

Some Tales Behind the Tales

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In the

Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative

Beneath the countless scenic attractions that make Turkey a tourist wonderland lie levels of culture that appeal endlessly to the inquiring mind. The Crossroad of Empire has seen many peoples come and go, leaving behind them their genes, their dreams, and their view of life. Art, history, literature, and philosophy have all given expression to many aspects of this rich background, but from the beginning, more basic articulation has been provided by the common people and transmitted via the oral tradition. The folktale has been their primary medium, and narrators have drawn upon and contributed to an oral internet that has spanned the ages. Is it any wonder, then, that collecting folk narrative in Turkey is not only a science but also a romance?

Once upon a Time / Once upon a Never

When my wife and I first went to Turkey in 1961 – she as a teacher at Ayşe Abla İlkokulu and I as a Senior Fulbright Lecturer at the University of Ankara – we were curious about folkloric studies in that great land. Because the mass of Turkish people still had a relatively low level of literacy, it seemed to us (in perhaps too facile a way) that there should consequently be a proportionately higher level of storytelling. And yet there had been very few studies – and those mostly short – of Turkish folktales published in English. We discovered that there were political and other reasons for this hiatus, but our more exciting discovery was the fact that Turkey was a vast treasury of oral riches. During evenings, weekends, and holidays we began to record as many folktales as possible, narratives that ranged in length from anecdotes to fragments of oral epics. The Bird of Fortune must have been hovering above our heads, for each of us soon had a helpful and knowledgeable Turkish collaborator. Barbara's was Neriman Hızır, owner of Ayşe Abla İlkokulu and "Storyteller to the Nation," as she was called on her Radio Ankara programs. My coworker was Professor Ahmet E. Uysal, not a trained folklorist but a person who understood thoroughly both the mentality and the psychology of villagers and working-class people from whom most of our folktales came.

It was only some time later, however, that we realized fully how fortunate we were to have such fine associates. By 1961 I had been collecting and occasionally publishing American folk materials, and I ingenuously assumed that my techniques of field work in rural areas of the States would be equally effective in Turkish villages. In my native land a young folklorist usually collects first from his family, friends, and neighbors, for most of these potential informants will probably be kindly disposed and cooperative. But having exhausted such ready sources, one must then extend his research among strangers, who might be quite uninterested in one's quest. I usually managed to insinuate myself into what I considered a likely group of idle talkers – in a general grocery store, in a barroom, at an old folks' home, or at an auto service station where farmers lingered on rainy days. After maintaining a low profile there for awhile, I might then venture to "prime the pump" by telling a tale of the kind I hoped to collect. If I had by then been accepted as a harmless and perhaps simpleminded interloper, I might in that way benefit from the one-upmanship syndrome. One

tale may invite another. I had incorrectly assumed that such an approach might work equally well in Turkey. Thanks to Ahmet Uysal, I was soon disabused of that notion.

The first village we visited together, late in 1961, was Aşağı Çavundur, in Çubuk kaza of Ankara Province, and it was there that I learned what would be the standard routine in almost all our rural stops throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. As a matter of both protocol and common sense, it was de rigueur to pay one's respects first to the headman (muhtar), and so our first stop was always at the office of this elected official. Invariably receptive and courteous, the muhtar would greet us in friendly fashion and then invite us to sit and chat with him. The conversation, more structured than most chatting, tended to be a question-and-answer exchange.

Muhtar: "How are you?"

Guest: "Very well, thank you. And how are you?"

Muhtar: "Very well, thank you. Do you have a family?"

Guest: "Yes."

Muhtar: "How are they?"

Guest: "Well, thank you. Do you have a family?"

Muhtar: "Yes."

Guest: "And how is your family?"

Muhtar: "Very well, thank you." Then, after a slight pause, "Where have you come from?"

Guest: "We have come from such and such a place."

Muhtar: "What is your occupation there?"

Guest: "We are professors."

Muhtar: "Where will you go when you leave here?"

