

## Examination of the tale of Kerem & Aslı in terms of clothes

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### Abstract

Folktale is the name given to the products of folk literature created on the basis of the deep effect of any event or literal product left a trace in the society in oral culture. It is a long winded type of narration about real or real-like events. They are stories with traditional content which are narrated orally from one generation to the next. They generally deal with love and heroism. Kerem & Aslı is one of the most famous folk tales.

Kerem & Aslı tale is one of the folk tales which was revealed by late 16<sup>th</sup> century, known and liked in other nations than Turkey and Oguz Turkish tribes (Armenian, Georgian, Lezg, etc.) addressing broad masses. Similar tales including Kerem & Aslı tale popular among broad masses are significant sources particularly in terms of revealing cultural values since they represented the past and future of the society.

The purpose of this research is to find terms of garment, accessories, fabrics referred in the Kerem & Aslı tale, reveal meanings thereof and provide information about how they were used in the tale. Written sources were reviewed in order to collect research data. The characteristics of clothing of the characters in the Kerem & Aslı tale were revealed and a general assessment was made in the research and what the terms of garment, accessories, fabrics meant was explained. It was determined that the following terms were referred in the Kerem & Aslı tale; don (underpants), hırka (cardigan), pestamal, libas (clothes), esvap (clothes), saya (clothes), fistan (clothes), kaftan (caftan), gomlek (shirt), arakcın, cevre, serpus, nikab, kalpak, oya (lace), aba, atlas, sal (shawl), yağlık (handkerchief), elvan, kusak (belt), tulbent (gauze).

Keywords: folktale, traditional dressing, history of dressing, Kerem & Aslı tale

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## 1. Introduction

Tales, comprising one of the significant and colourful circles of our cultural heritage, is a traditional type of narration with poem and music components. The term of tale was first used in the ninth century. It is derived from the Arabic word “hakaye” and means “narrating, likening, history, epic poem, short story, tale, reporting” (Alptekin, 2003).

Folktales are one of the most important types in narrating ones in Turkish literature (Duymaz, 2001). Folktale is one of the first examples of passing into a sedentary life from a nomadic one and is one of such narrative types of love, heroism, a type with a mixture of Turkish, Arab – Islam and Indian – Iran, narrated by lovers and public storytellers (Alptekin, 2003). Stories within the content of folk literature are a kind of narration and became widespread from 15<sup>th</sup> century, meeting the literary needs of public (Karadag, 1995).

The subject in folktales is made up of the events realized around a hero. Folktales have two elements; one is the oppressed and the other one is the oppressor. Folktales go on as the adventures between these two elements. The space in folktales is the world. The events are realized as real or real-like events in folktales. Extraordinary events are frequently encountered in the adventures with the birth and other things happening to the heroes in these tales (Yılmaz, 2011).

Kerem and Aslı has a significant place in the tradition of folktales in the life of Turkish society. This tale is also important in terms of the fact that it has all the features folk tales. It is a story narrated from Tashkent to Rumelia and loved. The poems of Kerem were born in Turkish character and geography (Bars, 2010). It has basically three versions. In the conk (a leather covered book open in its long side, where minstrels themselves or others compiled poems) with a date of 1840, Kerem was narrated as the son of a rich bey living in Aleppo. In the Anatolian and Istanbul version, Kerem is the son of Isfahan Shah. In Azerbaijani version, he is the son of Ziyat Khan, the Khan of Gence. The father of Aslı is an Armenian monk and the treasurer of the Khan or an rich man from Aleppo (Ozturk, 2006).

It is believed that the tale was formed around the life of Kerem the lover who is supposed to live in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the tale, the big love story of a Muslim young man and an Armenian girl is told (Batur, 2005). Not being able to come together because of belonging two different religions and the running away of a monk taking his daughter with him and the tagging of Kerem with his comrade Sofu are all told in the story (Ozturk, 2006). The events take place in the geography of Eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan (Batur, 2005).

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the tale of “Kerem and Aslı” having a significant place in Turkish folktales and determine the clothing features in the tale.

## 2. Method

The earliest publication of Kerem and Aslı tale was in Istanbul in 1886. Armenian adaptation was released in the same year for the first time. There are a lot of researches carried out into the tale. Among some of the researchers are Sukru Elcin, P. Naili Boratav, Cahit Oztelli, Fikret Turkmen (Turkey) etc. M.H. Tahmasp, Hamit Araslı (Azerbaijan), B.A. Kariyev, Amagul Durdunyeva (Turkmenistan) and Rıza Mollov (Bulgaria).

