

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS OF HISTORICAL NOVELS: "IHTIYAR SAVAŞÇI" (THE OLD WARRIOR) BY CENGIZ DAĞCI AND "SULTANMURAD" BY CENGIZ AYTMATOV

Funções educativas de novelas históricas: "Ihtiyar Savaşçi" (O Velho Guerreiro) de Cengiz Dağci e "Sultanmurad" de Cengiz Aytmatov

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ABSTRACT

In its most general sense, a nation is a group of people who live on the same territory and share a common culture and history. In order for people living on a certain territory with defined borders to be called a nation, they must share the same historical memory and a common culture and frame of mind. Several elements that play an active role in the formation of nations are also elements that contribute to the formation of national identities. While personal identity reveals the characteristics of an individual, national identity or cultural identity emerges as a set of characteristics formed by a nation's perceptions, way of thinking, lifestyle, value judgments and rules. Literature is one of the most important cultural elements that establish a society. The artist is both influenced by society and he/she gives it direction. Cultural values are generally conveyed to future generations through novels with historical context; therefore, literary works make colossal contribution to the formation of national identity. In this context, it is seen that especialy novels with historical context serve an important didactic function and should be considered as a complementary element for history courses offered at schools. Novels with historical content tell the stories of people who lived in the past in a fluent style and in detail, through historical events, which is essential in terms of cultural transfer and history teaching. Students prefer learning from a successfully written historical novel in a more vivid and comprehensive manner instead of learning from a textbook with a dry and insipid narrative. "İhtiyar Savaşçı" by Cengiz Dağcı and "Sultanmurad" by Cengiz Aytmatov, which constitute the subject of the study, are among the most important literary works of the Turkish world which display how negativey people are affected by wars. The works, which were examined using the document analysis technique in accordance with the qualitative approach, provided very important data, especially in terms of cultural transfer. In both novels, written in an extremely striking style, the authors conveyed the common cultural values of the Turkish world to the readers, while at the same time underlining the painful events experienced in the Turkestan geography as a result of the brutal policies implemented by the Soviet Union during the Second World War, and pioneered the raising of awareness for some historical facts among the youth.

Keywords: History, Novel, Education, Cengiz Dağcı, Cengiz Aytmatov.

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RESUMO

Em seu sentido mais geral, uma nação é um grupo de pessoas que vivem no mesmo território e compartilham uma cultura e história comuns. Para que as pessoas que vivem em um determinado território com fronteiras definidas sejam chamadas de nação, elas devem compartilhar a mesma memória histórica e uma cultura e estrutura de espírito comuns. Vários elementos que desempenham um papel ativo na formação de nações também são elementos que contribuem para a formação de identidades nacionais. Enquanto a identidade pessoal revela as características de um indivíduo, a identidade nacional ou identidade cultural surge como um conjunto de características formadas pelas percepções, modo de pensar, estilo de vida, julgamentos de valor e regras de uma nação. A literatura é um dos elementos culturais mais importantes que estabelecem uma sociedade. O artista é influenciado pela sociedade e lhe dá direção. Os valores culturais são geralmente transmitidos às gerações futuras por meio de romances com contexto histórico; portanto, as obras literárias fazem uma contribuição colossal para a formação da identidade nacional. Nesse contexto, vê-se que especialmente os romances com contexto histórico desempenham uma função didática importante e devem ser considerados como um elemento complementar para os cursos de história oferecidos nas escolas. Romances com conteúdo histórico contam histórias de pessoas que viveram no passado em um estilo fluente e em detalhes, por meio de eventos históricos, o que é essencial em termos de transferência cultural e ensino de história. Os alunos preferem aprender com um romance histórico escrito com sucesso de uma maneira mais vívida e abrangente em vez de aprender com um livro didático com uma narrativa seca e insípida. "İhtiyar Savaşçı" de Cengiz Dağcı e "Sultanmurad" de Cengiz Aytmatov, que constituem o assunto do estudo, estão entre as obras literárias mais importantes do mundo turco que mostram como as pessoas são afetadas negativamente pelas guerras. As obras, que foram examinadas usando a técnica de análise de documentos de acordo com a abordagem qualitativa, forneceram dados muito importantes, especialmente em termos de transferência cultural. Em ambos os romances, escritos em um estilo extremamente marcante, os autores transmitiram os valores culturais comuns do mundo turco aos leitores, ao mesmo tempo em que sublinhavam os eventos dolorosos vivenciados na geografia do Turquestão como resultado das políticas brutais implementadas pela União Soviética durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial, e foram pioneiros na conscientização sobre alguns fatos históricos entre os jovens.