This dialogue of query and response might continue for 20 or 25 minutes. It was usually followed by a silence of three or four minutes, during which all present sat motionless, staring blankly at the floor. At the end of that time, the muhtar would look up brightly and ask, "How are you?" Baffled, I wondered whether this repetition was the result of insanity or simply senility, but whatever its cause, round two of precisely the same dialogue had begun. At the end of that rerun, the muhtar ordered tea for everyone, but as the empty glasses were being removed, he launched at once into round three. When Citizen No. 1 of that village had concluded his inquiries, Citizen No. 2 (the religious leader, the hoca) was called in to repeat still one more time the gentle inquisition. During a second serving of tea, the muhtar and the hoca communicated with each other silently, though by what means I never discovered. "Are these strangers good men whom we can safely trust and help? Or is there something suspect or even sinister about them which should make us wary?"

If the signals were affirmative, the muhtar would then ask, "What was it that made you decide to honor our village with a visit here?"

Finally, at least two hours after our arrival, we could say, "We have come here in hope of hearing residents of this village tell us some old Turkish stories." Then and only then, after having been duly examined, could we state our purpose. Following more tea and hospitality, the muhtar usually called in three or four good narrators to tell a folktale apiece. But the situation was forced, and the narrators, sweaty and dirty from tilling the soil, were discomfited. Almost invariably one of them

would say, "This is not how folktales are told. If you will come to my house this evening at such and such a time, I shall tell you more stories." His comment held more promise than a literal interpretation of his words indicated, for what he really meant was that he would invite several of his friends, too, and all of us would sit in the male section of the house and swap stories for hours.

The initial interrogation that had led to this desired conclusion had been a matter of testing. Would we be polite? Would we tolerate their insistent curiosity? Would we remain patient? Would we take them seriously? Until recent years villagers had been understandably uneasy about strangers, especially those with urban earmarks and educated mien. All too often had they been scorned, scoffed at, or, at best, condescended to by members of the urban intellectual elite. Some city dwellers (whose families might have left the farm only a decade or two ago) disparaged their rural countrymen as being fierce, uncouth, lousy, carriers of disease, and inhospitable – all false accusations. The fact is that villagers often had a more refined sense of courtesy and a greater degree of hospitality than had all too many denizens of any metro-plex.¹ Turkish rustics are the salt of the earth, the exponents of the Turkish value system, and thereby the guardians of tradition.

Someone once observed (both wisely and functionally) that "Gold is where you find it!" Folktales too are wherever you find them, though in Turkey there are likely sites to dig for such treasure, and no place is more likely than the village coffeehouse. It is a favorite venue for folk raconteurs and minstrels, who know that the customers patronizing this institution do so as much for socializing and entertainment as for the beverages served there. The only price for admission is the purchase of an inexpensive glass of tea or a tiny cup of coffee, and so a ready audience is at hand. Many of our tape-recorded folktales have as background sounds the tinkle of teaspoons and the shuffle of coming and going. But the village coffeehouse has one serious restriction for field workers: its gender orientation. While similar shops in cities are open to all comers, most rural coffeehouses are frequented almost exclusively by men. If a woman entered a coffeehouse in some conservative areas of Turkey, the roof might collapse. Although many of the best tales in the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative were told by women, they were not told in coffeehouses.

The gender segregation that lingered in rural areas made it virtually impossible for my wife to accompany me on trips into the hinterland, but, paradoxically, this did not prevent her from taping rural residents. If she could not go to the village, parts of the village came to her. In Ankara she collected freely in the squatter settlements (gecekondular) inhabited by rustic newcomers. She also

¹Only twice did we fail to pass the test for access to a village's oral literature. I recall clearly an instance in the spring of 1962. We had had a successful day of field work along the Sakarya River near Gökçekaya Dam and in the area around Beypazarı. Starting back toward Ankara as the sun was sinking, we saw an attractive village just off the highway, and we decided to stop there briefly to record yet another tale or two. After completing the regular admission test (on which we apparently scored low), we were asked why we had favored that village with our presence. When we stated our mission, the muhtar answered, "I am sorry, but there are no storytellers in this village." This was patently untrue. Was there ever a Turkish village without at least three or five storytellers?

As we renewed our trip homeward, the three of us (Uysal, Walker, and an accompanying friend, Halil Temel) diagnosed our failure. (1) We had appeared suddenly out of nowhere at dusk. (2) We had arrived in Halil's Jeep, privately owned but still bearing some military markings. (3) Halil was wearing the army fatigue clothes in which he had been discharged. (4) Ahmet was wearing an American Air Force flight jacket. (5) I was obviously a foreigner. What was our real purpose in coming there? To whom would we afterwards report? Why should they risk having us there any longer? Clearly, we had erred.

taped numerous tales from peasant part-time or short-term workers who took menial jobs in the city to supplement their meager village incomes. They were janitors, laundresses, aides to the aged, seamstresses, cooks, household attendants, gardeners, baby-sitters.

