

TYPE AND MOTIF ANALYSIS OF THE FOLKTALE FORTY BROTHERS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL FINNISH METHOD

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Turkish folk tale titled “Forty Brothers”, collected from Buchim Village in the Radovsh region, by applying the Historical–Geographical Finnish Method. Founded by Julius Krohn, the Historical-Geographical Finnish Method is an analytical approach developed to investigate the original form (Ur-form) of folk tales, their patterns of dissemination, and their motif structures. In its early stages, the method was applied primarily to tales collected from Scandinavian regions such as Finland, Denmark, and Norway; later, its use expanded throughout Europe and eventually to other parts of the world. Today, this method is considered one of the most frequently employed approaches in folk tale studies. Within this framework, the study seeks both to identify the variants of the tale under examination and to determine its typological position based on the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) tale type classification. It has been determined that one variant of the analyzed tale, also referred to as a parallel text, appears in Naki Tezel’s work *Türk Masalları* (Turkish Folk Tales) under the title “Forty Boys”. The tale “Forty Brothers” addresses themes of brotherhood, loyalty, and justice, and conveys deep cultural meanings, particularly through its heroic structure and the symbolic significance of the number forty. Accordingly, the tale has been analyzed through comparisons with similar narratives in Turkish folk tales as well as with folk tale types found worldwide. As a result of these analyses, it has been concluded that the tale corresponds to ATU Type 302. The study demonstrates both the connection between the Macedonian Turkish folk tale tradition and universal folk tale types and how the Finnish Method can be effectively applied to Turkish folk tales.

Keyword: Folktale, Historical-Geographical Finnish Method, Forty Brothers, folktale type, motif

Introduction

The folktale, which has existed within the oral tradition for centuries, is one of the oral culture genres of anonymous folk literature. Folktales, which entertain listeners and allow them to spend an enjoyable time while also conveying important messages, have various characteristics. On the other hand, folktales also possess a distinctive structure. This unique structure has attracted the attention of folklorists, leading to the development of various methods for its analysis. One of these methods is the Historical-Geographical Finnish Method, developed in the Scandinavian countries and founded by Julius Krohn.

This method was designed to identify the original form of a folktale, also referred to as its *Ur-form*, by tracing its diffusion and systematically analyzing its motif structures. In its early stages, the method was applied to the study of folktales from the Scandinavian countries. Later, it began to be used throughout Europe, and in subsequent years, its application became widespread in different parts of the world.

In this context, the folktale titled “Forty Brothers,” which constitutes the subject of this study, has been examined using this method. As a result of the analysis of the folktale collected from Buchim Village in the district of Radovish, it was determined that one of its variants/parallel texts appears under the title “Forty Boys” in Naki Tezel’s work, *Turkish Folktales*. In addition, the folktale has been compared with international folktale types.

On the other hand, for the analysis of the folktale in terms of type, the study is based on the *Types of International Folktales*, compiled by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson and later expanded by Hans-Jörg Uther, as well as *Typen Türkischer Volksmärchen* (Turkish Folktale Types) authored by Wolfram Eberhard and Pertev Naili Boratav. The examination of the folktale from the perspective of motifs, meanwhile, is carried out according to Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*.

1. Forty Brothers

The folktale "Forty Brothers", which constitutes the subject of this study, was collected in 2015 from Buchim Village in the district of Radovich. Its analysis was carried out according to the Historical-Geographical Finnish Method and was published in the master's thesis titled *A Study on Folktales in the Oral Tradition of Eastern Macedonia*, prepared by the author in 2016. However, it has not been determined whether there are other variants of this folktale. This study, however, has revealed that a parallel text of the folktale appears under the title "Forty Boys" in Naki Tezel's work *Turkish Folktales* (Bağcı, 2011: 233). Additionally, the episodic structure of the folktale has been further expanded through this study. In this context, the original text of the folktale can be accessed via our master's thesis, which is available on the website of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

A. The Type of the Fairy Tale: ATU: 302, EB: 213.

B. The Narrator of the Fairy Tale: Bekir Zurap, Buchim/Radovich.

C. The Episodic Structure of the Fairy Tale:

1. A man had forty sons. The sons told their father that they wanted to get married. In response, their father gave each of them some money and a horse, saying, "Go and find your fortune."
2. The brothers went to a flat forest, where they encountered a girl. She explained that the region was very dangerous and that giants lived there. Claiming that she could protect them from the giants, she took them to her home.
3. The girl gave them wine; all of them became intoxicated except for the youngest brother. After getting the forty brothers drunk, the girl went to inform the giants. However, the youngest brother secretly followed her.
4. The youngest brother killed all the giants who had come to eat his brothers with his sword, and in the end, he also killed the girl and threw her into the water.
5. The youngest brother entered the giants' lair and rescued the forty girls they had imprisoned; he distributed them among his brothers and chose the most beautiful one for himself.
6. The eagle, the leader of the giants, appeared before the brothers. The eagle set a condition for the youngest brother: if he brought the girl to him, his life would be spared; otherwise, he would be killed.
7. During his journey, the youngest brother encountered a helpless lion trapped in a snare. He freed the lion from the trap. In return for this kindness, the lion plucked a tuft of hair from its mane and gave it to him, saying, "Keep these hairs. When you are in need of help, burn them in the fire. Wherever I may be, I will sense the smell of the smoke and come to your aid at once."
8. As the youngest brother continued on his journey, he encountered a tiger that had fallen into a trap, just like the lion. Without hesitation, he freed it as well. The tiger plucked a tuft of hair and repeated the lion's words.
9. The youngest brother encountered three brothers who could not agree on how to divide a cap, a sheepskin coat, and a pair of boots left by their father. The youngest brother said to them, "I will divide these for you," and deceived them. Then he sat on the sheepskin coat and flew away.

