жер, киелі уақыт.

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Посещение святых мест и обряды празднования – ритуалы анатолийских цыган

Посещение мест и праздничные обычаи имели место во всех обществах в течение очень долгих лет. Это практики, непосредственно связанные с концепцией «святого времени и места», также связаны и с мифологией, но зачастую, выходят за рамки мифов. Цыгане в Турции в значительной степени перешли к оседлому образу жизни, но есть еще те, которые частично или полностью придерживаются кочевнического образа жизни. Цыгане, ведущие оседлый образ жизни, часто посещают гробницы, могилы и другие места для посещений в своем районе, поскольку они приняли ислам суннитского толка. У них также есть места, которые посещают только цыгане. В Юсуфели, Артвине, «Могила Хафиза Поша» местные цыгане обязательно посещают во время

своих праздников. «Гробница Куро Бабы» в Касымпаше, в Стамбуле «Могила отца Эвлия Этхема», в Сулукуле, «Токлу Деде» в Чинардиби, «Чибали Хазретлери» в Кючюкмустафапаша и «Кандилли Ходжа» в Токмактепе являются яркими примерами некоторых мест посещения цыган в Стамбуле, интерес к этим местам сохранился сегодня, как и в прошлом. В статье представлены результаты, основанные на моих собственных исследованиях и опыте в период с 1996 по 2000 год.

Ключевые слова: праздники, посещение, цыгане, святое место, святое время.

Introduction

Each sacred site has social, cultural, political and religious aspects. In this context, people from different walks of life may have various definitions and explanations about sacred objects according to their social position and profession.

The phenomena such as cultic- visitation and pilgrimage are somewhat central to all religions and cultural systems. By visiting the graves of the places, places or people they deem sacred, people desire to participate in that holiness, to integrate with the holy one, and to get rid of all kinds of sins on this occasion. Hajj (or pilgrimage) and other religious visiting to the sacred places also serve on this purpose. Hopes for the future are kept alive by making vows and offering sacrifices in the places visited or in the graves of individuals. In all Turkish countries, the graves of martyrs and saints are cultic places in pilgrimages. This holy visit also serves to establish unity and solidarity. In other words, pilgrimage or grave-yards visits can also function an urgent role in the establishment of cultic-unity and co-religious solidarity, apart from purifying individuals from their sins, gaining the consent of Allah and giving spiritual happiness. “Wherever there is a saint's grave, it is Turkish land. Where there is no Saint (lit. awliya), there is no Turk either” (Güngör 1990: 150). As the late sociologist Erol Güngör pointed out that in fact religious places such as tombs, shrines as well as the other sacred cultic holy places are the most important symbols that make an ordinary soil a homeland.

Gypsies living in Turkey also visit the graves of both saints and people they value, who have a significant impact on the preservation of their own identities. Whereas those visits show that they protect the beliefs of the society they live in and the saints they value, they also try to protect their cultural identity by pilgrimages-visits to the graves of those they value, whom they consider as their patrons as well as their protecting souls for the ethnic identities. To summarize up, the phenomenon of visiting and pilgrimage of Gypsies in Turkey has three main and vital dimensions such as religious, cultural and social.

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

Due to the fact that Turkish gypsies live a closed life as well as their lack of information about their culture and traditions has led us to such a research. The fact that the subject-matter has an original content and a unique scientific character is another motivation for writing this article.

The main purpose of this study is to reveal that the Gypsies community in Turkey, with whom we have lived together for more than a thousand years, is an integral part of our country and that they are no different from other local citizens and that they are a part of us and our cultural richness. One of the aims of this study is to find out that these people, with whom we have lived together for centuries, are a vital part of Turkish rich societal unit they live in without being excluded due to their ghetto-like life-styles. Despite the difference in culture and life. Another goal of ours is to make it clear that gypsies, like all other people living in Anatolia, respect Anatolian religious saints (lit. awliya) as well as perform regularly visiting those graves. Because, human being him/herself is precious creature. Regardless of nationality or ethnicity, being human is an asset in itself. They also show that they are in harmony with the country they live in by performing those visiting's and pilgrimage phenomenon. Of course, the diverse ethnical peoples living in a country are considered as its wealth, but the existence of common points is another separate and distinctive wealthness.