Pastures might seem to be unpromising places for storytelling, but not a few of our tapes have the bleating of sheep in the background. Turkish shepherds are often lonely and bored. Because powerful and well-trained Kangal dogs monitor the flocks and keep them from straying, shepherds have ample time to play their kavals (fipple flutes), to practice on the saz (the primary stringed instrument for folk music), and to share their repertoires of tales and legends. One of our earliest informants was Tellâl Mehmet Çavuş, a town crier until mid-century, when technology replaced him with a P.A. system. By the time we met him (April, 1962), he had become the chief herdsman of a settlement on the outskirts of Nallihan, Ankara Province. Whether employed by a village or by a suburb of a town or city, such a person, accompanied sometimes by helpers, collects at dawn the miscellaneous livestock of the area, takes them to a nearby pasture, watches them throughout the day, and returns them to their respective owners in the early evening. We had heard of Mehmet Efendi's narrative ability and still powerful voice (at age 60), and we overtook him on a hillside where his charges had just begun to graze. We were well rewarded for our morning trek.

On a grander pastoral scale is the yayla, a mountain grazing area to which whole families of livestock raisers take their flocks and herds during the summer months. Cooler weather, ample water, and low pasturage fees attract cattle, sheep, and goat drovers to these high elevations. There the range of entertainment includes not only storytelling but also folk music and folk dance. We collected only a few tales during our brief sojourns in yaylas of Bolu, Konya, and Yozgat provinces, but a whole season in such a mountain camp could be time well spent by a folklorist or anthropologist.

Quirks of Fate

It is an illusion to suppose that one can structure completely any field work one proposes to undertake in folklore. Such research is based not on inert matter or the inarticulate responses of guinea pigs but upon the infinitely variable human psyche, upon unpredictable association linkages, and upon shifting semantics. The wise folklorist "sits loose" (as American slang would have it) and values whatever an informant says, even if it is not at the moment pertinent. Willy-nilly, surprises, whether productive or counterproductive, are likely to occur.

Failures are experienced sooner or later by most researchers doing field work, though such setbacks do not always come as surprises. One of my earliest failures in Turkey, however, was definitely surprising. The geographical location: Nallihan; the time: December 8, 1961; the collecting site: a large coffeehouse whose accommodations overflowed into an adjacent courtyard; the characters: an aged (perhaps 70) narrator and a middle-aged folklorist. The senior citizen – call him X Efendi – was telling an engaging tale which was being taped by the younger man. When, after some fifteen minutes, the narrator began to slow down, I wondered if his memory was faltering, and so I had his tea glass refilled, praised his performance, and urged him on. But clearly something was wrong, for his voice moved from slow to slower and finally stopped. He arose carefully, his gaze fixed steadily upon me, and began backing away from the table. After he had retreated three or four

meters, he turned around and fled. I was mystified. "What happened?" I asked the small audience which had gathered around us.

Ahmet Uysal, who had been snapping pictures of the coffeehouse crowd, came over to me and asked, "Well, Warren, did you get a good story from that grandfather?"

"I got only half of a good story," I replied, and then told him what had happened. A waiter volunteered the information that the narrator, retired, lived nearby with the family of his son. Subsequently, that son revealed to Ahmet's tactful query that his father had been traumatized by his growing suspicion that I was guilty of nazar (evil eye).

By sheer chance, Ahmet had taken a picture of us at the very moment when the frightened old man had frozen into silence. When I returned to the States eight months later, I showed that picture to a friend. He looked at the picture, he looked at me, and again he studied the picture. He then observed, "Warren, you should keep this picture, for it could be very helpful to you. If you should ever get an inflated idea of your own importance, you should take a look at this photo. There are thousands of people who have faces that make babies cry, but in all this world there are very few people whose faces can terrify old men." I still keep the picture close at hand.²

On one occasion another kind of folk belief was a deterrent, though only very briefly. In late 1980 in Devrek, a kaza center of Zonguldak Province, we met a small group of men who were competent storytellers, but among them was a narrator who was almost unintelligible because of a physical impairment. His face was badly twisted to one side by what I concluded was Bell's palsy. We thanked this unfortunate contributor for his efforts, even though we could not utilize them. His appearance was not by then unfamiliar to me, for I had observed it recently in several other men in Turkey, although in all my previous life I had seen such cases only three or four times. After our ailing informant had left, I asked an elderly merchant, through an interpreter, "Why is Bell's palsy seen so frequently in Turkey? It is a nerve disorder and not a communicable disease."