Palavras-chave: História, Romance, Educação, Cengiz Dağcı, Cengiz Aytmatov.

Introduction

Literature is a branch of art that is in close relationship with history, sociology, philosophy and psychology, accomodating several elements related to these branches of science. Contrary to popular belief, Literary works, which sometimes serve as a source for the science of history with the historical elements they contain, bring the reader closer to reality than the science of history. Based on literary texts written in a certain period of time, the lifestyles of the people living in that period, the cultural structure of the society and the language characteristics of that period can be uncovered. In the relevant novel, through the characters that are handled in a multi-faceted manner, the historical events covered in the period come to life before the eyes of the reader with their different dimensions. A careful



examination of the texts written in the context of the relations between literature and history will reveal that some social events experienced in the past (migration, war, earthquake, etc.) have been the subject of the works of the artists. The kinship of the word "history" with the word "story", which also includes epics, legends and tales, is a clear indication of this close relationship.

The aim of historical novels is not to make art but to use the text as a historical argument and to enlighten the reader. Novels written by artists with this understanding also contribute to the formation of the historical understanding of societies. For example, during the "National Literature Period" in Türkiye, writers supported the formation of a collective consciousness in the Turkish nation with their works. Furthermore, as some literary historians have emphasized, artists such as Ömer Seyfettin and Yakup Kadri contributed to the victory of the "War of Independence" with their pens. In a sense, the novelists of the period managed what the history books failed to do in those years and pioneered the formation of the historical consciousness of the Turkish nation. Although not welcomed by literary scholars who argue that art is for art's sake, historical novels in particular contain a certain ideology and aim to somehow pass on that ideology to future generations. "Ideology precedes the formation of the text, and every text reproduces itself by constantly establishing a relationship with the ideology that creates it. In other words, literature produces the societal within a fictional world, and therefore, despite being an individual creation, it bears a social dimension like history. Although not a priority for art, literary works hold an important place in the construction of collective memory. When the relationship between history, literature, and ideology is viewed from this perspective, it becomes clear that every narrative is a text reconstructed from the perspective of a certain narrator" (Dalar, 2020, s.386).

Although novels do not have a long history like poems in Türkiye, as emphasised before, in difficult times characterized by efforts to enlighten the society, poetry receded into the background and the intellectuals preferred to contribute to the formation of national consciousness and the transmission of culture through the novels they wrote. At the same time, they tried to covertly



propagate the ideas that were valid at that time. "The novel is a new literary genre in Türkiye, introduced in the second half of the 19th century. It is also the most effective way to convey history and ideology. Due to its historical background, the novel can be defined as the shortest path for the transfer of the existing ideology and the culture that develops to the next generations. This process of the novel is not random and intrinsic. On the contrary, the novelist uses the novel as a vessel, leaving aside its aesthetic aspect, and transfers his/her ideology to the next generations" (Aslan, 2014, p.256-257).

In their historical novels, Cengiz Dağcı and Cengiz Aytmatov addressed the difficulties faced by the people and the society from an objective point of view. Dağcı and Aytmatov reflected their era in a dramatic style in their various novels, and particularly dealt with the policies implemented by the Soviet Union during and after the war years and the resulting sufferings of people in the geography of Turkestan. Despite the severe censorship of the Soviet Union, especially on national issues, Dagci and Aitmatov continued to write in that period. In this way, the authors played an active role in awakening the Turks of Crimea and Kyrgyzstan and in creating a collective consciousness. Both Dağcı and Aytmatov played a major role in educating and transforming the people living in the geography of Turkestan today through the ideological framework they presented in their historical novels.