In the current study, the Anatolian version of the tale named “Kerem ile Aslı”, which is one of the most widespread versions of the tale, prepared for the series of classics of Hasan Ali Yucel by İsa Ozturk was investigated in terms of clothing and the characteristics of the clothes mentioned in the story was determined. In the study, what the clothes mean in the story was explained with the investigation of the clothes of the characters. The reason why this tale was chosen was that it has an importance place in Turkish folktales and that it has all the characteristics other tales have.

In the study, text-based investigation method was used. This is a method used to analyse, criticize and make it understandable and then investigate depending on the work to be investigated (Best, 1982).

### 3. Findings

In this part, the features of the clothes of the heroes in the tale of “Kerem ile Aslı” were determined and what the clothes mean was tried to explain after a general evaluation.

**Don (Underpants):** It is a kind of underwear with two parts of legs covering the body down the waist up to heels (Kocu, 1969). The colours of don mentioned in the tale are blue, red, black and green. Black is a controversial colour. It is regarded as dark powers, crime and evil things and on the other hand, it is considered as loyalty, insistence, resistance, precaution, wisdom and reliability symbol. It is used as more greatness, height, dominance and bad luck (Dilacar, 1988).

In addition, the black colour was regarded as a symbol of power as well as negation, sorrow and unhappiness with the words “I dipped my red don into dark in the tale of “Kerem ile Aslı”.

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Bu tatlı canımdan bezdim, usandım,  
Kırmızı **donumu** karaya bandım.  
Hey agalar askın oduna yandım,  
Eger ben yanarsam nara da kalmaz.

**Hırka (Cardigan):** It is a cotton cloth worn by the public under the frock or as night gown flowing up to knee or shorter. The sleeves of hırka is loose, it has no collar and closed with the buttons in the front. There are pockets on both sides (Kocu, 1967). The basic clothing style of women in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century was shalwar (baggy trousers), long-sleeved shirts made of crepe fabrics flowing down the heel, short and long sleeved cardigans, and with short and long sleeved caftans, also with fur caftans both inside and outside worn over these clothing by wealthy people. The most important feature of cardigans and caftans is that they are open in the front and having no collar (Koca & Koc; 2014).

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Gorur mu gozlerin o Aslı Han'ı,  
Yoluna kılmısım feda bu canı,  
Terkeyledim bir yar için vatani,  
Giydirdim **hırkayı** sallarda kaldım.

**Pestemal:** It comes from Persian language and called as “pustemal” originally. It is called “pestemal” in Turkish. It is tied around the waist and defined as the clothe covering the body down the waist.

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Giydigin kumasın rengi al oldu,  
İbrisim kusagım **pestamal** oldu,  
Tutuldu dilimiz birden lal oldu,

Coz Aslım coz gogsun dugmelerini.

In the tale of Kerem ile Aslı, the words “libas, esvas, saya and fistan” are defined as clothes. The examples of libas, esvas, saya and fistan mentioned in the tale were given below.

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Kırk tane guzellerden kız alıp her birine ayrı ayrı **libas** giydirip Aslı Han’a daha eski **esvap** giydirip gul bahcesine goturdu.

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Irmak kenarında **esvap** yuyanlar,

Yolcuyu yolundan eyler bu gelin.

Kaldır nikabını yuzun goreyim

Yolcuyu yolundan eyler bu gelin.

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Egnine giymistir **saya**,

Yanında var cifte taya,

Sana derim sarı kaya

Kaya Aslı’mı gordun mu?

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Sihirli bir **fistan**, ilik dugme yaptırdı.

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Sevdigim bastan ayaga,

**Al kırmızı** giyinmistir.

Yarasır kendi dalına,

**Al kırmızı** giyinmistir.

In the tale of “Kerem ile Aslı”, Aslı wears a red dress at the night of wedding. It is a Turkish tradition. It is known that brides and grooms wear red caftans in the weddings in the tales of Dede Korkut (Gulec, 2009). In the study of “A Study into Dede Korkut Tales in terms of Clothing” by Civitci and Sahinoglu, it was determined that brides wear a red dress. The most popular colour in Dede Korkut tales is red, which is the symbol of maturity, happiness and wish (Ogel, 1991). In addition, the dress Aslı wore in her wedding night is magic. When the forty buttons of this dress are unbuttoned, they are buttoned on their own again. Not being able to unbutton the dress of Aslı in the wedding night, Kerem cannot reach his wish and also he goes hot all over (Durdıyeva 2004).