"What do you mean when you say 'Bell's palsy'?" he asked. After I had described the symptoms, he responded, to my amazement, "That is not a disease at all, but a curse."

"A curse? For what offense?"

"It is a punishment for anyone who urinates, accidentally or otherwise, on a saint's grave."

Ahmet Uysal said to me, sotto voce, in English, "Warren, the moral of this analysis is simple. If you walk about the countryside at night, be sure to carry a flashlight with you or you may return to America with your mouth curled up under one ear."

I could not, however, take the matter lightly. I had, after all, seen with my own eyes several Turks with contorted faces and an unmistakable appearance of discomfort. I wondered, "Could this possibly be a psychosomatic response to misgivings about one's security or to a sense of guilt?" But then I reminded myself that I was in reality a folklorist and teacher of literature, not a psychiatrist,

²The damaging influence of evil eye is one of the oldest and most widely distributed beliefs. In some of the more ancient Egyptian pyramids archeologists found charms against this purported danger. In several European countries people fear the baleful glance of an ill-disposed person. In the United States concern about evil eye is especially strong among Native American Indians and people of Hispanic extraction. Among the protective amulets are large likenesses of the eye, sometimes called "God's Eyes."

and should thus avoid further prying into such a clinical conundrum.³ Since that time, I have been told of other careless sacrileges (quite apart from saint lore) which allegedly earned their perpetrators misshapen physiognomies.⁴

The most stunning surprise in our thirty-two years of intermittent research in Turkey occurred in the summer of 1974. Ahmet Uysal and I had made tentative arrangements to collect tales at several places in Erzincan, Erzurum, and Kars provinces, Aware, however that our stay in the east might consume all of his free time and thus deprive his family of any summer vacation, Ahmet suggested that we first spend two weeks at a campground along the shore of the Sea of Marmara, on the peninsula about five kilometers north of Erdek. There, as his family swam, boated, and frolicked on the beach, he and I could transcribe some of our backlog of tapes. It was a good idea. At the campsite Ahmet and I worked at a long table holding a set of tape recorders and a large, old-fashioned radio, the latter tuned in hourly to Turkish Radio/Television to pick up news of the recently begun military action in Cyprus, and every three hours to Voice of America in order to get some perspective on the progress of the war. After we had maintained our work/play schedules for a week, Mrs. Uysal suggested that it might be tonic to alter our routines briefly with a visit to Erdek, where we could shop, dine at a good restaurant, and talk with local friends. Accordingly we departed at 4:00 that afternoon, proceeded to Erdek, fulfilled our intentions there, and returned at 8 o'clock. When we reentered the campground, we discerned no change, though in fact an invisible change had occurred during our absence. This we discovered when we stepped out of Ahmet's Ford and were stopped in our tracks by 24 bayonets poised or pressed lightly against us. Ahmet presented his official identification documents to the officer in charge and asked for an explanation. The captain's answer astounded us. "There have been several reports to Security Headquarters in Ankara that you are carrying on clandestine communications with Greek forces on Cyprus, and we have been sent to investigate those allegations." After Ahmet had denied categorically such charges, the captain continued. "While you were gone, we examined your trailer and your tent without finding any radio transmitter in either place, but we must also examine your car. Unlock the trunk!" The opened trunk revealed a large Uher tape recorder. "Aha, what is that?"

"It is a tape recorder, sir."

"What is on that tape?"

³To appreciate fully this little episode, one must understand some of the elements of saint lore in Turkey and some other Muslim countries. Saints are far more numerous in Islam than they are in Christianity. This is largely because sainthood is not determined by a religious council or leader (such as the Pope) but by popular acclamation. Anyone who is especially reverent, benevolent, and prone to making truly wise pronouncements may be deemed a saint; if this idea gains general acceptance, a legend begins to develop about the blessed person, often attributing to him spiritual insights, mind-reading ability, and other decidedly preternatural powers. It seems that almost every village, town, and city in Turkey has one or more local saints, usually historical but occasionally contemporary. After death, the most widely known saints are frequently honored with a tomb, which immediately becomes a shrine to the faithful. Most saints, however, are interred more simply in wayside cemeteries beneath gravestones with epitaphs testifying to their sanctity. It would, quite obviously, be easy for a careless traveler to desecrate such a place with a urinary sin.