Methodology

Research Model

In the study, qualitative research was applied as a research method and document analysis was used to collect data. Qualitative research can be defined as "a type of research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, and document analysis are used and a qualitative process is followed to present perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic manner in a natural environment" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The "document analysis" used in such studies consists of the analysis of written documents containing information about the phenomena targeted by the study (Yıldırım and Şimsek, 2013, p. 218).

Sample

The sample of the study includes the novels "İhtiyar Savaşçı" by Cengiz Dağcı and "Sultanmurad" by Cengiz Aytmatov. This study was based on convenience sampling, which is a type of purposeful sampling: historical novels written by the authors in question that the researcher had previously studied, was familiar with and contained educational elements were selected.

Data Collection Tool and Analysis

The data of the study were collected from the novels "İhtiyar Savaşçı" by Cengiz Dağcı and "Sultanmurad" by Cengiz Aytmatov, which were analyzed through "descriptive analysis". The main objective of descriptive analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. In this context, the novels mentioned in the sample were examined, the relevant concepts were identified, and the importance of the novels in terms of educational function was revealed.

Results and Discussion

Throughout his life, Cengiz Dağcı yearned for the lands he called home. Due to this longing, in his novel "İhtiyar Savaşçı", he addressed the brutal deportation of the Crimean Turks from their homeland during World War II and the struggle they gave to return their home years later.

Aytmatov, one of the first figures that comes to mind regarding Kyrgyz-Turkish literature, has also emphasized his belief and trust in humanity in this novel, as he has emphasized in almost all of his other works. The author has addressed the superhuman efforts of Sultanmurad, whose father was drafted into the army, to meet the nutrition needs of the soldiers at the front together with his friends.

The cultural values and religious and historical elements reflected in both novels are given in the tables below. In addition, the commonalities of the novels, which deal with the events during World War II, are also shown in a separate table.



Strong woman image



Table 1 -	Educational	Elements in	the novel	Sultanmurad
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Table 1 – Educational Elements in the novel Sultanmurad						
Socio-Cultural elements	Historical elements	Religious				
V (1) 1	m 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	elements				
Heating with dung and straw	The harsh conditions of World War II	Praying				
The essence of horses and horse riding for	Kolhoz-Sovhoz	Death				
Turks						
Eating and drinking culture (Tea and	Alphabet					
bazlama (flatbread), sorpa, boza, kumiss,	-					
horse meat)						
The importance of agriculture and animal						
husbandry among Turks						
Entertainment culture among Turks (Fairs)						
The importance of respect among Turks						
(Uzbeks)						
Needlework						
Aksakal (white beard)						
Military Service						
Kalpak						
Love-Marriage						
Mani (chansonette)						
Bravery in Turks						
Yurt, tent in Turks						
Needlework						
Manas saga						
Collaboration in Turks						
Mythology of Kyrgyz Turks						
Evil Eye						
Hunting						
Family structure in Turks (Sultanmurad,						
Hacımurad, Uncle Nurgazi, Father Bekbay,						
Grandmother Aru Ukan and their mother)						

As in his other works, Cengiz Aytmatov used socio-cultural elements peculiar to the Turkish nation intensively in this novel. The author frequently treated the eating and drinking culture, entertainment culture, agriculture-animal husbandry, horse riding and handicrafts which play a major role in the daily lives of the Kyrgyz Turks. He also referred to the Turkish family structure, the mythology of the Kyrgyz Turks, and Manas, one of the most important sagas of the Kyrgyz Turks and the entire Turkic world: "The young farmers looked at him with respect and admiration.



They were ready to fulfill his every command. This warrior in front of them was probably Manas: gray-haired, armored, majestic Manas! And they were his loyal, brave comrades. Their swords were on their waists, their shields in their hands. Who were these fearless heroes that Manas pinned his hopes on for his trusted cause?" (Aytmatov, 1990, p.51).

