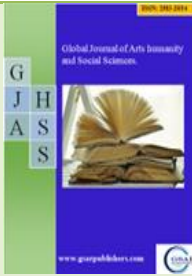




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FOLKLORE ELEMENTS AMONG THE AHISKA TURKS OF THE ARTVİN REGION

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Abstract

The study is based on identifying the socio-cultural structures of the Ahiska Turks, who have lived in the Artvin region within the borders of Turkey for about a century, and revealing the elements of folklore that have survived to the present day. The general aim of the study is to pioneer efforts to identify and preserve the elements of folklore of the Ahiska Turks, who came to Artvin as exiles within the Turkish cultural structure. The method chosen for the study was field research, involving direct communication with individuals. Thirty elderly individuals living in the region were identified as sources of information. Elderly individuals were specifically chosen as sources in order to obtain more reliable information. The number of individuals was limited to ten from each district. The folklore elements observed and collected included religion, language, health, cuisine, beliefs, children's games, folk songs, ballads, and changes in these areas. This study, which collected the folklore elements of the Ahiska Turks in the Artvin region, revealed that sociocultural elements are passed down from generation to generation. It was determined that verbal and nonverbal cultural elements passed down from older to younger generations are consciously transmitted by older individuals, thereby preserving their culture. The Ahiska Turks, who owe their identity to their culture, demonstrate and practice folklore elements through learning by doing and living.

Keywords: Folklore Elements, Ahiska Turks, Ethnic Origin, Culture

INTRODUCTION

Folklore elements reveal a great deal about what a society has experienced in its past and helps us understand its present. Folklore, which has accumulated over the years, is defined as “a science that deals with the cultural products of a country or a specific region in the material and spiritual spheres, compiling, classifying, analysing, interpreting them with its own unique methods, and ultimately aiming to synthesise them” (Örnek, 2014). Folklore products, which can be material or immaterial, have been passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition and various practices to the present day. Folklore encompasses a wide range of elements, including folk songs, lullabies, riddles, culinary culture, music, folk medicine, beliefs, and language.

The regions of Yusufeli, Ardanuç and Şavşat, which are the subject of this study, are areas where Ahiska Turks generally live. With the Moscow Treaty of 16 March 1921, the majority of the Ahiska Turks remained within the borders of Georgia, while other Ahiska Turks were dispersed to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Siberia and the North Caucasus Republics, and Turkey.

The study is based on identifying the sociocultural structures of the Ahiska Turks, who have lived in the Artvin region within the borders of Turkey for approximately a century, and revealing the elements of folklore that have survived to the present day.

The overall aim of the study is to pioneer work aimed at identifying and preserving the folklore elements of the Ahiska Turks who came to Artvin as exiles within the Turkish cultural structure. For this purpose, the method chosen for the study was field research, involving direct communication with individuals. Informants were identified by locating elderly people living in the region and consulting their knowledge. The elderly were specifically chosen as sources in order to obtain more reliable information. The folklore elements observed and collected included religion, language, health, cuisine, beliefs, children's games, folk songs, ballads and changes in these areas. The study involved first conducting a source search and then interviewing Ahiska citizens living in the districts in question.



Culture and Cultural Change

The concept of culture is explained in the Turkish Dictionary as follows: "The entirety of all material and spiritual values created within the historical and social development process, along with the tools used to create and transmit these to subsequent generations, demonstrating the extent of human mastery over their natural and social environment, customs, traditions." (2005). William Haviland, Harald Prins, Dana Walrath and Bunny McBride define culture as follows: "Culture produces behaviours that are shared and understood by the members of a society. Cultures are not biologically inherited from our ancestors; culture is learned, and all the different parts of culture function in an integrated manner." (2010). The purpose of culture is to shape language, religion, music, architecture, health and, above all, people, bringing them to the highest, most beautiful and most refined point possible (Kaplan, 1976). According to Zeynep Aksoy, culture can be described as "a way of life that people learn, share and try to construct meaning within a particular society. In fact, the concept of culture generally refers to spiritual culture. Spiritual culture is the traditions, collective behaviours, social rules, value judgements and mentality that distinguish one community, people or nation from another" (2012). The elements of material and spiritual culture are elements that reflect the society in which they are formed, contain characteristics specific to that society, and take centuries to change.

One aspect and characteristic of the concept of culture that bears no resemblance to geographical maps is the issue of its boundaries, or rather the uncertainty surrounding them. While boundaries are fundamental to geographical maps, they are not particularly clear-cut in cultural maps. At the very least, the boundaries of the concept do not coincide with the political boundaries of the nation. There is a dual and traditional distinction between Eastern and Western cultures. However, the boundaries of this division are not clear-cut. The Middle East, Mediterranean and Islamic cultures are intertwined cultural areas (Güvenç, 1984). According to Edward B. Tylor, culture is: "A complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Soysal, 1985). Culture that has been accepted by people and has survived to the present day is called universal culture, while in a world that has developed and transformed with industrialisation, a distinction has been made between national culture and the concept of nation. Ziya Gökalp's view on this subject is as follows: "Culture is merely the harmonious sum of a nation's way of life in terms of religion, morality, law, reason, aesthetics, language, economics, philosophy and science; civilisation is the common sum of the social life of many nations at the same level of development" (1997). Culture, which is the cornerstone of a nation, distinguishes it from other cultures. Many data about a society can be obtained from the cultural elements belonging to that society.