⁴ATON tale No. 1156 is an autobiographical account of the urinary desecration of a mosque and the facial distortion that resulted.

"Folktales, which we have been translating into English, sir."

"Folktales? Oh, yes. Ha! Ha! Turn it on!"

By great good fortune, the machine was set at the very beginning of a folktale, and the first words spoken were, "Bir varmıs, bir yokmus!" ("Once there was and once there wasn't!"), a formulaic opening for Turkish stories. The captain stared intently at the recorder for about twenty minutes as randomly selected passages were played. "Turn it off! I regret that this has happened, but you know how ignorant some of our people are!" That did not enlighten us much, nor did his embarrassment and repeated apologies. Both Ahmet and his wife, Melek, matched his apologies with their assurances and reassurances that, as far as they were concerned, he was simply performing his duty.

The mystery then slowly unrolled. Between the campground and the waterfront ran a gravel road used by local residents as they passed back and forth to and from Erdek. Apparently many of them had observed our layout of audio equipment, and some had obviously heard a foreign language coming forth from the radio. They had no idea what foreign language it was, but the war hysteria had led them to conclude that it must be Greek. The issue resolved, no harm done, the troops climbed back into their two "six-by-six" trucks, the captain into his chauffeured Jeep, and the military force left quickly.

Although the contretemps had been settled, it was not forgotten. When Ahmet Uysal returned to the camp in 1977, he was startled to hear in a neighborhood coffeehouse a colorful account of the melodramatic capture of two dangerous spies at the campground three years earlier. Did the kismet written on our foreheads indicate that because of our intense interest in the oral tradition, we ourselves would one day become a folktale?

One of the most pleasant surprises along our trail occurred in 1970 at the village of Pazar in the kaza of Mengen, Bolu Province. We had no fixed itinerary in Bolu but chose our stopping places in casual fashion. Although we knew no one in the Mengen district, we were repeatedly advised during our first taping sessions to visit a senior storyteller named Sadık Erol but nicknamed "Eski (ancient) Chauffeur." He was not at home when we called at his house in Pazar, but he could be found, we were told, in a certain field of his farm, where he was overseeing his children and grandchildren as they threshed his wheat crop.

After we had recorded four folktales told by Sadık Bey, we took the liberty of inquiring about his sobriquet "Eski Chauffeur." He laughed and said, "I am not really ancient, but I am called that because I was Atatürk's chauffeur long ago during the War of Independence." He then recounted a minor incident involving Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and one of his vehicles. We considered this an historical report and not a folktale. So too did the Atatürk Society of America when it published that account in the February 1998 issue of its journal. By 1970 there were few survivors from among those who had worked with the Father of the Republic of Turkey during the early 1920s, and so we cherished our almost accidental introduction to Sadık Erol.

Shadows on the Landscape

Forty years ago Americans knew all too little about Turkey. Acquaintances had misgivings about my travels in Anatolia. "Isn't it dangerous over there?" they would ask me. Such a simplistic question prompts an equally simplistic response: "Don't all lands have their dangers?" I never suffered harm of any kind in Turkey, and my only real discomfort came from occasional gastric ailments in eastern provinces. Only one digestive disorder is preserved clearly in my memory, and it remains there because of its humorous dimension.

While I lay recovering in an Erzurum hotel room in 1974, my partner, Ahmet Uysal, continued the field work we had begun together. He returned to the hotel one evening and asked, "Well, Warren, what have you been doing today?"

I had, of course, been sleeping most of the time, but my fever had misled me into thinking that I too had been doing field work. "Ahmet," I said, "I have been collecting some excellent folktales."

"Really? From whom?"

"From a very clever flock of sheep." In my delirium I was convinced that this had actually happened.

Looking at me sternly, Ahmet said, "Warren, there is just one thing about which I am curious. Were those sheep speaking in Turkish or in English?" – We joked for years about our hope of finding another whole flock of clever and articulate informants!