Courtesy and respect play a major role in Turkish society's family life and traditions. In the novel, Sultanmurad's father took him to the market and introduced him to his Uzbek friends. Stunned by the courtesy of the Uzbek Turks, Sultanmurad emphasized that they were gentle people who showed respect to everyone, regardless of age (Aytmatov, 1990, p.29).

In the past, horseback riding, hunting and archery had a special importance in the cultural life of the nomadic Turks. In order to adapt to the difficult conditions of the region they moved to as nomads and to make a living, both boys and girls were taught to ride horses and shoot arrows (Güven&Hergüner, 1999, p.33). Aytmatov expressed in the novel how important the horse was for the Turks as follows: "There is no creature in the world as sensitive as a horse, said the village elders. When they fell into competent hands, they would recover immediately. If you valued it as much as your little finger, it would repay you a hundredfold. And then they would tell old stories about horses. They would say, 'What horses there were in the past.'" (Aytmatov, 1990, p.54). The author also mentioned that in the past, people who hunted on horseback would give a part of the game to the first person they met so that they would have more luck (Aytmatov, 1990, p.115).

There are some concepts that nations glorify in their cultures. Courage, bravery and military service are concepts that occupy an essential place in the Turkish culture. "Concepts such as warfare, bravery, and military service are glorified in Turkish culture and therefore in the conceptual world of the Turkish people" (Düşmez, 2023, s.20). In the past, it was an obligation for the Turks, who lived a nomadic life, to be brave and warriors in order to turn the steppes into their homeland and to protect them. In his novel Sultanmurad, which describes the tough conditions of World War II, Aytmatov used the concepts of bravery and military





service together. In the novel, Sultanmurad's brother Hacımurat sang pre-war songs with a high-tone child's voice when he was happy:

Give the command, marshals, We will all go at once. Even if a thousand million enemies come, We will burn them all at once. One two, one two, Step straight (Aytmatov, 1990, s.74-75).

While addressing the children who were going to Aksay, Chairman Tinaliev stated that they should not have their harnesses stolen and that they should protect them just as the soldiers protect their weapons (Aytmatov, 1990, p.95).

In the novel Sultanmurad, which Cengiz Aytmatov wrote based on his childhood memories (Balkan, 2013, p.2625), since all fathers participated in World War II, all the work in the village and the task of providing food for the front became the responsibility of young children. As a result of this situation, in the small villages where Kyrgyz Turks lived in the mentioned years, all the work of the kolkhoz (an agricultural enterprise where peasants worked together in Russia) was done by 14-15 year old children. While Aytmatov frequently referred to kolkhozes and sovhozes (state houses) in his novel, he also referred to the alphabet problem, which we see as the basic element for ensuring the cultural unity of the Turkic world: "...The letters S.c.M. could be seen among the ornaments in one corner, which meant 'Sultanmurad cana Mirzagül'. These Latin letters, which were used before the Kyrgyz alphabet was changed, were a response to his long letters and verses" (Aytmatov, 1990, p.97).

The Turks replaced the Sky God belief with Islam in the tenth century, and from that time on, the Turkish cultural world began to take shape with Islam. It is known that "praying" was widespread among the Turks both during the Sky God belief and during the Islamic period, and that spiritual relief was achieved in this way. "Prayers are the sum of formulaic words that a person uses to invoke, take refuge in, ask for forgiveness and protection from a transcendent being, and to inform that being of his/her wishes and desires. In the Turkish cultural world, a social dimension was added to the individual dimension of prayers, and the tradition of 'praying together or mutually' developed" (Arslan & Erdemtürk, 2021, p.114). In





the novel, we see that the characters pray frequently, especially in the face of the difficulties they experience, and that they achieve spiritual relief. "Then, when the sounds of prayer rose in the courtyard, everyone fell silent, everyone was left alone with their own loneliness. He was looking at the holy book (the Quran) with his hands open and raised, as if he were seeing it in his palms, and was listening to the magnificent prayer." (Aytmatov, 1990, s.106).