In the world we live in, almost everything is subject to change and transformation. Humanity has also been affected by this change, sometimes playing the role of the affected and sometimes that of the influencer. Thus, psychologically, sociologically, and

biologically, humans have strived to position themselves adequately in every situation (Çevik, 2014). As a result of their struggle with nature, humans produced their first artefacts in the form of cave paintings and tools. As the world order developed, humankind also changed, and the way they understood and described the world evolved in a different direction. Each society produced products with its own unique characteristics, and thus different cultures came into being (Ersoy, 2012). Culture has taken on the role of a guide for people, providing solutions to their problems and offering them the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts. Culture, which maintains balance within society, also regulates people's lives. Culture changes as the environment and conditions change (Haviland et al., 2010). This change is seen in some cultural elements, while some cultural characteristics are resistant to change. Cultural elements that undergo change without disrupting the main structure are present.

Where society changes, it is impossible for culture to remain the same. It is inevitable that the cultural products of a society that does not have a static structure will also change and transform over time. To a greater or lesser extent, every society experiences this change and transformation (Özdemir, 2001). This change does not occur at the same speed and time in every society. In some societies, cultural change is seen very quickly, while in others, it takes years to realise that change has occurred. Along with the changing culture, people establish new rules, values and meanings (Okumuş, 2003; Ertürk & Sivritepe 2017). The more open a society is to change, the more its cultural characteristics undergo change.

In A.K.C. Ottoway's book "Social Forces – Cultural Change and Education", translated by Mahmut Tezcan, it is stated that culture changes in accordance with needs. "All people, first and foremost, act out of a desire to satisfy their needs; this is the driving force behind both individual and social activity. Needs can be egoistic, altruistic, material, physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. As culture changes, new needs are met." (Ottoway & Tezcan, 2012). As a social being, humans undergo constant change throughout their lives. Throughout their lives, humans modify the traditions and customs inherited from their ancestors to suit current conditions and pass them on to the next generation in their new form. Each generation changes culture in proportion to its own needs.

The influence of cultures on each other is related to their geographical proximity, but in today's world, they are also influenced through the virtual world. The cultural interaction resulting from this geographical proximity means that the influence of cultures on each other is related to the dominant culture. Whichever community's culture is dominant, other cultures will be influenced by it to a greater or lesser extent. In this situation, where forced change is likely, the newly formed cultural elements will be incorporated into society. These new elements, which may carry traces of the past, will continue to exist until they are influenced by a different and dominant culture.

Culture among the Ahıska Turks

The Ahıska Turks, who live in Ardahan, Artvin, Şavşat, İspir, Ardanuç, Yusufeli, Oltu, Narman, Posof, Çıldır, and Göle in Turkey, are those who remained on Turkish soil when the Turkish-Russian border was drawn. The citizens living in these lands, with Ahıska as the capital of the Çıldır Province, have continued their lives on Turkish soil as a reminder of the Ottoman Empire (Kurt, 2018). Located in a buffer zone between the Turkic Republics and Anatolia, the Ahıska Turks experience statelessness within their homeland.

In addition to being the capital, Ahıska has also been a centre of science, art and culture. The Ahıska region, renowned for its madrasas during the Ottoman Empire, produced many scholars. In addition, soldiers, beylerbeys, governors and admirals also grew up in the same region and rose to important positions in the Ottoman Empire (Zeyrek, 2006). The presence of scholars and men of science demonstrates how knowledgeable the people of Ahıska were in education, teaching, and religious sciences. Both during the Ottoman period and the Republic of Turkey period, the people of Ahıska have been satisfied with the necessary interest and attention they have received.

The tradition of minstrelsy in the Ahıska region has developed as it has in Anatolia, and the works of artists raised within this tradition have survived to the present day. These poets include: "İrfanî, Gülalî, Hasta Hasan, Cevri, Çerkezoğlu, Çirkinî, Emrah, Garip, İsmail, Korhan, Nihanî, Şehrî, Sefilî, and others whose names and sayings have survived to this day, alongside Posoflu Fakirî, Zülalî, and Çıldırî Şenlik, who are some of these minstrels." (Zeyrek, 2006). The minstrels, who were the voice of the people, tried to express and publicise the experiences of the Ahıska people, seeking to alleviate their suffering to some extent.

For the Ahıska people, who are engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, kinship relations are important. Communicating in the Eastern Anatolian dialect of Turkey in their daily lives, the Ahıska Turks have maintained their traditions and customs and brought them to the present day thanks to their strong social lifestyle (Avcı, 2012). The Ahıska Turks, who embraced Islam, strongly preserve their traditional family structure and culture. Living a secluded life, the Ahıska people have prevented the deterioration of their traditions and customs. "Marrying within their own community, living together rather than scattered, not speaking any language other than Turkish within the family, practising and preserving their religion despite all kinds of pressure, stems from this awareness. However, intercultural interaction has been inevitable. Just as in their language, the Ahıska people's traditional cuisine and clothing have also changed according to the countries they live in." (Ersöz, 2016; Devrisheva, 2018). As a result of exile, the people who ended up in different lands have changed their own culture because they could not resist the dominant culture. As a result, changes occurred in everything from their clothing to their weddings, and from their food to their games.