Although we never encountered any violence or direct threat of violence, this is not to say that we were unaware of two potential dangers: banditry and feuds – evils as plentiful on the American record as on that of Turkey. Although banditry has been all but eliminated from Turkey today, such was not the case in the early 1960s. It was not until July of 1964 that government forces finally killed Mehmet İshan Kilit (alias "Kocero"), one of the most notorious Turkish bandits of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1950, he had become almost a warlord in southeastern Turkey, where he terrorized travelers, looted great amounts of money from them, killed six men and wounded many others. What force could restrain his depredations against the Turkish people? Public outcry forced the resignation of Sadır Kuruluoğlu, Interior Minister, for the failure of his gendarmes to maintain law and order in the countryside beyond the jurisdiction of municipalities and townships. It was finally a betrayal by one of his associates that brought Kocero down.

Within less than a month after his death, five of us bussed over a section of the Ilgaz Mountains to reach Kastamonu. As we entered that city, we could see a great throng of people massed in one of the main squares. What was it? A political rally? An organized protest of some sort? A public emergency? We soon learned the focus of this gathering. The bus immediately preceding ours had been attacked by bandits in a mountain pass. Such an event was still too common to be especially newsworthy, but this particular heist had been somewhat more extravagant than most. The outlaws had relieved the passengers not only of their cash and other valuables but also all of their outer garments. It was indeed shocking to have a whole busload of people arrive in a provincial capital in their underwear. Reportedly, there were aboard that ill-fated bus two federal officials who were so outraged that they returned to Ankara at once and initiated still another investigation of the Ministry of Interior. This was, of course, an isolated incident, but one so colorful that it helped keep alive widespread apprehension about outlaws.

Feuds may flare up anywhere, anytime, and once they are ignited, they are difficult to extinguish. In most places they develop along kinship lines and are hence called blood feuds – the Montague family versus the Capulet family in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, the Hatfields versus the McCoys in Kentucky, the Mitchells versus the Truitts in Texas. In Turkish feuds the lineage groups may be larger than families; they may be clans or even, at one time, whole tribes. Such large kinship units may occupy whole villages or larger settlements, and so the battle perimeters may seem to follow geographical rather than blood lines. Conflicts may be based on physical factors: pasturage claims, water resources, hunting rights; or they may be born of abstract concerns: honor, pride, or pure punctillio.

We had no interest in Turkish feuds, and because they can be both sensitive and explosive matters, we discreetly tried to avoid all conversations about them. However, the subject was frequently brought to our attention in one way or another during August and September of 1964 as we were collecting tales in Black Sea provinces. One of our best narrators in Kastamonu Province volunteered the information that he had spent several years in a penitentiary for feuding activity until a change of government extended an amnesty for cases of his type. We then noticed for the first time that he carried a large-caliber pistol, not entirely concealed, on his right hip. In an adjacent village, the family of our next informant was grieving for a son who had been shot while he was sleeping one night on the roof of his house to escape the summer heat inside.

When we reached Sinop, we were permitted to collect tales from inmates of a maximum-security prison housed in the fortress of a medieval Genoese commercial colony. For three days we taped tales from groups of prisoners in a restricted section of that building. We had pleasant exchanges there with perhaps 200 men. Only when we were making our final departure from that jail did the warden reveal the chilling fact that all of our contacts had been convicted of murder committed in feuds.

As we proceeded eastward along the Black Sea coast, we came, early in September, to a port which will here remain nameless. The kaymakam, an old friend and former classmate of Ahmet Uysal, welcomed us cordially and invited us to lunch on the following day. Ahmet observed at once, however, that that federal administrator seemed unusually nervous – chain-smoking and biting his fingernails. At the end of our lunch Ahmet asked the kaymakam, "What has made you so uneasy?"

"It is just the season – that's all."

"The season?"

"Yes. We are rapidly approaching the time when the leaves will be falling from the trees, and that produces a serious situation here." But what lay behind such a cryptic comment?

"Blood feuders in this area often hide in the thick foliage of trees to ambush their enemies. After the leaves have fallen, they can no longer use that tactic, and so just before the trees defoliate, feuders take every opportunity to use that protective cover. Feuders are especially vengeful, and increased ambushing will produce increased retaliation. It is always a difficult time for me."

