

English *Ballads* and Turkish *Turkus* a Comparative Study

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Abstract

Although "ballad" whose origins based on the medieval period in the Western World; derived from Latin, and Italian word 'ballata' (ballare :/ = dance) to "turku" occurring approximately in the same centuries in the Eastern World, whose sources of the "Turkish" word sung by melodies in spoken tradition of Anatolia, a term given for folk poetry /songs "Turks" emerged in different nations and different cultures appear in similar directions. When both Ballads and folk songs as products of different cultures in terms of topics, motifs, structures and forms were analyzed are similar in many respects despite of exceptions. Here we will handle and evaluate the ballads and turkus, folk songs, being the products of different countries and cultures, according to the Comparative Literature and Criticism, and its theory by focusing the selected works, by means of a pluralistic approach. In this context these two literary genres having literary values, similar and different aspects in structure and content will be evaluated compared and contrasted in light of various methods as formal ,structural, reception and historical approaches.

Keywords: ballad, turku, folk songs, folk poems, comparative literature

Introduction

Although both *Ballad* and *Türkü* are the products of different countries and cultures, except for some unimportant differences, they have similar aspects in terms of their subject, theme, motive, structure and form. In this study these two terms will be addressed, compared and contrasted according to the Comparative Literary Theory, in regard to both their content and their form. In writing this article, I have assumed that the reader is acquainted with the traditional ballad and *türkü* and realizes close similarities between these two terms. In this study the discussion has been divided into two sections:

The first provides a general overview including some questions such as “what are these two words?” What distinguishes them from other kinds of songs and from each other? Where do they come from?” In this part a short history of these two terms is also contained. That is to say, ballad and *türkü* will be examined for their historical definitions and traditional aspects.

The second section deals with ballads and *türkü*ler from the perspective of their similarities and differences about their content and form from past to present, chronologically. In this part, the traditional horizon questions, such as “how have ballad and *türkü* been alive till our days? or how have they been reached until our time? in what manner are they similar?, are going to be discussed in this article.

This article focuses upon the traditional English ballads often referred to as the Child ballads and Turkish *türkü*ler (*türkü*ler means the plural form of songs, folk songs), generally known as Anatolian *türkü*ler. There are some famous ballads such as *Lord Randall*, *Barbara Allen*, *Hind Horn*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, *The Wife of Usher's Well*, *The Cruel Sister*, *Johnny Armstrong*, *Otterbourne*, *Scarborough Fair*, *The House Carpenter*, *The Three Ravens*, *The Ballads of Robin Hood*; on the side of *türkü*, some popular *türkü*ler such as *Köroğlu*, *Kızıroğlu Mustafa*, *Gelin Ayşem*, *Allı Durnam Bizim Ele Varırsan*, *Türkü of Yemen*, *Türkü of Kızılırmak*, *Türkmen Kızı*, *Genç Osman*, *Battal Gazi*, *Keklik*, *Karanfil*, *Karakoyun*, *Evlerinin Önü Mersin*.

The First Part:

A Short History of Ballad and *Türkü*:

The term “ballad” derives from the late Latin and Italian *ballata* (from ballare, to dance in twelfth century Italy). It has the same parentage as *ballade* and *ballet*. The name belongs historically to the courtly 14th century dance song, the *ballade*, an intricate fixed form that arose in France and was popular in England in the late 14th and 15th centuries. (Encyclopaedia Americana 1970: 99) Ballad and *türkü* are short poems or songs telling a story of some heroic deed, usually romantic.

The words “ballad” and “*türkü*” have come face to face with some mutations over the centuries. Some kinds of ballads and *türkü*ler can be traced back earlier than the year 1500, or perhaps 1400. The term ballad historically, *which means the dance song of Court*, *ballade* in France, begun to be used in the twelfth century. It became popular in England in the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries. In the fifteenth century the word referred to a song meant to accompany a dance. Earlier than that, it referred to the term ‘ballade,’ the French verse form as mentioned above. This name was given to many lyrics of any type such as love poems, short edifying poems, satirical-allegorical poems, narrative poems, religious and heroic pieces, and printed street ballads in the period of Queen Elizabeth I.