Respect for elders is one of the most important characteristics of the Ahıska Turks. This ensures continuity within the family and

enables them to live in solidarity. By establishing a constant mechanism of control over the young, the elders ensure that their traditions continue. The Ahıska people, a community that faced exile, understood the importance of solidarity within the family, and this solidarity facilitated their organisation (Devrisheva, 2018). The Ahıska Turks, who were geographically dispersed to different countries, tried to overcome their exile and experiences by remaining closely connected to each other wherever they went.

Although women have a say, in Ahıska families the final word always rests with the man of the house. The word of the eldest male organises the affairs of the family, and no one goes against his word. When an unmarried man in the household marries, he generally continues to live with his parents, and the bride is obliged to look after the elderly members of the household. When there are elderly people in the house, it is considered inappropriate to sit with one's legs crossed or stretched out, and the young people of the house do not go to sleep before the elderly. When the eldest member of the household arrives home, the other members of the household stand up to show their respect. Food is first offered to the oldest man and then served to the others. The oldest person in the household always sits at the head of the table. As with the men, the oldest woman in the household decides what food will be cooked and what work will be done, and the bride and daughters carry this out without question. Although men appear to take more charge of the household, women are treated with respect and are given a say in important decisions. The term "elkızı" used for brides is now becoming obsolete. Although not very common, in some families the bride washes her mother-in-law's feet. (Yüzbey, 2008). The mother-in-law, seen as the head of the household, is held in high esteem, and her decisions are carried out without question.

Çalışmanın Amacı

Toplumsal olayların kültürü etkilediği düşünüldüğünde bu etkinin ne derece olduğu veya olmadığı sorgulanmaktadır. Göç ve sürgün ile yerlerinden edilen her halk gibi Ahıska Türkleri de yerlerinden edilerek yeni yaşam yerlerinde hayat mücadelesi vermiştir. Coğrafyaya ve topluma uyum sağlama sorunlarının yanı sıra kültürün sürekliliğini sağlama gibi sorunlarla da başa çıkmaya çalışmışlardır. Bu çalışmada somut ve soyut kültürel unsurlar Artvin bölgesindeki Ahıska halkı özelinde incelenmiştir. Sözlü aktarım ile halkbilimi unsurlarının ne derece kalıcı olabileceği bu çalışma ile gösterilmek istenmiştir.

Çalışmanın Yöntemi

Çalışmanın yöntemi alan araştırmasına dayanmaktadır. Artvin bölgesinde çalışma sahası olarak Ardanuç, Şavşat ve Yusufeli ilçeleri seçilmiştir. Bu ilçelerde yaşamlarını sürdüren Ahıska Türklerinden otuz kişi ile görüşerek halkbilimi unsurları derlenmiştir. Elde edilen veriler "din, dil, sağlık, mutfak, inanışlar, çocuk oyunları, mâni, türkü" başlıkları ile verilmiş ve kaynak kişilere verilen numaralar parantez içerisinde belirtilmiştir. Bilgisine başvuru alan kişiler genelde yaşlı kişilerdir. Bunda amaç bilgilerin daha sağlam olmasını sağlamaktır.



Sonuç

Ahıska Türkleri dil, din, örf ve adetlerini gittikleri her ülkede başarılı bir şekilde yaşatmışlardır. Şavşat, Ardanuç ve Yusufeli özelinde Ahıska Türkleri yöre halkından bağımsız kültürel unsurlarını sürdürmeyi başarmıştır. Derlenen halk bilimi unsurları; halk hekimliği uygulamaları, halk inancı, mâni ve türküler, çocuk oyunları, halk mutfağı ve yörede Ahıska Türkleri tarafından sıkça kullanılan kelimeleri içermektedir. Kendilerine özgü bir yaşam biçimi olan bu halkın kültürlerini devam ettirmek adına sıkı önlemler aldıkları görülmüştür. Bunun dışında somut olmayan kültürel miras unsurlarının hemen hepsini yörede yaşamlarını sürdüren Ahıska Türklerinde görmek mümkündür.

Elements of Folklore among the Ahıska Turks of Ardanuç, Şavşat and Yusufeli

Due to the fact that the Ahıska Turks live in different geographical locations, their population figures are uncertain. "As the deportation took place during the Second World War, the men of the Ahıska Turks fought against the Germans. As some were killed in action and others were taken prisoner, their exact number is unknown." (Özder, 2017). Furthermore, it is highly probable that after the war ended, some were unable to find their families upon returning to their homeland, while others settled elsewhere and started new lives. According to interviews conducted during fieldwork, those who could not find their families may have died in the war, in captivity, or while searching for their families. Some members of these families still believe that their relatives who went to war may be alive. Consequently, the Ahıska Turks, a community of unknown numbers exiled to various places, are scattered across different provinces in Turkey. In Artvin specifically, the Ahıska Turks are mostly concentrated in the districts of Ardanuç, Şavşat and Yusufeli.

The Ahıska community has preserved its cultural characteristics to this day. The changes in material and spiritual values during and after the exile were adjustments to circumstances and do not imply a change in the core themes of these values. The fundamental structure has always resisted change. This has been ensured by the attitudes and behaviours of the older generation of Ahıska Turks.