The kaymakam gave no hint that he wished us to move along out of harm's way, but Ahmet inferred that our presence there was adding to his friend's anxiety. We obligingly left the following day.

Despite our efforts to turn a deaf ear to the dynamics of blood feuding in Turkey, we were not entirely successful in doing so. In some of the Laz anecdotes in the Archive are bits of grim humor about casualties in such internecine combat.

Technical Dilemmas

Recording in a studio is one thing, but recording in the field is something else. Cities and towns in Turkey acquired electric power when the rest of the world did, but our area of concentration lay beyond urban limits, and in the 1960s high-tension lines had reached very few villages. We were constrained, therefore, to use miniature, battery-driven tape recorders in most of our work.

This presented problems thirty or forty years ago. The Turkish electronics industry was just beginning and still did not have a network of sales agencies and service facilities. Most of our audio equipment and supplies came from abroad, often via tourists and Turkish workers returning from jobs in Europe. We taped informants for several years with a sturdy Grundig machine that withstood the jolts of backpacks, saddlebags, and rural buses. Billed as being "state of the art" equipment, it nevertheless lacked one crucial feature, a power meter. We could judge battery fatigue only by observing the declining speed with which the tape reels were turning. So imprecise was this means of measurement that we sometimes had allowed an hour or two of off-speed recording before realizing it and plugging in new D-cells. Although we felt no pain from the recording, we did experience headaches from the playback.

At home when we tried to transcribe tales from tape to paper, using new, full-strength batteries, we discovered that the voices of our narrators sounded like the twittering of birds. Lacking professional laboratory equipment with variable speeds, we somehow had to slow down the playback to the rate of the recording. This was accomplished by brief and careful applications of heat to weaken new batteries to the voltage level of the tired batteries we had used in the field. It was a messy procedure, for at that point in time leak-proof batteries had not yet been invented, and heat caused mini-cells to ooze a sticky and corrosive fluid.

One evening Ahmet and I were transcribing tapes in the kitchen of his family's Ankara apartment. Around 11 o'clock his aged and diminutive mother entered the kitchen to make us some tea. Going to the stove, she noticed that the oven was turned on. When she peeked inside it, she was baffled by what she saw. "Ahmet, what are you doing with the oven?" she asked.

Weary at that hour and struggling with a difficult passage of narration, Ahmet responded briefly, "It's all right, Mother. We are just killing some batteries."

The old lady remained confused about that for days. Visiting some of her contemporaries, she said, "I don't understand my son's generation. They go around doing all sorts of strange things – like killing batteries!"

Shortages of tape presented a different problem. A few five-inch and seven-inch tapes appeared, off and on, in miscellaneous shop windows, but the three-inch reels that we used were simply not available. In 1962 I took to Turkey 80 small reels, enough for most of our year's work, but on other occasions I missed the mark. (It took me years to realize fully how boundless was the Turkish oral tradition.) In the summer of 1964, for example, I packed in my duffle 32 reels, seemingly enough for just two months' work, but in fact we had exhausted the supply three weeks before the end of that period. We then had two choices: terminate our quest early or reuse tapes already full. We opted for the second, even though it almost doubled our daily work schedule. From then onward, the field work ended at 4 P.M. After grabbing a quick supper, we transcribed tales until midnight, in that way freeing two or three tapes for our collecting on the following day.

Even more regrettable than this brief awkwardness was the loss of oral texts. Approximately 92 percent of Archive narratives are available on tape. The remainder were either dictated or were recorded on tapes that had to be reused.

A final technical dilemma is generated by technology itself. We are under constant pressure to put all of the holdings on Internet, a move which we have so far successfully resisted. We have done so for two reasons: 1) to protect both Turkey itself and our informants from misuse of sensitive materials in some tales; and 2) to protect copyright held both by scholars using Archive materials and by journals and book companies which published their works. Inasmuch as Texas Tech University Library is committed to maintain in perpetuity the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative, its folktales will continue to be accessible in this world if not in cyberspace. However, two of the Archive's research tools are in the process of going into WWW: the latest Catalogue of this facility and the extensive Subject Index.

Field work in folklore may reach beyond the collector's expectations. The professional goal may be the garnering of specimens of the oral tradition, but the personal rewards for his or her efforts may well exceed that goal. Fortuitous factors and serendipital discoveries along the way can contribute to a result greater than the total input might provide. When this occurs, a synergism has been realized.