**Kaftan (Caftan):** It is a cloth without a lining worn over other clothes, particularly in earlier times, from 1828 onwards, and it is the name of man shirt; man’s wear starts with don, the underwear worn on skin, and a shirt then it is completed with caftan. Over the caftan, cubbe which looks like current coat, fur and kapacine are worn. Caftan in earlier Turks is made up of three parts. The central part surrounds the waist and buttoned up to the waist. Sometimes, the models without button are closed from the left to the right and tied with a ribbon (Kocu, 1967).

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Yâri bulsam, kına yaksam eline,  
Alıp gitsem vatanıma; elime,  
Bir kerecik sarılaydım beline,  
Kerem aglar; **kaftan** aglar; bel aglar.

**Gomlek (Shirt):** The correct for of gomlek is “gonlek”. Gonlek is the cloth worn on naked body. The skirttail of man shirts is over knees and it is placed inside the done down the waist, while woman shirts are flown down the heels (Kocu, 1967). In the tale, the shirt Aslı wears is defined as the one with buttons and made of linen.

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Karadır kasları gozu surmeli,  
**Keten gomlek** giyer gogsu dugmeli,  
Guzeller icinde onu oğmeli,  
Aslı Hanım Kayseri’ye vardı mı?

**Arakcın:** It is the name of a cap worn under kulah (conical hat) or turban in order to prevent them becoming dirty or oiled. It is called terlik (sweat absorber) in public (Kocu, 1967).

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Kiminiz **arakcın** giymis basına,  
Kudretten kalemi cekmis kasına,  
Henuz girmis on uc on dort yasına,  
Kızlar Aslı’m kiliseye geldi mi?

**Cevre:** It is a handkerchief with the sides bended inside and decorated with laces and embroidery. It has two kinds as yazma (hand-painted handkerchief) and sırmalı (brocaded). They are called yazma cevre and sırmalı cevre. Sırmalı cevre is also called yağlık (oil absorber) (Kocu, 1967).

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Derken gordu ki gergefin uzerinde bir **cevre** var, o cevreyi alıp koynunda sakladı. Cevrenin bir gulu daha islenmemis idi.

**Serpis:** It is a headwear. It has various types which were worn by both Turkish men and women for ages. Earlier Turkish serpus are; kavuk, kulah, take, fez, tas, kukuleta, pusu, kalpak, migfer (helmet), hotoz, tepelik, tac (crown) and sapka (hat) (Kocu, 1967).

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Aynasın almıs dizine,  
Surmesin cekmis gozune,  
**Serpusun** egmis yuzune

Hanım mı oldun? Hanım mı oldun?

**Nikab:** It is a face veil and also called as pece and yasmak. It is particularly made of white and black semi-transparent clothes. The eyes just behind nikab could see the front and around easily but those looking at her from a distance cannot recognize the face behind nikab. As nikab cover all the face, it cannot be replaced by yasmak. Turkish equivalence of nikab is pece. In earlier Turks, nikab was also used by men (Kocu, 1967).

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Irmak kenarında esvap yuyanlar,

Yolcuyu yolundan eyler bu gelin.

Kaldır **nikabını** yuzun goreyim

Yolcuyu yolundan eyler bu gelin.

**Kalpak:** It is a kind of serpus made of leather and broadcloth without turban around it. They have different names such as Tatar Kalpak, Cerkez (Circassian) Kalpak, Bulgarian Kalpak, Acem (Iranian) Kalpak and Samur (weasel) Kalpak (Kocu, 1967). The surface of kalpak is mostly covered with black velvet fabric and it is decorated with a fur (Civitci&Arga Sahinoglu&Ozeren, 2011). It was determined in the tale of Kerem ile Aslı that kalpak was decorated with a fur.

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Baktılar ki Gurcistan ilinin adamları hep samur **kalpak** giyerler.

**Oya (Lace) :** It is the embroidery knitted with a needle and colourful silk thread in the form of flower and leaves. It is stitched on the border of clothes and handkerchiefs (Kocu, 1967).

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**Oyaları** oymak oymak

Olmaz imis yâre doymak,

Agzı sut dudagı kaymak,

Han Aslı'mı gordunuz mu?

**Aba:** It is a coarse and thick wool fabric. The clothes, potur, cardigan, vest made from this fabric are also called aba. It was worn by small handicraft artists, ordinary people and dervishes (Kocu, 1967). Aba is the name given to the clothing woven out of coarse wool yarn, the fabric produced by beating into a felt. Being a cloth having been worn by people for ages, aba has some peculiar motives and it is expressed that each region has its own motives (Ortac&Buyukturkmen, 2013).

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Coskun derdim sular gibi bulandı,

Aktı gitti karlı dagı dolandı,

Post bağlayıp kapı kapı dolandı,

Hırka derdi, **aba** derdi, sal derdi.