10. The youngest brother went to the city where the King lived and stayed at the home of an old woman.

11. The youngest brother learned the location of the Lord's residence. Riding on the cap he had received from the brothers who could not divide their inheritance, he entered the girl's room through the window like a bird and drank her sweet sherbet. The girl informed her father that someone had entered her room, and he immediately changed the guards.

12. On the third attempt, the Lord's daughter caught the youngest brother. She took a liking to him, and he also liked her. He then said that he would ask her father for her hand.

13. The boy sent a matchmaker to ask for the girl's hand from her father. The girl's father replied, "I will give my daughter to him if he agrees to my conditions.

14. Lions were made to fight in a large arena, and the lion that the youngest brother had helped defeat was the eagle's lion. Similarly, tigers were also made to fight, and the tiger aided by the youngest brother defeated the Lord's tiger.

15. As the third condition, the eagle demanded that he make a bowl out of paper and fetch water from a distant spring. With the help of the girl, the youngest brother completed this task. Thus, the youngest brother won the Lord's daughter.

16. The youngest brother and the Lord's daughter rode on the sheepskin coat back to the eagle. The eagle grabbed the girl by her hair and attempted to eat her; however, she struck the eagle with a sword and killed it. Afterwards, the two rode the sheepskin coat home again and lived happily ever after.

Motif Structure:

B. Animals

B500-B599. Helper Animals' Services.

B545. The animals are freed from the trap.

The youngest of the Forty Brothers, the youngest brother, rescued the lion that had fallen into a trap. In the same way, he also freed the tiger.

F. Marvels

F700-F899. Extraordinary places and things.

F840. Other extraordinary objects and places.

F823. Extraordinary shoes.

The three brothers quarreled because they could not agree on how to divide the extraordinary boots left to them as an inheritance by their father.

G. Ogres

G10-G399. Kind of ogres.

G10-G49. Regular Cannibalism.

G11.2. Cannibal giant.

The girl who deceived the Forty Brothers informed the giants so that they could eat them.

H. Tests

H300-H499. Marriage tests.

H310-H359. Suitor Tests.

H310. Suitor Tests.

The younger brother fulfills the conditions set by the girl's father and marries her.

H335.0.1. The bride helps the suitor perform his tasks.

The Lord's daughter gives the young man she favors a thick sheet of paper so that he can win the contest, and she helps him fetch water from the fountain.

H900-H1199. Tests of Prowess: Tasks.

H950-H999. Performance of tasks.

H982. Animals help humans perform tasks.

The younger brother succeeds in fulfilling the Lord's conditions with the help of a lion and a leopard.

P. Society

P200-299. The family.

P250. Brothers and sisters.

P251. Brothers.

The Forty Brothers tell their father that they want to get married.

Q. Rewards and Punishments

Q200-Q399. Deeds punished.

Q210. Crimes punished.

Q211. Murder punished.

The youngest and smartest of the Forty Brothers kills the girl who tries to set a trap for them.

W. Traits of Character

W0-W99. Favorable traits of character.

W20. Other favorable traits of character.

W32. Bravery.

The youngest and bravest of the Forty Brothers kills the giants who try to eat them.

Z. Miscellaneous Groups of Motifs

ZO-Z99. Formulas.

Z60. Other formulistic motifs.

Z71. Formulistic numbers.

Z71.1. Formulistic number: three.

The three brothers are unable to divide the cap, coat, and boots they inherited from their father, all of which possess extraordinary powers.

Z71.12. Formulistic number: forty.

There was a father who had forty sons.

Conclusion

In this study, the Turkish folk tale "Forty Brothers", collected from Buçım Village in the Radovish region, was analyzed using the Historical-Geographical Method. Additionally, the tale was compared with international types of folk tales. It was determined that the tale corresponds to ATU 302, listed in the *International Catalogue of Tale Types (The Types of International Tales)*, prepared by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson and later developed by Hans-Jörg Uther. Furthermore, it was found to align with type number 213 in the catalog *Typen Türkischer Volksmärchen (Turkish Tale Types)*, prepared by Wolfram Eberhard and Pertev Naili Boratav.

Moreover, the tale was analyzed according to the motif groups included in Stith Thompson's *The Motif Index of Folk Literature*. The motifs present in the tale were found to correspond largely with the motif codes in the index. As mentioned above, it was also determined that a variant of this tale is narrated in the Turkish region. In this context, more extensive and detailed studies could reveal whether there are other variants of the tale in different regions.

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Oral sources

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