

SHACKLE RITUAL IN THRACE REGION Trakya Bölgesinde Köstek Kesme Ritüeli

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ABSTRACT

Culture is the sum of material and spiritual values transferred to future generations with the accumulation of the past. These cultures include rituals. In this study, the *Köstek Kesme*, which is a rite of passage in the Thrace Region, was examined in detail. The *Köstek Kesme* ritual is a ritual based on the celebration of the child's first step. Sometimes it is seen as the reason for not being able to start walking, and this rite is carried out with the aim of helping the child start to walk. The fact that a child takes the first step on his own is a sign that he has grown up and is considered a transition worth celebrating by the Turks. This ritual, which dates to ancient Turkish beliefs was intensely celebrated in the Thrace Region in the past. Today, the frequency of the celebration of this rite is gradually on the decrease. The hypothesis of the research is based on an assumption that the ritual will not be performed in the Thrace Region in the future. The aim of the study was analyzed with both qualitative and quantitative methods. Cultural analysis technique, a form of qualitative methods and survey study, a form of quantitative method were used. The purpose of using both methods is to examine in depth the changes in social and cultural values experienced in this ritual. In addition, this ritual held in the Thrace Region was personally attended and a face-to-face interview was held with the relevant people involved in this ritual. The results obtained from personal observations, personal structured interview and a face-to-face interview indicated that the ritual intensely performed in rural areas in previous years did not attract enough attention in urban areas, and thus such rituals would no longer be performed in the future.

Keywords: Köstek Kesme, ritual, Thrace Region, child

ÖZET

Kültür, geçmişin birikimiyle gelecek nesillere aktarılan maddi ve manevi değerlerin toplamıdır. Bu kültürler ritüelleri içerir. Bu çalışmada Trakya Bölgesi'nde bir geçiş ritüeli olan köstek kesme ritüeli detaylı olarak incelenmiştir. Köstek kesme ritüeli çocuğun ilk adım atmasının kutlanmasına dayalı bir ritüeldir. Bazen ise yürümeye başlayamamasının nedeni olarak görülür ve bu ritüel çocuğun yürümeye başlaması amacıyla yapılmaktadır. Çocuğun ilk adımını kendi başına atması, onun büyüdüğüne bir işaret ve Türklerce kutlamaya değer bir geçiş olarak kabul edilmektedir. Kökeni eski Türk inanışlarına kadar dayanan bu ritüel eskiden Trakya Bölgesi'nde yoğun olarak kutlanmaktadır. Günümüzde ise bu ritüelin kutlanma sıklığı giderek azalmaktadır. Araştırmanın hipotezi de bu savın araştırılmasına dayalı olarak: 'İleride Trakya Bölgesi'nde köstek kesme ritüeli yapılmayacak' varsayımına dayanmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı hem nitel hem de nicel yöntemler ile analiz edilmiştir. Nitel yöntemlerden kültür analizi tekniği ve nicel yöntemlerden anket çalışması uygulanmıştır. Her iki yöntemin kullanılmasındaki amaç bu ritüel için sosyal ve kültürel değerlerde meydana gelen değişimleri derinlemesine incelemektir. Ayrıca Trakya Bölgesi'nde düzenlenen bu ritüele bizzat katılım sağlanmış ve bu ritüel hakkında ilgili kişilerle yüz yüze görüşülmüştür. Geçmiş yıllarda kırsal kesimde yoğun bir şekilde gerçekleştirilen bu ritüelin kent toplumunda yeterince ilgi görmediği ve gelecekte bu ritüelin yapılmayacağı bulgusu gözlem, yapılandırılmış kişisel görüşme ve yüz yüze görüşme yoluyla elde edilmiştir.

Keywords: Köstek Kesme, ritüel, Trakya Bölgesi, çocuk

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Introduction

Rituals are at the core of the social identity of all communities. Yet, according to the opinion of each society, the issue of what is ritual and what is not differs (De Coppet, 1992, s. 7).

Culture, in other words, social capital includes concepts such as morality, civic virtue, trust, rules and institutions, social norms, values and beliefs in social life (Aktan and Tutar, 2007, s. 2).

The rituals, which are a part of cultural and social values, consist of behaviors accepted in the society (Önk and Gökaliler, 2020, s. 674). No matter which society one lives in, in some periods of his life, he goes through some periods in which his place and position both in the personal and in the society change. During these periods, there are some ceremonies and celebrations where the purpose and essence remain the same, although they change from society to society (Yeşil, 2014, s. 132). For example, in Kazakh Turks, the "tusav kesü" (köstek kesmek) ritual is performed for the child's first walk. Kyrgyz's "tuşoo kesüü toyu" is practiced in Turkey with the name of "köstek kesmek" (Polat, 2005, s. 62). The toy that is made when the child starts to stand up and walk is called the köstek kesmek. Tusavkeser, one of the common traditions of the Turkish World, is one of the important ceremonies performed after the birth of a child in Kazakhs. This ceremony is performed for the child to walk quickly in a certain period of time. The child comes out of the cradle and starts to tread slowly after the crawling stage. This ritual is performed when he steps on the soil of the place where he was born with his own foot, makes a mark and sees his way with his own eyes (Çetin, 2018, s. 1095).