**Atlas:** It is a kind of fabric woven out of silk to make a dress and has red, blue, green and yellow plain colours. There is no motive on it and it has two types; fine and thick. However, both types are hard. From the fine atlas, the daughters of the families in middle income group make it sown into bride's dress and shirt for the sons that will have a circumcision. Young women and men used to have shirts and shalwar out of this fabric (Kocu, 1967). In the tale, it was expressed that the cloth of Kerem was made of atlas.

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Kerem eder canım gibi,

**Atlas** giyer hanım gibi,

Yar yitirdim canım gibi

Han Aslı'mı gordunuz mu?

**Sal (Shawl):** It is a valuable woollen fabric used as a scarf or belt for shoulders and neck. This word, which comes from Persian, is used in Turkish for all clothes produced out of woollen, silk fabrics and woollen knitting for shoulders and neck. Instead of scarf and neckerchief, they are called sal (shawl). It is necessary to differentiate it from other fabrics. In the literature, shawl is one of the fabric in the poems written as the depiction of the beautiful (Kocu, 1967).

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Gorur mu gozlerim o Aslı Han'ı,

Yoluna kılmısım feda bu canı,

Terkeyledim bir yar için vatanı,

Giydirdim hırkayı **sallarda** kaldım.

**Yaglık (Handkerchief):** Yaglık is a handkerchief. It is a cloth of cevre, handkerchief and Yemeni. It's differentiated by its being larger than others. It used to be decorated with the finest examples of old Turkish embroidery (Kocu, 1967).

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Yine bir derdim bin oldu

Ne yapayım yaglık seni.

Derdime derman bulmadım

Merhem edem **yaglık** seni.

**Elvan:** A very colourful fabric (Grand Larousse, 1986).

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Kerem eder dustum aska gorunce,

Anladım ki gorusmesi pek yuce,

Basına asmıştır **elvan** burumce,

Elif kaddim buktu vardı yurudu.

**Kusak (Belt):** It is a long and narrow fabric in earlier Turkish clothing rolled around waist for both men and women to keep it warm (Kocu, 1967). In the tale of Kerem ile Aslı, it is believed that belt has an important place in the clothing of the age.

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Giydigin kumasın rengi al oldu,  
İbrisim **kusagım** pestamal oldu,  
Tutuldu dilimiz birden lal oldu,  
Coz aslım coz gogsun dugmelerini.

**Tulbent (Gauze):** It is a white and very fine cloth. It was the most suitable cloth used in the turbans to roll around (Kocu, 1967).

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Yudum **tulbendimi** beyaz eyledim,  
Sildim gonul pasın ayaz eyledim,  
Ben kahpe felege niyaz eyledim,  
Felek verdi bana bes gun caba hey.

#### 4. Conclusion

Due to traditional differences and changes starting with the emigration of Turks from Central Asia to Anatolia, the tradition of telling an epic poem turned in time to the tradition of telling a Folktale in Anatolia. The tale of Kerem ile Aslı also has a very significant place in the tradition of telling a folktale in Turkish social life. This tale repeats the sacrifices endured for the sake of love by symbolizing them. Today, these tales keep their value as a historical and cultural material.

In the study, a great many materialistic and spiritual cultural elements which are of great importance in the social and cultural life of Turks take place in the tale of Kerem ile Aslı, one of the intangible cultural heritages of Turks. One of the most important and easy-to-see components of this culture is clothing. There are important clues in the tale of Kerem ile Aslı with regard to Turkish clothing. With the investigation of the clothes of the characters in the tale, it was determined that the terms of don (underpants), hırka (cardigan), pestamal, libas (clothes), esvap (clothes), kaftan (caftan), gomlek (shirt), saya (clothes), arakcın, cevre, serpus, nikap, kalpak, oya (lace), aba, atlas, sal (shawl), yaglık (handkerchief), elvan, kusak(belt) ve tulbent (gauze) took place in the current study which was carried out to find out what they mean. As a conclusion, the terms of aba, arakcın, atlas, elvan, fistan (clothes), kaftan (caftan), kusak (belt), nikab, oya (lace), pestamal, saya (clothes), serpus, tulbent (gauze), yaglık (handkerchief) was mentioned in once, gomlek (shirt), cevre, libas (clothes), kalpak twice, hırka (cardigan) was mentioned three times, don (underpants) four times, sal (shawl) five times and esvap(clothes) six times.

It is believed that investigation of the clothes of the characters in the tale of Kerem ile Aslı would have a contribution to the introduction of our clothing culture due to the fact that clothing products which are one of the materialistic cultural values both in the past and in current time since they have a quality of a document in terms of cultural history.

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