Table 2 – Educational Elements in the "İhtivar Savascı" Novel

Table 2 – Educational Elements in the "Ihtiyar Savaşçı" Novel				
Socio-Cultural elements	Historical elements	Religious elements		
Eating and drinking culture	The harsh conditions of	Begins with Basmala		
(Quince jam, Karaim pastries, tea,	World War II			
eggs)				
Goods (copper trays-prayer	Love-longing for the	Quran		
beads)	homeland			
Clothing (headscarves with lace	Crimean Tatars through	Mosque		
ends-coloured dresses),	the eyes of Russians			
Uzbek shawl-Crimean skullcap				
Kalpak				
Folk song	Turkish homelands	Hazrat Isa (Jesus the		
	(Fergana-Alma Ata,	Prophet)		
	Ashgabat, Akmescit,			
	Gurzuf etc.)			
Bravery	Musa Mamut	Belief in God and		
		Respect for the Prophet		
Entertainment Culture	İsmail Gaspirali	Prayer		
Handkerchief and Haytarma				
Games				
Hıdırellez	Kolkhozes	Reciting Mawlid		
Architectural Structure	Crimean exile	Death, Death Ceremony		
Family Structure in Turks (Mrs				
Melek, Warrior and Her Four				
Sons)				
Cooperatives				
Strong Woman Image				

In the novel, Cengiz Dağcı talked about the copper trays and prayer beads used by the Turks at that time, the handkerchief and haytarma games that were part of their entertainment life, the architectural structure of the houses where the Turks lived, and the rich heritage of the Turks who had a glorious clothing culture from



Central Asia to Anatolia. In this way, he provided valuable information about the culture to the readers.

While the Crimean Turks were fighting for Russia on the front lines during World War II, the lands they lived in were raided by Russian soldiers and they were forced to migrate. In his novel The Old Warrior, Cengiz Dağcı described this exile and the journey made in inhuman conditions in train cars through the Old Warrior and his wife, Mrs Melek, in a striking style. "The first person to die in the car was the old shepherd. He died on his grandson's outstretched legs. The girl's hands were on the man's shoulders, she was crying inwardly, swaying from side to side... The next day, they found three more dead people in the car, one child and two women" (Dağcı, 2005, p.58). Cengiz Dağcı did not only describe such atrocities in the novel, but also portrayed the opnions of the Russians about the Crimean Turks in the mentioned years to young readers with a more realistic approach through the words of the novel's characters. "Crimean Tatars, huh!.. These!.. Even the crazy ones... What a shame!.. Stalin died before eradicating them" (Dağcı, 2005, s.102). In addition, the author enriched his narrative with elements related to Turkish culture, which he frequently used, and provided the reader with valuable information in this sense. The author, who thanked Allah with the Basmala at the very beginning of the novel, emphasized that everything should be started with the name of Allah (Dağcı, 2005, p.11). Dağcı's novel İhtiyar Savaşçı, which has a longer text, contains more educational elements than Aytmatov's novel. Gaspirali, who is highly respected throughout the Turkish world today for his work on Turkish culture and especially the Turkish language, and Musa Mamut (a Crimean who torched himself because he was denied the permission to reside in Crimea by the party and state organs) are figures in the novel. In addition, residential areas of the Turkish world such as Fergana, Almaata, Ashgabat, Akmescit and Gurzuf have a large place in the novel as historical elements. The author also told the readers in an effective style how deep was the love of the Crimean Turks for their homeland at that time. "A long time, like forty-five years, had passed since they were exiled from Crimea. It was true, they had not taken root in Sürgünyeri, nor anywhere else. And root they could not take. Could a thousand-year-old oak tree be ripped off from the soil it grew in and planted



in another soil? Of course it could not. Even if it were planted, it could not take root in its new place" (Dağcı, 2005, p.82).