At the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, the word generally defined as “a common song” was sung on the streets, that is to say, referred to broadside ballads, often called name ballads today; however, most of them were not. This name comes from the single broad sheet printed on, to say that the broadsides were the

printed song sheets often sold in a cheap way on streets. They were also called stall ballads of Elizabethan England, which is the type of ballad, explained by Shakespeare's Autolycus in *Winter's Tale*.

The eighteenth century saw two major ballad revivals. One came in mid-century, and was marked by Bishop Thomas Percy's collection and publication (in his 1765 "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry") of many of the old ballads he was able. topical songs, set to the tunes of the day. Some of the broadside ballads were songs we would to acquire.. in the sixteenth century.

The other came at the end of the century, through the efforts of Sir Walter Scott and his circle. Most of our obviously-Scottish ballads date to this time or later. Then, by the nineteenth century, the ballad had become more the sort of (English) narrative verse with which we associate ballads today.

Traditional English ballads were collected, at the end of the nineteenth century, in the five-volume collection called *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-98) published by Francis James Child. In this book the oldest ballad belongs to the year 1300. Child included every traditional English or Scottish ballad in his collection. He identified 305 groups of songs, some *containing* about a thousand variants. But for the ballads the oldest reference to traditional ballads is in *Piers Plowman*, in the late fourteenth century, in which they are referred to as *Rhymes of Robyn Hood*. One of the earliest ballads in Child's collection is *Robin Hood and the Monk* about 1450 AD.

Ballad and türkü have dealt with social stories of sorrow, crime, disasters, happenings, and historical events abroad as well as home, and also sentimental matters such as love and death songs. Most of the tales, themes, and plot devices of English and Scottish ballads also appear in the ballads, tales, rhymes, sagas, lais, chansons, legends, folk-tales, folklore, fables, romances, and soon not only in Britain but also in the other European countries. Child's collection includes the lyrics of every song recognized by Child as a traditional English or Scottish ballad as well as traces of the roots of each ballad.

In the 20th Century, the first serious study was Cecil Sharp's. Sharp collected and recorded 1500 ballads, and again in 1916-1917 and 1918, he collected about 1600 tunes at the travels to Appalachian Mountains in the North America. Sharp collected these ballads in the book called *English Folk Song* (first publication is in 1907 and the fourth one is in 1965) (Bronson 1962: 72) In the years of 1904-14 Gavin Grieg found 107 variations of James Child's ballads widespread in Scotland's northern sides. One of the best critical works in the first part of 20th century is Gordon Hall Gerould's book named *The Ballad of Tradition* (1932). He studied ballads from several perspectives in this work. According to him "ballad" is a folk song telling a story or an event in an impressive way. (Gerould 1932:11)

The origin of the word "türkü" that we use instead of "Ballad" is the word *Turk*. The folk poems in rhyme are called türkü in Anatolian oral tradition. As the poems sung in special composition of Varsak tribe is named *Varsağı*, *Bayatı to Bayat's*, *Türkmani* to poems of *Turcoman* in Turkish Folk Poems are given the name *Türkü (Türki)*. Türküler, according to topics and rhymes, called the names like *Değiş*, *Deme*, *Hava*, *Ağıt*. The types of Türküler written by prosody (*aruz*) are named *sarkı (song)*. The word *yir* or *beyit (beyt)* is used instead of the word türkü in Anatolian in some places. Accordingly, Kazak Turks use *ölen/ölön* instead of türkü. (Türk Ansiklopedisi 1983: 1461) On the other hand it is named *Mahnı* by Azeri Turks, *Halk Yırı* by Başkurtlar, *Türki*, *Halk Koşığı* by Kazaklar, *Halk Cırı* by Tuataras, *Halk Aydımı* by Turcoman, *Nahsa*, *Koça Nahçisi* by Uighur say these names for the türküler. (Karşılaştırmalı Türk Leh. Söz. I 1961: 908-909)