Practices related to public health, folk beliefs, folk songs and ballads, children's games, folk cuisine and common words obtained from the Ahıska Turks living in the districts of Ardanuç, Şavşat and Yusufeli are presented based on information from key informants.

Public Health

Traditional folk medicine is practised by today's healers and herbalists, who are the descendants of the shamans of old. These individuals use various herbs that grow in the region or animal parts found locally to heal patients. The practices have been acquired through oral transmission. The bond between the practitioner and the teacher generally progresses through the method of passing on the craft. Individuals interested in the subject who have seen such practices from their elders learn the details of the procedures by standing beside the master teacher and, when

their turn comes, perform the procedure flawlessly as someone trained in the craft.

The Ahıska Turks, who were exiled and relocated, healed their wounds and treated their fractures using traditional folk medicine practices, and calmed their spirits with religious incantations. Based on information obtained from Ahıska Turks living in the region, it has been observed that they are highly knowledgeable about folk medicine. The treatments obtained using various prayers, fruit, vegetable and animal parts are listed below:

Nettle: Used to relieve heartburn and stomach pain. It is generally consumed fresh and used in soups (Informant-11).

Cabbage Leaf: The leaves are placed on wounds to treat them. Mothers who wish to stop breastfeeding lie down with cabbage leaves wrapped around their breasts. After one day, the milk is observed to have dried up. In addition, it is boiled, the water is placed in a container, and the paralysed person is placed in it. When the water loses its heat, the person is removed from the water (Informant-5).

Mayasıl Herb: Used for the treatment of haemorrhoids (Informant-26).

Onion: The core of an onion roasted over coals is used to remove splinters from the hands and feet, treat nail infections, and treat bruises (Informant-6).

Potato: Sliced and placed in a cloth, it is applied to the affected area for headaches or eye pain to relieve discomfort (Informant-1).

Thyme: Mountain thyme is collected, either fresh or dried, and brewed as tea. This tea is believed to be good for all ailments (Informant-1).

Cherry stems: Dried cherry stems are brewed as tea and drunk. This tea, also used for weight loss, is also used to relieve sore throats and coughs (Informant-13).

Walnut: Crushed walnut is used to treat bruising caused by sprains or contusions of the foot and ankle (Informant-29).

Olive: Used in the treatment of sprains of the foot and ankle. The olive pit is crushed in a mortar, wrapped around the sprained area, and left overnight before treatment is completed (Informant-7).

Gavut Soup: Known as a soup for the sick. The soup, made from flour produced by roasting and grinding seven grains, brings healing to patients (Informant-17).

Three-Leaf Herb: It is used to stop bleeding from cuts. The herb is chewed in the mouth, pressed onto the wound, and left to stop the bleeding (Informant-9).

Vinegar: It is used to relieve headaches and treat sunstroke. In addition, for ingrown toenails, vinegar is poured into warm water, and the affected foot is soaked in that water for about half an hour to draw out the inflammation (Informant-3, 15, 25).

Tea leaves: Tea leaves are placed on a cloth and applied to the sore eye (Informant-4).



Milk: A couple of drops of milk are dripped into the eye to remove dust particles (Informant-19).

Pear: Used to treat diarrhoea (Informant-6).

Coffee: It is consumed dry to relieve diarrhoea. In addition, if a person suspects they have been affected by the evil eye, a cup of coffee is made and drunk, and if an eye shape appears under the cup, the coffee grounds are eaten accompanied by various prayers (Informant-27).

Raw meat: Used in the treatment of bruises and sprains. Raw meat is applied to the bruised or sprained area (Informant-1).

Red-spotted trout: The fish is tied to the herniated area and left there. In addition, red-spotted trout fry are swallowed alive to seek a cure for internal diseases and eye treatments (Informant-7).

Animal bone: In eye diseases of cows or other animals, the bone is ground into powder and applied to the eye. It is also used as a splint to keep fractures stable (Informant-13).

Folk Beliefs

Folk beliefs shape people's lives; they provide comfort in areas such as fear, healing, anxiety and trust, enabling individuals to continue living their lives more peacefully. As a result of certain beliefs considered superstitions, individuals may reach the point of losing themselves. In such cases, folk beliefs come into play, and practices and statements aimed at eliminating the problem in question are carried out. Prayers and practices performed among the Ahiska Turks for certain illnesses and situations are as follows: Demravi: For the healing of eczema that appears as oval patches anywhere on the body, one should go to someone knowledgeable and have them recite the 'Ayetel Kürsi'. Accompanied by prayer, the area around the wound is traced with a needle or pen. Sometimes, the person performing the ritual runs the needle between their teeth and rubs the tooth residue onto the wound (Informant-18, 29).

Cazi: A tailed creature believed to afflict women who have recently given birth. The belief in the cazi, also called 'poçikli, kuyruklu' (tailed, with a tail), is widespread in the district of Yusufeli (Informant-9).

Uylak: Derived from the verb 'uylamak,' this word represents imaginary beings that address people by name at night. These beings can appear to humans in the form of dogs, goats, cats, etc. (Informant-11).

Tying the wolf's mouth: People who have left animals outside close the knife and recite prayers. It is believed that the wolf's mouth is tied by means of the closed knife (Informant-13).

Koncoloz: Imaginary creatures believed to haunt women who have recently given birth and their babies. It is believed that these creatures rip out babies' lungs, which is why newborn babies are never left alone (Informant-9, 12, 14, 25).