The aim of this study is to generalize the subject on the basis of the inductive method and to examine the *köstek kesmek* ritual practiced in the Thrace Region. This ritual, which was frequently practiced in rural areas in the past, is rarely performed in rural areas today. Unfortunately, it is thought that this ritual will not be performed in the future. This study is important in terms of how this ritual succumbed to the attitudes and behaviors of the society and the analysis of the changes in the values of the society.

Material and Method

The purpose of cultural analysis research is to define and interpret the culture of a particular group. This definition is usually made within the framework of concepts, processes, and perceptions specific to that culture. For this reason, the written and spoken language, behavioral patterns, perceptions, and shared experiences of the participants included in the research emerge as areas on which the research can focus (Hanko, 2011, s. 29). Culture is relative. For this reason, it is not possible to fit into some molds. For this reason, the researcher who conducts research with the culture analysis approach should stay in the field for a long time and enter an intensive data collection process. For these reasons, documents, literature, various newspaper, and magazine publications related to the subject were examined.

In addition, in the field of how this ritual was performed, this ritual was personally attended, and various notes were taken by avoiding prejudices. Another part of the study consists of a survey conducted with 100 people. The purpose of applying the survey study is to analyze the situation of this ritual in the future with quantitative data, why this ritual is done or not.

Result

In the literature review, it was found that this practice was made as a part of Turkish culture in many parts of Anatolia and in many Turkish countries.

Thrace Region provinces; a survey was conducted with 100 women living in Edirne, Tekirdağ and Kırklareli. In this study, the number of women who were surveyed was limited on the grounds that Tekirdağ received a lot of immigration and the demographic structure deteriorated, which could create a misleading effect on the survey results.

In Turkish society, age is accepted as an important factor in the acceptance of individuals, gaining a certain place in the society, and influencing the region or area (Yıldırak, at al., 2003, s. 47). In the survey study, the age range consists of 18-28: 9%, 29-38: 51%, 39-48: 24%, 49-58: 12%, 59-68: 1%, and 3% of female individuals aged 69 and over. The marital status of these women is 89% married, 7% single and 4% widowed. According to TUIK 2021 data, the age density of marriage in Edirne, Tekirdağ and Kırklareli provinces is in the range of 20-24 and 25-29 at most. TUIK data is an indication that our study is compatible with the demographic structure of the region.

According to TUIK 2020 data, the average household size in Turkey has decreased to 3.30 people. When the average household size in the Thrace Region is examined in the last 10 years, there is a decrease of 1 unit. The average household size in Kırklareli is 2.78, in Edirne 2.74 and in Tekirdağ it is 3.15. In our survey results, the number of people living in the total household is concentrated between 4 people (44%) and 3 people (33%) proportionally. The number of children in the family is 1 child (43%), 2 children (48%), 3 children (8%) and 4 children (1%).

Although the level of education is an indicator of social development (Kır, 2021, s. 52), the educational status of people can also affect many factors such as following innovations, communicating, researching, or adopting the origins of rituals. In the research area, the distribution of education status of women was examined. In the research area, it was found that 5% of the women were primary school graduates, 5% secondary school graduates, 24% high school graduates, 17% associate degree and 49% undergraduate graduates. This finding is an indication that the education level of the women participating in the survey is quite high, and therefore skills such as communication skills are highly developed.

Communication, along with technology, is one of the actions that people do a lot today (Irmak, 2019, s. 33). The use of the Internet and the widespread use of smart phones provide fast and easy use of this communication. All of the women in the research area have and actively use smartphones. The frequency of daily use of the internet was found to be 24% for 1-2 hours, 23% for 2-3 hours, 20% for 3-4 hours, 31% for 4-5 hours, and 2% for more than 5 hours. This finding shows that the women participating in the survey use the internet intensively.

Rook (1985, s. 259) emphasizes that "the expenditure and services for ritual are highly consumption-oriented compared to everyday life". In a study by Belk, Bahn, and Mayer in 1982, "ritual behavior is a symbolic language. "Learning how individuals begin to ritualize certain aspects of their market behavior will complement the recent work that emerges as they learn to decipher the symbolic meanings of products." With this perspective, it is stated that consumption-ritual-oriented studies are new. In the 21st century, "daily life practices, which take the consumption phenomenon from the traditional folk culture, evolve into a structure fed by popular culture elements in modern societies.