Cevdet Kudret says that the word türkü was firstly used in the 15th Century in East Türkistan for the products written by aruz and spoken in a special rhyme. (Kudret 1980: 295)

Türkü is one of the oldest kinds of Turkish folk poems. Fuat Köprülü and Hikmet Dizdaroğlu, inform us that this subject was told in Ali Şir Nevai's *Mizan-ül-Evzan*. In this work, it is said that the word türkü was invented in Horasan in the period of Sultan Hussein Mirza. (Köprülü 1988: 347, Dizdaroğlu 1969:103)

Like ballads, türküler were also transmitted orally in several tunes before literary türküler. Thus the Turkish oral tradition is as old as its history. However most of türküler before written folk songs were lost. Up to now in the studies done, the oldest türkü samples appeared in the *Divan ü Lügat-it Turk* by *Kashkarli Mahmut* and *Kutadgu Bilig* by Yusuf Has Hacıp. For example as the first poem we see "çuçu" in *Divan ü Lügat-it Turk*. (Atalay 1960: 364)

In the result of some studies, we also meet eight Turkish poets' names in Mani texts found in the diggings of Tufan: Aprınçur Tigin, Kül Tarkan, Sungku Seli Tutung, Ki- Ki, Pratyay ya-Shiri, Asıg Tutung, Çisuya Tutung, Kalım Keyshi (Arat 1965: XXI-XXII, Dizdaroğlu 1993: 2, Türk Ansiklopedisi 1983: 1461)

The birth of Türküler has gone till the time of Middle Asia Turks. The first historical folk songs are the poems and laments that told victory and heroism of Attila, sung on his death in the fifth century in the Attila's period. (Köprülü 1988: 57,157-158)

In the main structure of popular poems there is mani, koshma, varsagı, semai, epic and türküler. The most popular folk literature works seemed to be in Karahanlılar's time. In *Divan ü Lügat-it Türk*'te (1072-1074) Kashkarlı Mahmud gives the works had meter structures being seven, eight and twelve. "Satuk Buğra Han Epic" and "Manas Epic" (11th and 12th centuries) are the first anonymous poetic folk songs.

Although Türkü, one of the oldest sorts of anonymous folk poems, appeared in 15th century among the East Turks, the oldest türküler in Anatolian Turkish literature were born in 16th century. In terms of form, Öksüz Dede composed the first türkü text. (Dizdaroğlu 1960:104, Köprülü 1962: 37-38)

It is the first türkü sung with metrical structure in Anatolia. In 16th century like English and Scottish minstrels (asıklar/bards) of 17th and 18th centuries, the Turkish folk poets also sang old anonymous folk songs, and have struggled to keep them alive nowadays. Mostly heroism, love, death, nature and sorrow themes were handled. For instance, Yunus Emre, Pir Sultan Abdal, Koroğlu, Karacaoğlan, Dadaloğlu, Erzurumlu Emrah, Dertli, Âsik Veysel, Seyrani, Sümmani, Mahsuni Şerif, Murat Çobanoğlu, Şerafettin Taşlıova are the most important figures of asik literature (minstrel literature)

In the first years of the Turkish Republic, a lot of türkü tunes collected by Dar-ül Elhan (Conservatory) were printed in the Ottoman language, these studies were supported by Ataurk directly. Thus the golden age began in the history of türküler. (Yeni Mecmua 1988)

After the 1920s, Dar-ül Elhan Society has journeyed in the country four times and collected 850 türkü tunes. Then in 1926 Yekta Ekrem Besim and Dürri Bey recorded 250 tunes in the cities of Adana, Antep, Urfa, Niğde, Kayseri and Sivas. And the other studies in the years 1927, 1928, 1932 followed this. These türküler were published with the names of Anatolian Folk Songs.