Rituals related to death and the dead have a large place in Turkish culture. According to ancient Turks, life and death were considered as an inseparable whole, and the transition from life to death and vice versa was perceived as a normal process between two separate parts of a whole (Sümbüllü, 2004, p.62). Death, which can be defined as a transition phase in human life, is a social as well as a personal phenomenon, and the loss of life of important people deeply affects their society. In his novel "İhtiyar Savaşçı", the author portrays the burial procedures carried out after the Warrior's death with emotional descriptions: "Some forty people from Sürgünyeri, Taşkent and Beşterek had gathered around the Warrior's coffin. Everywhere was silent. Life was only in the breaths of the birds flying in the cemetery. The rays of the sun that had descended on the peak of Romankos Mountain reflected on the medals of the Warrior, and the coffin stood on the slope like the golden catafalque of a Roman Caesar" (Dağcı, 2005, p.148). Religious elements have an important place in the novel that begins with the Basmala. It is seen that the characters pray, recite Mawlid and the Quran, and show huge respect for God and the prophets.

Table 3 – Common Educational Elements				
Socio-Cultural elements	Historical elements	Religious elements		
Eating and drinking culture	The difficult	Reciting Prayers		
	conditions of World			
	War II			
Clothing - apparel	Kolkhoz	Death		
Bravery				
Family structure in Turks				
Entertainment culture				
Strong woman image				

It has been observed that both novels, which narrate the hardships experienced by the Kyrgyz and Crimean Turks during the years of World War II, contain common educational elements. In both works, the courage, bravery and militant characteristics of the Turks are highlighted, and important information is provided, especially for young readers, about the eating and drinking, clothing and



entertainment cultures. In both novels, which provide a picture of the Turkish family structure, information is given about the Russian kolkhoz system, and in both works, the heroes are seen praying and burying their dead.

Conclusion

Historical novels that are true to reality and present this reality in an artistic way play a very important role in teaching students history and in transferring national cultural elements to future generations; in short, in helping individuals gain self-awareness and identity. Historical novels are one of the most important reference sources for both teachers and students, especially in extra-school history teaching. In this context, it is clear that textbooks are not sufficient in teaching history to students, and that these books should be supported by qualified historical novels. This method will increase interest in the course and, as a result, bring success. A study conducted by Şimşek on 120 students found that historical stories made a positive contribution to the teaching of history subjects at the primary school level (Şimşek, 2004, p.17). Another study concluded that teaching history through stories was extremely effective on students regardless of age (Dilek and Soğucaklı Yapıcı, 2005, p.129).

In the novels "İhtiyar Savaşçı" by Cengiz Dağcı and "Sultanmurad" by Cengiz Aytmatov, various educational elements related to Turkish culture have been identified (Praying/Reading the Quran, Reading the Mawlid, Military Service, Respect for God/Prophet, Animal Husbandry, Riding Horses, Strong Woman Image and Her Value, Farming, etc.). In the novel "İhtiyar Savaşçı", Cengiz Dağcı deeply feels the longing for his homeland, and at the same time, in order to alleviate this longing to some extent and to convey the cultural values of the Crimean Turks to the reader, he intensively addresses the above-mentioned values. On the other hand, in his novels translated into different languages, Aytmatov conveyed to the reader the rich culture of the deep-rooted Kyrgyz Turks who made the Tanrı Mountains their home. Dağcı's novel, which tells the story of the Crimean exile that took place as a result of the Red Army attack in 1944, and Cengiz Aytmatov's work, which pictures



the struggle of a village in Kyrgyzstan during the violent Second World War, have also provided data to the science of history in a sincere and objective manner. It can be argued that almost all of the elements identified in these novels, which Cengiz Dağcı and Aytmatov wrote to educate the youth and to transfer elements specific to Turkish culture to future generations, show significant similarities with the cultures of Anatolian and Cypriot Turks. When both works are evaluated in terms of cultural values, the similarity seen in the main elements of Turkish culture and the continuity revealed by the cultural basin clearly manifest that these values originate from the same place even though we are settled in distant corners of the world.

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