Scientific research methodology

This research is a field-study. On the occasion of this research, gypsy regions living widely in Turkey were visited and an empirical field research was carried out by experience of symbiosis and convivenza among them. In this study, observation, participatory observation and interview methods were applied due to the nature of the subject-matter. The comparative historical method was applied to the main themes such as visitings and cross -cults of the

gypsies living throughout the world. The Phenomenological hermeneutical approach is used also in order to get the core- meanings of the so-called cultic phenomena

Main part

Visiting Places and Pilgrimage

Many gypsies settled in Anatolia visit the tombs, graves and visiting places popular in their areas because they largely take part in the Sunni Muslim groups. However, there are some precious places in some lands only visited and cherished by the gypsies themselves. In Yusufeli, Artvin, "Hafız Poşa Tomb" is visited by the local gypsies certainly in every feast. "Cüro Baba Türbesi" in Kasımpaşa in Istanbul, "Father Evliya Ethem" in Sulukule, "Toklu Dede" in Çınardibi, "Cibali Hazretleri" in Küçük-mustafapaşa, "Kandilli Hodja" in Tokmaktepe are some of the places they pay attention today as well as in the past (Kaygılı, 1939: 269). The tomb of the person known as "Belly Dancing Grandpa" in Meydancık, Bursa or as "Gypsy Grandpa" is another place visited by gypsies (Malkoç, 1997: 80). Sometimes they attach fabric to the trees around the tomb to make a wish. The tomb of "Broken-neck Grandpa" in Canakkale is also a cherished location of the gypsies. The tomb of a popular person in Akhisar, "Grandpa of Karaköy" is another example for these places.

Apart from these local points, there is Hacibektaş, which is the significant visitation place for the gypsies of Bektashi belief. They go to Hacibektaş in Kırşehir every year on the 15th, 16th and 17th of August, offer such sacrifices as goat or sheep and take vows there. The sacrifice is consumed there by way of cooking and eating. If the sacrifice is made for a vow, then the meat is given away to needy people without being eaten by the people sacrificing. These locations are more popular for the gypsies from cities like Kayseri, Adana, Osmaniye, Denizli, Bursa-İnegöl and Sakarya (Özkan, 2000:118).

Gypsies are known to have some visiting locations in every country. Such groups as Sinti, Roma, Gitano et cetera have some preferred visitation places in almost every city in Europe. The most well-known of these is "Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer" of the South France. Each year, thousands of gypsy pilgrims arrive in this place to worship Nun "Dark Sarah" and to carry her statue with religious parade by the sea on the 24th and 26th of May (Arnold 1965: 168; Vossen, 1983:229). They visit "Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer" for pilgrimage twice a year in Octo-

ber and March. Yet, the most significant visit is on the 24th and 26th of March (Gronomeyer-Rakelmen 1988: 149; Block 1962: VI 1909). As it happens in the case of Hacibektaş, many local and foreign tourists attend the ritual as audience on the 24th and 26th of March. Also because European gypsies are mostly Christians, they pay respect to the holy people of the Christianity and Protestantism and visit their tombs as well (Vossen, 1983. 230).

Gypsy Feasts and Celebrations

Similar to the gypsies worldwide having their own way of celebration, Turkish gypsies also have local feasts and festivals.

Although it is believed that the Turkish gypsies converted into Islam have left "Dark Sarah" celebrations, "Kakava Feast", which is celebrated by lots of gypsies in the locality of Şeytandere, Kırklareli on the 5th of May is quite the same with St. George's Day of Christianity and the practices in this feast show great resemblance to the ones of the "Dark Sarah". The feast they call "Kakava" begins on the 5th of May, yet they unite this celebration with the local Spring Festival (Hıdırellez) of the 6th of May. Thus, they perform both "Kakava" and "Hıdırellez" celebrations on the 5th and 6th of May every year (Özkan, 2000: 119).