Ballads and Türküler have been passed down through the centuries, changing, borrowing from the songs of their time, borrowing from each other. Both ballad and türkü have undergone a revival for many ages. Due to this of course they have got a living musical tradition whose roots can be traced back over half a millennium. Ballads and türküler are popular throughout Europe, in Turkic World and the English-language ballad tradition shows considerable borrowing from other lands.

Two forms of the ballad are often distinguished - the folk ballad, dating from about the 12th century, and the literary ballad, dating from the late 18th century. The distinction between traditional songs and composed ones, between folk ballads and türküler; with literary ballads and türküler, is that traditional ballads and türküler never had composers.

The literary ballad and literary türkü are narrative poems created by a poet, a folk poet (minstrel-bard) in imitation of the old anonymous folk ballad and türkü. Usually the literary ballad and türkü are more elaborate and complex; the poet may retain only some of the devices and conventions of the older narrative verses. In other words, we can say that ballad and türkü are descriptive or narrative verses or songs. In English and Turkish writing traditions, the literary ballads and türküler describe all forms of popular verse accompanied by a melody. They may be sub-divided into lullabies, laments, and other airs and verses.

The Folk Ballad and türkü, anonymous folk ones (or popular ones), were composed to be sung. They were passed along orally from singer to singer, from generation to generation, and from one region to another or from one coulter to the other. During this progression a particular ballad or türkü would certainly undergo many changes in both words and tune. They are originated among common people that the writers or composers are unknown, sung by minstrels, bards.

Mostly ballads are classified like the following. (Pound 1916: 171-187, Otis & Needleman, 1939:101-102)

The Second Part:

Classification of Ballads:

1. Ballads of the Greenwood. Primarily comedies. The Ballads of Robin Hood (contains 38 ballads) is one of the largest and richest collections of ballad tradition.

2. Ballads of History. For instance: "Chevy Chase," "Sir Patrick Spens," "The Battle of Otterburn," "The Hunting of the Cheviot," "Young Waters"

3. Ballads of Love. "Child Waters," "Glasgertan," "King Estmere," "Helen of Kirkcannell" are among the most famous ballads

4. Ballads of Humor. For instance: "The Crafty Farmer," "The Gardener," "Get up and Bar the Door"

5..Ballads of Domestic Tragedy. Examples: "Edward," "The Douglas Tragedy," "Babylon," "The Cruel Brother"

6. Ballads of the Supernatural. Examples: The ballads such as "Thomas Rymer," "The Wife of Usher's Well" and "Sweet William's Ghost" carry fearful, grotesque aspects full of supernatural creators like ghosts, giants, fairies, devils

7. Ballads of the Domestic Border. Examples: "Captain Car" (Edam o Gardon), "Bonnie George Campbell" are important English and Scottish ballads.

8. Ballads of Art. They are literary ballads which are not anonymous. Example, S. T. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner's still is a popular ballad in our days as well.

9. Ballads Derived From Epic Material. They are also called "narrative ballads." "King Orfeo" and "The Bruce" show epic features.

Generally türküler are separated in to three groups according to their rhymes, subject matter and structure. (Dizdaroğlu 1960: 102-107)

Classification of Türküler:

According to rhymes:

1. Exceptional Türküler such as Bozlak, hoyrat, divan, koshma
2. Türküler with rule including in Oyun havaları (musical tune).

According to Structure:

1. Türküler in form of mâni-lines (quarter note)
2. Türküler with four lines
3. Türküler with two lines (in ballads we see lines in these kinds too.)