In societies that turn to more exaggerated consumption elements under the name of modernization in daily life practices, rituals are similarly affected by this change (Önk and Gökaliler, 2020, s. 280). In a study (2018) conducted by Taşkaya and Yağız on concept birthdays, it was concluded that while the concept party was being held, in addition to the cake, products reflecting the concept in posters, bottles, costumes, treats and decorations were used as a set. A similar phenomenon is observed in the altı ay kınası ritual performed in the Thrace Region. Henna clothes, gifts, etc. for henna are very costly under the name of henna concept (Irmak, 2022, s. 4).

The common phenomenon in these rites is that they are very consumption-oriented and open to diversity in terms of the materials used (clothes, gifts, various products with increasing prices with most cartoon characters under the name of

concept etc). Şahin (2008, s. 272), on the other hand, thinks that sociocultural lives in Turkey have not been developed in terms of theoretical and conceptual perspectives that can be analyzed and that they are under the influence of Western science perception. It can be said that Şahin's thoughts are correct for the rites of passage celebrated in the Thrace Region, such as birthdays, kına şenlileri, and altı ay kınası.

The *köstek kesme* ritual, on the other hand, is not consumption-oriented compared to these transition rites. It can even be said that this rite celebrates only the biological developmental stage of the child. This reduces the attractiveness of this rite, and as the rural population decreases over the years, the practice of this rite decreases in direct proportion. According to a study conducted by Yılmaz (2019, s. 277), the urban population, which was 24% of the total population in 1927, started to increase in the 1950s and reached 44% in 1980. After 2010, the rate of urban population increased up to 77%. With the law numbered 6360 enacted in 2013, villages in all metropolitan areas were transformed into neighborhoods. For this reason, the rural population, which was 23% according to the data at the end of 2012, decreased to 9% as of the end of 2013.

According to another view adopted by Yoloğlu and Zorlu (2020, s. 157), while in reality, between 6.5% and 8.5% of Turkey's population has a rural character, it has attained an urban status. Although it is not expected that radical changes will be observed in the life cultures of the people, the rural population on paper has been changed in this way by the legislators. In Thrace Region, migration is from village to city, especially in Edirne and Kırklareli provinces (Sarioğlu and Irmak, 2022, s. 171). Gusfield and Michalowicz (1984, s. 417-418) argued that rituals were not sufficiently researched. With the migration from rural to urban, rituals are not sufficiently researched, and these transition rites have not found a place in urban culture.

Although this situation can be associated with the phenomenon of migration; contrary to the result of the study carried out by Erdoğan (2009, s. 79) by grouping the provinces and districts of Turkey according to various development criteria (population, average household size, ratio of women who have given birth to 4 or more live births to married women, share of workers in industry in total employment, share of workers in agriculture in total employment, share of workers in service sector in total employment, total employment of wage-earning women share in employment, share of unpaid family workers in total employment, share of illiterate people in the population over 6 years old, share of university graduates in the population over 6 years old, rate of households whose toilet is not in the house, and rate of households without piped water installation in their house, etc.); he found that all of the Thrace provinces were highly developed.

It is a phenomenon that rituals change, disappears, or decreases over time. For example, although the phenomenon of death and the rituals associated with this phenomenon have been viewed from a social and religious perspective, different disciplines have approached the subject in a very different way with the development of science and technology. Although scientists on the subject still do not have a definite opinion, the researchers could not approach the findings of the past years impartially and they chose to make use of their imagination. Researchers are in common opinion that the rites related to the phenomenon of death differ from society to society, time, social differences, geography and period (Hobsbown, 1983, s. 10; Metcalf P, Hungtington R, 1991, s. 44; Parılı U and Uhri A , 2018, s. 16). The best example that can be given to the lost traditions in the Thrace Region; is the bride price (dowry). Bride price (dowry) is a custom, especially in primitive societies or rural areas. The basis of the ritual is based on giving money or valuables with monetary value and sometimes farm animals to the girl's side due to marriage. In primitive societies, the purpose of this rite is to provide dynamics such as the belief that marriage will go better, the strengthening of ties between relatives, the validation of marriage (increasing awareness), the protection of social strata (wealthy people marry wealthy people) (Tezcan, 2019, s. 424). The most

important reason for the disappearance of this rite in the Thrace Region is that the people of Thrace are intellectuals and have assimilated that women cannot be bought or sold. A report prepared on the Thrace Region; states that the education level of the agricultural producers is high. The report mentions that young farmers have at least a high school or university degree (Anonymous, 2014). Education level is an indicator of social development (Kır, 2010, s. 17). Irmak E and Sarıoğlu M (2022, s. 8) In the study named Blessing of the Girl Child in the Thrace Region: 6 Months Henna, it is clearly mentioned that women and girls are valued in the Thrace Region. In summary, the tradition of bride price (dowry) has disappeared due to the enlightenment of the society, the increase in education and awareness. It is the bocuk night that has increased its popularity in the Thrace Region with the rapid use of mass media and the influence of the media. According to a study conducted by Sol S.(2019, s. 600), around twenty thousand local and foreign tourists in 2018 and around thirty thousand in 2019 flocked to Çamlıca town to celebrate the bocuk night.