"Kakava" means "Stewpot Feast" in the gypsy language. I think the exact meaning of this word is also "Stewpot Feast" (Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik lugat, 1981: 1027). Because these celebrations are the practices stemming from the beliefs of dark-skinned citizens rather than the need for fun and entertainment (Sakaoğlu 1995: 291).

"Kakava Feast" is known to have been celebrated within the borders of the Ottoman Empire since 15th century. Roman citizens in Kırklareli go to the forest area in the suburbs of the city and hang the branches of the trees they have collected on the doors and windows of their houses on the 5th of May. This practice is done to keep the evil spirits and witches away from people, animals and crops in their area. At the same day, crop spikes gathered from the fields are placed in the house for fertility. On the evening of the 5th of May before sunset, they also have a tradition of burning a mat out of their houses. Everyone must leap over the burning mat three times. When I asked the gypsies the reason of this practice in an interview, they told me it was done to kill the fleas. Besides, they have another practice called "41 weed". In this practice, the pots which contain the water of a creek named "Şeytandere" are filled with 41 stones and 41 weeds on the 5th of May (sakaoğlu, 1995: 291). Then, people have

a bath with this water for health purposes on the 6th of May. All gypsies living in this locality race to "Şeytandere" on the 6th of May because the real feast takes place on that day.

Anatolian gypsies are banned from eating lamb meat before the 6th of May. According to their belief, whoever eats lamb meat before this holy day is considered to be eating the flesh of their own children who are dead. Lamb or goat should be sacrificed before sunrise. After the eldest of the family prays to God for having protected them through the winter, the lamb is positioned towards the sun. After the lamb is given some water for past sins, the sacrifice is carried out. It is as well believed that those who have sacrificed lamb or goat at "Kakava Feast" shall be rewarded with sorcery power. The same practice is seen on St. George's Day of the European gypsies, when they sacrifice lamb or goat on that day just like Turkish gypsies do (Tomasevic-Djuric 1989: 24). Besides, Hindus are observed to get up before sunrise for praying and facing the east while worshipping. I would like to point out the similarity (Tümer- Küçük 1997: 104).

"Kakava Feast" was celebrated in the village "Asilbeyli" in the past. Later, the celebration point is taken to the locality of Şeytandere, which is 4 km away from Kırklareli. "Kakava Feast taking place in "Şeytandere" is then turned into a cultural festival embracing the art performances by the verdict of the Kırklareli Parliament of Municipality. "Kakava Feast" is now celebrated for three days as "Karagöz Culture, Art and Kakava Feast" from the 22nd to the 24th of May. When the weather is not good, the dates might be drawn back.

During this three-day festival, such practices as wallpaper and kite competitions for children, beauty contest for young girls and also cart-decorating and shoe shine box-ornamenting competitions gives a different dimension to the celebrations.

Though the feast is provided with another identity through cultural and art performances to get the interest of the local people for entertainment as well, Roman citizens have their own way of enjoying the "Kakava Feast". They arrive at Şeytandere with their families as the feast suggests. They put tables in the creek, drink and have a good time. In this respect, "Kakava" presents two different images. On the one hand, you can realise the funny screams, natural sounds and kebab smell of the goat meat from the creek where the gypsies are enjoying. On the other hand, there is formal entertainment designed for all people (Özkan, 2000: 120).

When I talked to the Roman citizens, they expressed that they were not content with the degener-

ation of the feasts originating from their own traditions and morals.

In the "Kakava Feast", big fire is set up for the celebration of "Hidirellez, the Spring Festival" and people leap over the fire. People with carts ornament them with all colours. Leaping over the fire is performed for killing the fleas as the Romans said. The cleansing quality of fire is also emphasised in the old Turkish belief (Sarıkçioğlu, 1983: 92).

Roman "Kakava Feast" was celebrated in Edirne before it was taken to Kırklareli. Romans from Edirne went to Tunca River and facing the sun, they scrubbed their backs with willow branches and had a bath in the river (Onur, 1995: 275).