According to subject matter:

1. Lyrical Türküler: love, türküler in the themes such as homesick, death (lullabies and laments are also in this group) “Emrah ile Selvihan,” “Emmim Kızı-Emmim Oğlu,” “Allı Durnam Bizim Ele Varırsan,” “Ağlama Yar Ağlama,” “Yüksek Yüksek Tepelere Ev Kurmasınlar,” “Mızıka Çalınır Dügün mü Sandın”
2. Satiric Türküler: they are mostly humorous. “Horozumu Kaçtırdılar,” “İki Durnam Vardir Akli Kareli,” “Karabiber As M’olur,” “Kırpıkların Ok Eyle,” “Tepsi Tepside Tepsi Fındıklar,”
3. Event Türküler: “Yemen Türküsü,” (Havada Bulut Yok), “Kızılırmak Türküsü,” “Çanakkale İçinde Aynalı Çarşı,” “Sarı Zeybek,” “Yemen Yemen Sanli Yemen,” “Değirmen Başında Vurdular Beni”
4. Historical Türküler - Heroic Türküler: they show epic features. “Koroğlu,” “Genç Osman,” “Battal Gazi,” “Danışmend Gazi,” “Mert Dayanır Namert Kaçar,” “Kisne Kır’at,” “Esrefoğlu Al Haberi”
5. Sermonic and Seasonal Türküler: “Bugün Bayram Günü Derler,” “Kar Yağar Kar Üstüne” (Amman Hey), “Yaz Ayları Geldi Geçti,” “Yaz Gelirse”
6. Work and Job Türküler : “Türkmen Kızı,” “Değirmenin Bendine,” “Ekin Ekilen Yere,” “Hey Buğdayım Buğdayım,” “Makaram Sarı Bağlar,” “Kiraz Aldım Dikmeden,” “Kalenin Ardına Ekerler Darı”
7. Pastoral Türküler: “Karakoyun,” “Kınalı Keklik,” “Geyik türküsü,” “Sürüler İçinde Sürmeli Koyun,” “Şu Yüce Dağların,” “Bahçelerde Bir Kuzu”
8. Didactic: “Horoz Destanı,” “Tembel Destanı,” “Yalılar Destanı” (in styles of türkü), “Damdan Dama Atlayan Yar,” “Bülbüle Su Verdim Altın Tasıman,” “Viran Bahçelerde Bülbül Öter mi,”
9. Play Türküler: “Silifke türküsü,” “Kafkas Türküsü,” “Çorum Halayı,” “Koroğlu Pehlivan Havası,” “Çekin Halay Düzülsün”
10. Free-subjected Türküler: “Ah Dağlar, Ulu Dağlar,” “Bebek Türküsü,” “Ahu Gözlerini Sevdiğim,” “Evlerinin Önü Mersin,” “Adana’nın Yolları Taşlık,” “Erzurum Çarşı Pazar” (Sarı Gelin), “İzmir’in Kavakları,”

Ballads and Türküler have quite similar motives sheep-lamb-shepherd hunter-deer, lover, dear, weapon, board, color, harshness, violent, season, flower; homesick, sorrow, nature, bird, death; transportation and communication tools (train, letter, telephone and soon); heroism and braveness. Consequently, instrumental devices and melody are important for both ballads and türküler. We give “The Wife of Usher’s Well” as an example one of the most important oral ballads, “Gelin Ayşe’m” (My Bride Aysem) for popular türküler.

We hear the sorrow of a mother who lost her three sons in the war in “The Wife of Usher’s Well”

There lived a wife at Usher’s Well,
And a wealthy wife was she;
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them oer the sea.
A part handled the same themes from “Gelin Ayşem”

Turkish	English
Koyun gelir yata yata	Sheep come by laying and laying
Çamurlara bata bata,	In mud by sinking and sinking
Gelin Ayşe’m sele gitmiş,	My bride Ayse fell in flood
Yosunları tuta tuta	Moss by holding and holding
Aman Ayşe’m yaman Ayşe’m	Oh my Ayse, brave my Ayse
Dağlar başı duman Ayşem	Mist on mountain, my Ayse.