Other folk beliefs:

- It is believed that young girls who ride donkeys will not

have children. This is associated with the donkey being barren (Informant-10, 16, 17).

- When a shooting star is seen, it is predicted that someone from that village will die (Informant-15, 18, 29).
- It is believed that the first April rains make one's hair and body grow. For this reason, people walk around with their heads uncovered in the April rain (Informant-6, 12, 20).
- Sitting on the threshold of a house is considered unlucky (Informant-1, 2, 3).
- Teenage girls and young women drinking coffee is frowned upon because it is believed that girls who drink coffee will not have children (Informant-13, 21, 22).
- Crossing one's arms at chest level is also considered unlucky. It is believed that those who do so will cause their mother and father to die (Informant-6, 7).
- Hot water should not be thrown at the door at night. It is believed that three-lettered creatures may come upon it (Informant-15, 16, 17).
- It is believed that if crows circle around the house, bad news will come, but if magpies circle, good news will come (Informant-23, 24, 25).
- Pointing at graves in a cemetery is perceived as summoning evil spirits (Informant-1, 2, 5).
- The need to fear the spring months is expressed in the following quatrain:

"Fear not the winter's frost,
 Fear April's fifth day,
 The ox is separated from its mate,
 The raven is fed from the carcass" (Informant-1, 12, 13)

- Itching of the right hand signifies money coming, while itching of the left hand signifies money going (Informant-26, 27, 28).
- When someone has the hiccups, it is believed that others are talking about them (Informant-20, 26, 29).
- Knives or scissors should not be passed from hand to hand. If this happens, it is believed that a fight will break out (Informant-30).

Manis

Manis, which are part of the intangible cultural heritage embedded in the public memory, convey their intended meaning in a single quatrain and therefore contain a dense narrative. Manis, chosen for their short but effective expression of feelings and thoughts, are also a common form among the Ahiska Turks. The following manis were obtained from the Ahiska Turks in the Artvin region:

"I have a mat in the orchard
 I have corn on it
 You Armenian girl
 I have no fault." (Informant-12, 14).

"My dress is swaying
 Swaying and shaking
 If you take it, take it beautifully
 It will be sweet with love." (Informant-17, 23).

“The stream is coming, the stream
 Spreading its sand
 Take me away
 To where tomorrow lies.” (Informant-26).

“Carnation buds
 I don't like buds
 My beloved is dressed up
 I am the buttons.” (Informant-10, 18, 29).

“I weep like tears
 My sorrow is like mountains
 I have become a gazelle, I have been shed
 Like ruined vineyards.” (Informant-18, 19).

“I sliced the watermelon
 I frayed the handkerchief
 I thought my beloved was in my bosom
 I embraced the quilt.” (Informant-19, 27).

“Look at the foot of the sock
 Look at the tied knot
 When you think of me
 Look at Mount Hargüvar.” (Informant-25, 26, 29).

“Tell my mother to get up
 Let her ride the horse and come quickly
 My soul has departed, my face is covered
 What else could possibly happen to me?” (Informant-8, 14, 16).

“In my mother's arms,
 I would have stayed in the deserts
 I would have been double bracelets
 In my beloved's arms.” (Informant-24, 27).

“I planted the garden with my own hands
 They flooded it with water
 I would not leave the garden
 They separated me with force.” (Informant-19, 30).

“This stream is long
 I couldn't cross it
 I took the girl from Ahıska
 I couldn't bear her coquetry.” (Informant-23, 24, 25).

“I went out and pruned the pine tree,
 I cut down half of it.
 Give me my beloved,
 So I won't look at another.” (Informant-10, 11).

“The sheep graze on the mountain
 My father is honoured
 Thanks to my father
 The girls adore me.” (Informant-5, 6).

“The brother-in-law has arrived, what shall we do?
 Let us make some kuymak in the pan.
 The cushion is full of dust mites,
 Let him sleep on the straw mattress.” (Informant-7, 12, 18).

To understand the historical heritage of the Ahıska Turks, their traditions and customs, how they experience social events, their superstitions, and much more, one need only look at their folk songs. When folk songs are considered as a repository of memory among the Ahıska Turks of Artvin, it is evident that they have chosen to express their sorrows and joys through folk songs. Generally singing their folk songs to a cheerful rhythm, the Ahıska Turks of Artvin have preferred weddings, celebrations, and leisure time as venues for their performances. The following folk songs belonging to the Ahıska Turks were collected from the region:

“Crush him, crush him, boy,
 The boy wandering in the meadow,
 From the needle's star,
 The boy who glances at the girl.”

“Crush him, crush him, boy,
 The boy with the moustache,
 My father won't give you a girl,
 Go earn some money, boy.” (Informant-23, 24).

“I went to that side
 The waters had dried up
 The infidel's son
 Was as yellow as silver.”

“Oh my hazelnut, my hazelnut
 I climbed your branches
 Where were you last night?
 Oh, I'll bite your mouth.” (Informant-13, 24).