Another gypsy feast is the one celebrated for Goddess "Bibi" in March. The feast performed for paying respect to Bibi is the continuation of an ancient tree cult. The feast takes place around a tree bearing fruits, especially pear tree. The tree around which the feast is celebrated is named "Bibi" after the feast. The tree is decorated with flowers and red ropes before the feast. On the day of the feast, the gypsies gather around the tree to have the feast dish. Fish, rice, bean and similar food as well as drinks with alcohol are put in the ground. Then, the celebrations start after they pray and chant to Bibi to provide them with health and happiness. The feast organiser who changes every year serves food and drink to men, women and children. Those having their food and drink pray for the well-being of the organiser and the organiser responds them with the same prayer. Later, the people go to their houses and keep celebrating till the evening (Özkan, 2000: 125).

This feast which is to respect Goddess "Bibi" and to relive the ancient tree cult is witnessed to be forsaken by settled gypsies (Gonda 1960: XI. 49). However, this is a practice of the nomad gypsies despite rarely and it continues as "Humbara Feast". Nomad gypsies celebrating it on the 14th of March believe "Humbara Feast" to be their day of liberation (Yayan, 1983: 17-18). I think this liberation is also a way of realising the wrath of Goddess "Bibi" because all gypsies in the world perform this feast to remember the wrath of Bibi.

Conclusion and discussion

Today, the rites of visiting holy places or sanctified sites are described as religious tourism. In this context, the types of religious tourism can be divided into the following groups: Pilgrimage tourism, Esoteric tourism and Sacral tourism. Journeys taken by various religious persons to visit holy places are

called Pilgrim tourism. Esoteric tourism includes individual journeys to increase the traditional religious beliefs in a person who wishes to understand the talismanic powers of so-called sacred sites. As for the sacral tourism, it is when people having talismanic endeavours visit a certain sacred site in attempt to contact the metaphysical world. Sacral ("sacrum" in Latin, meaning sacred or strength) means ascribing a special meaning to an object, thus turning it into a mystical entity and increasing its irrational significance. Therefore, the words such as "holy", "sacred" and "strength" are called sacral terms as a whole in the Religionswissenschaft. (Özkan, Kamolava, Baitenova, Kantarbaeva, 2019: 204).

The World Tourism Organization UNWTO, has stated that religious tourism is the most prestigious branch of touristic journeys in the 21st century due to the increase in visits to the holy lands and sacred sites. Nowadays, due to the increasing competition amongst countries, regions and cities, each region is able to promote its values better than ever for the contemporary age we live in, making this competitive atmosphere necessarily significant. (Özkan, at al. 2019; 204).

Consecration of the holy places have been existing since many ancient times. As people's enthusiasm and desirous wishes changed over time, diversified views about holy shrines emerged in society. The deep interest in temples has also increased due to the influence of methods and ideas in the areas of the study of religion since the 19th century.

Mircea Eliade's definition of sacred site makes this subject more understandable. For him "each kratophany (manifestation of power) and hierophany (manifestation of the sacred) transforms the space where it emerges: The site, which was not sacred until that day, becomes sacred" (Eliade, 2003, 355). In fact, according to Eliade, the notion of sacred site is based on the religious idea of renewing the arche-typical hierophany, which blesses a place by drawing a line around it to isolate it from the profane place surrounded around it (Eliade, 2003, 356).

Holy time and places have been of great importance in the history of mankind. Accordingly, Romans living in Turkey have kept visiting holy places determined by their customs and preserving their festal traditions up to date.

In the case of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer" in South France, the European gypsies take the statue of "Dark Sarah" from the church and carry it till the sea and then get into the water by their bellies, which resembles to Hindu rituals. Hindus also take their cult figures to a walk on the feasts and special days and drag them to the river by cars and wash them in ceremony. Further, Hindus' getting into Ganj River and then, the European gypsies' taking the "Dark Sarah" statue into the sea and finally, the Roman citizens' in Turkey entering the Şeytandere creek on Kakava have indeed great similarity in practice. Turkish Romans accommodating in Thrace aim to get rid of evil spirits by taking a holy bath in the creek of Şeytandere.

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