There is the death theme and separation theme in both of these two folk songs

Conclusion:

Ballads and türküler can be both written and oral. They had been anonymous until the written works seemed. After 14th and 15th centuries (especially by popular asiklar-minstrels) they took place as written works in Popular Literature. Both these two terms have a lot of similar common characteristics as well as their differences. The most significant similarities and differences can be classified in this way:

Similarities of Ballads and Türküler:

1. The first samples of both of these two terms seem in about eleventh-twelfth centuries.
2. The first samples generally are including either religious or heroic characteristics as a result of the Middle Age’s social and political structure.
3. They had been anonymous until printing was invented. We can give the ballads such as “The Tree Ravens,” “Crow Song,” “Spring Field Mountain,” “Lord Randal,” “Bonnie Barbara Allen” as examples of anonymous ballads; “Yemen Türküsü,” “Karanfil,” “Kızılırmak,” “Keklik,” “Kozanoglu Avdan Gelir,” “Mihrali Bey” (Hekimoğlu) of anonymous türküler. In the ballads and türküler with heroic and love subjects persons’ names, or settings’ names the events take place are usually used. For example: the türküler like “Battal Gazi,” “Köroglu,” “Genç Osman,” “Gelin Ayşem,” “Kızılırmak,” “Burası Muştur,” “Yemen”; the ballads like “Lord Randal,” “Edward,” “The Brus,” “Robin Hood,” “Helen of

Kirkcannell,” “Bannockburn,” “The Battle of Otterburn,” “Child Waters” “The Tree Ravens”

4. The subjects mostly are on love, death, heroism. In both of them the most common themes and motives are deer-hunter, sheep-lamb-shepherd, bird, nature, lover, heroism, sorrow, violent and pistol. Especially in türküler the motives ‘horse and pistol’ appears in the türküler of Köroğlu and Karacaoglan; however, in ballads as the pistol the motives ‘arrow and bow’ seems. We can clearly see these in The Ballads of Robin Hood.

5.The languages used have local aspects in both of them as well, simple, clear and understandable.

6.Generally they are sung with music and melody including dancing and playing (halay) innumerable folk songs like epics, ağıt, satires, ironies have reached up to now. The lines of songs can be different, there are no strict rules. They can have two, three, four or more lines. But most of them are written by four lines. Shortly rhyme has the great importance in these two folk songs.

7.There are a lot of tunes of anonymous kinds in both of them, such as “Robin Hood” and “Köroğlu” 8.Simple measures such as 2/4, 4/4 and 3/4, disorganized measures such as 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 7/4 and 5/4 and mixed measures such as 8/8, 10/8 and 12/8 are used in the folk music as rhythm models.

9.Melodies in various types and forms created by folk poets or the other people. “Asıklar” (Bards-Minstrels), “Saz Sairleri” (Instrumental Poets) playing instruments and singing melodies, reading poetry have a great contribution in the formation and spread of Turkish Folk Music and English Folk Music.

Differences of Ballads and Türküler:

1.Ballads are more epic and legendary than türküler. Dialogs are used in many ballads. In most of the ballads such as “The Wife of Usher’s well,” “Lord Randal,” “Robin Hood,” “The Brus,” dialogs appear. On the other side in the türküler like “Köroğlu,” “Genç Osman,” “Battal Gazi Destani,” “Dagistanli Hasan Bey,” “Öksüz Vezir Hikayesi” we also see dialogs. Minstrels (bards) name this kind “deme.”

2. While The Folk Ozans (Bards) usually use their names called “mahlas” in the last line in türküler, this situation does not seem in ballads.

3. The anonymous ballads have been kept by writing in diaries and manuscripts. In the anonymous türküler, however, this is not done. But saz poets (asik-ministrel-bard) have protected the türküler written in the notebooks named ‘cönkler, sığır dili, suparalar,’ or manuscript notebooks. That is, ballads have mostly been kept in the kinds of manuscripts called diaries, however, türküler in the kind of manuscripts named ‘cönk’.

Ballads and Türküler, the folkloric products of several cultures, are oral and written literature genres, coming to our day in different tunes or versions for many centuries. They will surely pass from generation to generation in the coming days as in the past as well.

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