“In one village there was an old woman
 They called her Neciya Bibi
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

She wore a peştamal and wrapped a sash around her waist
 She chopped wood like a man
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

She mowed the meadow with a scythe in her hand
 And occasionally she would smoke a pipe
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

She went up to the barn and lit the lamp
 She stayed on the road until morning
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

If there was trouble, she would find it
 All sorts of things would happen to her
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh
 The barn burned, the hay burned
 Neciya Bibi went mad
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

The fox took the chickens
 Neciya Bibi sat down in the ashes
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

The cow didn't give milk, it was angry
 It kicked the hay, it didn't eat
 Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh.

Examples of Folk Songs



She drank the ayran, she spilled the milk
Neciya Bibi was bewildered
Neciya Bibi oh oh, Neciya Bibi oh oh". (Informant-16, 20, 22, 30).

Children's Games

Children's games, which enable children to have fun, bear traces of the culture in which they originated. Passed down from generation to generation, these games provide information about the region in terms of the materials used and the words spoken. Children's games frequently played by the Ahiska Turks in the Artvin region have been learned from older individuals, and there have also been observations of these games being played in the field. The compiled children's games are listed below:

Foot Counting Game:

Four or five children sit on the ground and stretch out their feet. One person touches each foot with their hand on every syllable of the rhyme. The owner of the foot corresponding to the last syllable withdraws their foot from the game. The rhyme goes like this:

I spoke of the chimney, the mischievous eye
One is blue, one is grey
I climbed onto the grey one's neck
I went to the road to Aleppo
The road to Aleppo ends at the market
A monkey walks around inside
The monkey saw me
It dangled its ears
Shake this one
Pull this one. (Informant-5, 7, 15, 26).

Saymaca:

Before starting any game, the palms of the hands are held flat on the ground. The person leading the game recites a rhyme, touching one hand with each syllable. At the last syllable, whichever hand is touched is pulled back, and the game continues. The rhyme goes as follows:

"My hand, my hand, my little hand
The cap that fell from my hand
Half of the cap
Is Keloğlan's wife
Sallum sullum
Pull this and that." (Informant-3, 9, 11, 28).

Handkerchief Tag:

This is a game played by children sitting in a circle, with someone running around behind them. At the last syllable of the rhyme, the handkerchief in the runner's hand is placed behind someone's back. The person who notices the handkerchief picks it up and tries to catch the other person. The rhyme used in the game goes like this:

"Oooooo, the needle pricked, did it hurt?
The plump bird runs to the car
The car's wheel is Istanbul's sugar
Pull, my friend, pull
Pull your car off the road
Pull, pull, uncle, your nose is hooked

Here's a gun for you
There are five bullets in the gun: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5." (Informant-14, 19, 29, 30).

Five Stones:

A game played by hand with stones of equal size collected from riverbanks or the banks of the Çoruh River (Informant-2, 6, 7).

Sobe:

A type of hide-and-seek game. (Informant-1, 9, 10, 16, 19, 20).

Birdirbir:

A game similar to the long donkey game. (Informant-24, 29, 30).

Gıcibici:

This is a game played by hiding something in one's hand, placing the hands behind the back, passing the object from one hand to the other, and guessing which hand the object is in. The words spoken in the game are as follows:

"Gıcibici gıcibici
Which one?" (Informant-18, 23, 27).

Words Used in the Region

One of the factors that determine a people's identity is their language. The Ahiska people, who were exiled from their homeland, have managed to preserve their language to this day. Adapting their geography to their language, the Ahiska Turks living in the Artvin region have developed a language unique to themselves. Words that a foreigner visiting the region would find difficult to understand are everyday words for them. As these frequently used words are known to the source persons, no source person number has been provided. These words are as follows:

Afkurma/Hafkurma: To bark.

Ağarti: General name for dairy products.

Ağos: Digging the soil in lines when planting a vegetable garden.

Ahorik: A perforated device tied to a donkey's mouth to prevent it from eating grass.

Anurli/Aburli: Honourable.

Avli: Entrance to the house.

Ayvan: Balcony.

Chimney: Roof

Bayah: Just now, a moment ago.

Bedevre: Thin wood used in house construction instead of hair and tiles.

Bıldır: Last year.

Bihçi: Saw.

Bırği: A tool used to drill holes in wood.

Bico: Slang interjection.

Bibi: Auntie.



Bonduruh: The wooden beam to which the plough is attached when ploughing.

Borbadik: The scarecrow that children carry from door to door when praying for rain.

Buğarsahğ: The bull attached to the cow to be mated.

Bürde: Refers to rice grass.

Cakum: A type of grass that grows on the trunks of pine trees.

Cancik: The iron at the end of the central pole that turns the millstone in mills.

Cazgır: Used for people who cause a disturbance.

Cıncık: Ornament

Cıncıl: Weak

Cilit: A type of grass placed inside the saddle.

Cor: Refers to the accumulation of animal excrement in the form of a water pond.

Çapar: Fence

Çapan: To make things difficult.

Çırpi: A type of bush.

Çöpük: A type of basket woven from bushes.

Dayağ: A wooden pole placed under places that are collapsing.

Degek: Grape leaf.

Dıpcık: A kick given by an animal.

Dişger: Wooden gate of the garden.

Donguz: Pig.

Düngür: The relative position of the bride's and groom's families to each other.

Egiş: Iron tool used to remove bread from the oven, with one end flat and the other hooked.

Encemi: Probably means "in the end".

Evlek: Refers to rows of grapes.

Evlevi: Purple plum.

Gandırıf: A leather rope is wrapped around the centre of the wooden beam to which the plough is attached. This is the name of the leather.

Gavar: A channel dug to change the direction of water flow.

Gocor: An open area fenced in with a fence or stone wall for small livestock.

Gostik: The leftover part of corn.

Görüm: Sister-in-law.

Gussa: Sorrow.

Gursak: Throat.

Hapahap: Immediately, suddenly.

Hasut: Jealousy.

Hızan: Land where grass does not grow.

Hoçcik: Corn silk.

Hoçul: Piece of stick.

Honça: Wooden stool.

Horum: Grass rolled up using a special technique.

İskembe: Chair.

İstikan: Small tea cup used in coffee houses.

İşmar: Eyebrow, eye gesture.

Karzevel: Wood stuck in the plough's furrow.

Kartul: Potato.

Kem: Thick rope made from rice straw.

Kolomkoç: The tangled state of a rolling object.

Komzak: The wooden frame of a donkey's saddle.

Kurun: Bowl from which animals drink water.

Las: Pieces of grass gathered together.

Laydan: A tool used to make rope from grass.

Lazut: Corn.

Leçek: A woman's headscarf.

Lobiya/löbiya: Bean.

Mac: The name of the handle held on the plough.

Mayasil: A type of eczema.

Meni: Obstacle.

Merek: A wooden hayrack where grass is stored.

Mesel: Fairy tale.

Müsürük: A place where grass is placed in front of animals.

Nahır: A herd of cows.

Patat: A flat tool filled with cloth used to knock bread into the oven.

Peşgun: A wooden floor table.

Pipila/ pirpita: Butterfly.

Sahavel: A broom made from brushwood.

Sasav: A hut made from brushwood with stone walls, found in vineyards and gardens.

Savicah: A piece of wood used to divert the flow of water.

Suhariç: Roasting onions.

Şilta: Cover for a quilt or mattress.

Şose: Road.

Terek: Wooden shelf for storing plates.

Tump: Edges of fields or rice paddies.

Yanbegi: Sideways.

Yenişmah: To prevail in wrestling or an argument.

Yerişmah: The ripening of fruit.

Yonga: Wood chips left over from the wood-chopping process.

Yunti/yal: Food cooked for animals to eat.

Zam: Wood shaped like a "U" and placed around the necks of large animals to tie them up.

Zukgum: An insult meaning "may what you eat stick in your throat".

Folk Cuisine

Just as one looks at how a society speaks, dresses and behaves in sociocultural terms, one should also look at its food culture (Türkan; Çiloğlu, 2020). The Ahiska people took their traditions and customs with them wherever they went and kept them alive for generations by practising them. Adapting their own cultural eating habits to the Artvin region, the Ahiska Turks showcased their culinary culture with ingredients such as spices, herbs and flour. The dishes specific to the Ahiska culture consumed in the region have been explained by the informants as follows:

Nettle Soup/Cincar Soup: Freshly picked nettles are chopped and boiled. A roux made from flour and eggs is added to prepare the soup.

Milk Soup: Milk and water are placed in a saucepan and brought to the boil. Rice and salt are added to the boiling milk.

Gavut/Kavut Soup: Kavut flour is roasted in butter. Cold water is added and the dough is beaten with a whisk until smooth. Salt is added to the soup as it begins to boil, then it is removed from the heat.

Gendime Soup: Gendime, made specially from wheat, is placed in a pot with bones and water is added. Milk and salt are added to the soup when it begins to boil, then it is removed from the heat.

Ayran/ Yoghurt Soup: It is the same as yayla soup.

Turnip Soup: Chopped turnips are added to half a pot of boiling water and cooked. While the turnips are cooking, a mixture of yoghurt, flour and salt is prepared and added to the pot. After boiling for a couple of minutes, the soup is removed from the heat.

Kesme Soup: The dough is rolled out and cut into thin strips, then dried. These dried noodles are added to boiling water and cooked. While the soup is boiling, flour and butter are added. The cooked soup is removed from the heat.

Kuymak: Cottage cheese is added to melted butter in a pan. Once the cottage cheese has melted, an egg is cracked on top and cooked. It is usually eaten for breakfast.

Boran: Purslane, known locally as pımpir, is boiled. The boiled pımpir is mixed with yoghurt.

Kaysefe: Dried apricots are boiled. Ground walnuts are mixed with powdered sugar and spread on the bottom of a small tray. The remaining walnuts are stuffed into the apricots and arranged on the tray. Walnuts are sprinkled on top again and melted butter is drizzled over them to make them ready to eat.

Hasuta: Butter, molasses, flour and water are placed in a pan and mixed. After the boiling mixture is removed from the heat, one or two tablespoons of flour are stirred in and it is cooked again.

Gopdin/kopdin: Dried mulberries and walnut kernels are ground well in a mortar and eaten.

Kete: A dough similar to bread dough is prepared. Small pieces of dough are rolled out with butter, shaped, and baked in the oven.

Siron/sinor: The rolled-out dough is cooked on a griddle and rolled up. The rolled-up dough is cut into strips two fingers wide with a knife and arranged on a tray. Garlic yoghurt and butter are drizzled over it before serving.

Cadi: This refers to bread made from corn flour.

CONCLUSION

The Ahiska Turks are a people who have been separated from their homeland and scattered across the world. Their exile, which began during the Soviet era, resulted in the deaths of thousands. Today, there are still a significant number of Ahiska Turks who have not returned to their homeland and who live with this longing.

The Ahiska Turks, a unique community, managed to preserve their traditions and customs even during these periods of exile. Undoubtedly, the hierarchical family structure played a major role in this. Cultural elements, both verbal and non-verbal, passed down from older to younger generations, were consciously preserved by the older members of the community, thus safeguarding their culture.

This study, which compiles the folklore elements of the Ahiska Turks in the Artvin region, demonstrates once again that socio-cultural elements are passed down from generation to generation. The Ahiska Turks have successfully preserved their language, religion, customs and traditions in every country they have settled in. Specifically in Şavşat, Ardanuç and Yusufeli, the Ahiska Turks have become one with the local population and have not remained separate. Being of the same ethnicity plays a major role in this. The Ahiska Turks living in Artvin have preserved all elements of folklore, from their folk songs to their beliefs, from their rhymes to their children's games.

The collected folklore elements include folk medicine practices, folk beliefs, rhymes and folk songs, children's games, folk cuisine, and words frequently used by the Ahiska Turks in the region. In

addition, almost all elements of intangible cultural heritage can be seen in the Ahiska Turks living in the region. Ancient knowledge passed down from elders to younger generations within the tradition still survives today. The products were collected to the extent that the memory of the elderly informants allowed, and it was observed that these individuals had difficulty remembering most of the practices they knew. After stating that they owed everything they knew to their elders, the informants recounted what they had learned.

As far as can be seen, the Ahiska Turks, who have adapted their unique cultural characteristics to the districts of Artvin province, are extremely happy living in the region. The interest and affection of the people of Artvin towards their fellow ethnic group continues to grow deeper than it was on the first day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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APPENDIX

Informant Index

Name/Surname	Date of Birth	Profession	Educational Status	Informant Number	Meeting Date/Place
Mehmet TOPÇU	10.05.1953	Farmer	Primary School	1	15.04.2020/Şavşat
Fatma ALTUN	02.12.1951	Housewife	Primary School	2	15.04.2020/Şavşat
Ali TOPÇU	05.06.1949	Shoemaker	Primary School	3	15.04.2020/Şavşat
Yasin İŞÇİ	11.10.1956	Farmer	Primary School	4	16.04.2020/Şavşat
Meliha İŞÇİ	25.09.1954	Housewife	Primary School	5	16.04.2020/Şavşat
Faruk ERİŞTİ	09.10.1950	Restaurateur	Primary School	6	16.04.2020/Şavşat
Hüseyin ALTUN	16.03.1958	Farmer	Primary School	7	16.04.2020/Şavşat
Gülfikar İNCE	29.07.1957	Housewife	Primary School	8	16.04.2020/Şavşat
Hatice DEMİR	11.10.1954	Housewife	Primary School	9	06.04.2020/Şavşat
Vesile TOPÇU	20.04.1950	Housewife	Primary School	10	16.04.2020/Şavşat
Ömer PEHLEVAN	08.10.1947	Farmer	Primary School	11	17.04.2020/Ardanuç
Yusuf AKTI	23.03.1949	Farmer	Primary School	12	17.04.2020/Ardanuç
İsmail ÇİFTÇİ	01.07.1951	Restaurateur	Primary School	13	17.04.2020/Ardanuç
Ramazan DURAL	02.01.1956	Farmer	Primary School	14	17.04.2020/Ardanuç
Leyla KARA	13.09.1956	Housewife	Primary School	15	18.04.2020/Ardanuç
Yılmaz GÜMÜŞ	17.08.1955	Barber	Primary School	16	18.04.2020/Ardanuç
Nurdane ÇİFTÇİ	26.06.1953	Housewife	Primary School	17	18.04.2020/Ardanuç
Sevimgül GENÇ	12.10.1957	Housewife	Primary School	18	18.04.2020/Ardanuç
Ayşe GENÇ	21.08.1946	Housewife	Primary School	19	18.04.2020/Ardanuç

Faik PEHLEVAN	10.05.1945	Farmer	Uneducated	20	18.04.2020/Ardanuç
Dursun KILAVUZ	02.01.1943	Farmer	Primary School	21	19.04.2020/Yusufeli
Şahabettin DEMİR	05.09.1941	Grocer	Primary School	22	19.04.2020/Yusufeli
Dursun POLAT	08.10.1944	Farmer	Primary School	23	19.04.2020/Yusufeli
Halil CESUR	12.01.1946	Farmer	Primary School	24	19.04.2020/Yusufeli
Azime YARALI	19.09.1952	Housewife	Primary School	25	19.04.2020/Yusufeli
Naime USTA	15.06.1943	Housewife	Primary School	26	19.04.2020/Yusufeli
Cevriye PEHLİVAN	06.08.1941	Housewife	Primary School	27	20.04.2020/Yusufeli
Fevzi ASLAN	20.02.1943	Tailor	Primary School	28	20.04.2020/Yusufeli
Yurdagül DEMİRCİ	26.12.1943	Housewife	Uneducated	29	20.04.2020/Yusufeli
Mehmet DEMİRCİ	10.09.1941	Farmer	Uneducated	30	20.04.2020/Yusufeli

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