Rituals are a way for people to say what they find important and necessary (Karaman, 2010, s. 229). The key point that can be associated with this research is: Rather than the phenomenon of immigration in the population; It can be explained by the fact that this ritual does not serve neo-liberal policies, it is not focused on consumption, the lack of green areas in the city and as a result, the absence of an area where children can move and play comfortably. As a result of the findings, Thracians do not find this ritual important and necessary.

In the Karaibrahim Village of Amasya, the child who is late in walking in the village is first taken to the healer. After the child is taken to healer, a rope is wrapped around the child's feet and cut the rope three times. In Yeşilöz Village, children who do not walk properly when they reach their walking age are taken to Ayakbastı Hill. A rope is cut on this hill when praying (Güler, 2018, s. 123). This practice, which is similar in various regions of Turkey, takes place in and around the Gerede region of Bolu as follows: The two legs of the child to be shackled are tied with a rope, something to eat or money is given to his hand, and a child who walks well is given a knife. The child with a knife in his/her hand cuts the rope that is tied to the legs of the child whose shackle is to be cut and slaps him. He/she takes the food or money from the child's hand and runs away (Polat, 2005, s. 63).

Another practice regarding the shackle is as follows: One of the child's relatives ties the both feet of the child with a rope early early in the morning, recites the al-Ihlas sura of the Qur'an, cuts the ropes, and leaves without looking back. It is believed that after this, the child will walk well. A similar practice is also seen in Azerbaijani Turks. If the child walks or talks late, they say "Çocuğa çille basmış". In this case, the child is held above the running water, the thumbs of both feet or hands are tied with a rope and the rope is cut with scissors by reading the al-Ihlas sura, it is said "I cut your çille". Thus, the child is freed from çille (Arık, 2005, s. 172).

The ritual of breaking the shackle in the Thrace Region can be explained as follows: In the village defined as a rural area, a red ribbon is tied to the feet of a girl or boy who is just starting to walk, and they are seated in front of the house. Scissors are placed next to the child. Two children, slightly older than him/her, from his/her relatives (relatives or neighbors) run around the house. The child who comes in first cuts the tape and ends off the disability. Good wishes are made so that "May God give keep him/her safe & healthy". Then the lokma tatlısı (sweet rolls) prepared by the host are distributed and the ritual ends. Those who wish can also buy gifts suitable for their age for the running children. Also, a special cake called *adım çöreği* is made by the host. Only one of these *adım çöreği* is served, by putting a coin in it, as a gift to the houses in the village. The household who finds the coin is given a pair of shoes as a gift.

In the study, the household income of women was determined. The purpose of determining the household income is to examine the change in the consumption-oriented henna for six months in the situation of this ritual.

Household income was determined as 19% between 4,000-6,000 TL, 23% between 6,000-8,000 TL, 14% between 8,000-10,000 TL, 19% between 12,000-14,000 TL, 13% between 14,000-16,000 TL, 16,000-18,000 incomes between TL 9% and income over 18,000 TL 3%. Although it can be said that the income distribution is evenly distributed, it has been determined that it is the highest between 6.000-8.000 TL (23%).

Did you do the shackle ritual for your own child in the study? it was asked. The responses received are proportionally no (95.0%) and yes (5.0%). The results obtained when we wanted to investigate the reason for this situation; It was found that 38.9% found rituals too exaggerated, 20.2% used them for advertising purposes in social media, 22.5% found rituals unnecessary, and 18.4% found rituals expensive. It is important to know the history of that ritual to apply a ritual or not. Because only in this way can that ritual be assimilated deeply. According to Taylor in a similar view, on this issue culture is emphasized that it is a learned value, a legacy inherited from upper generations.

Do you have any information about the history of the shackle ritual? When we asked the question "No, we don't know" was answered with a rate of 63.3%. This is followed by the answer I know a little by 21.4% and I know by 15.3%, respectively. It cannot be expected that a group that does not know the purpose of a ritual, does not know its history, in short, is alienated from that ritual, will adopt this ritual. In this context, there is a directly proportional situation between knowing the historical past and not performing the ritual. In a similar result, the result about the application of this ritual is that it is unnecessary to do this ritual with a rate of 63.3%. According to Yeşil (2014), rites of passage can be thought of as person-centered. Because the essence of the ritual is to express the change in the situation of the person and to prepare him for this situation.

Another point is that these rituals are non-repetitive (like birth and death only once in a person's life). Therefore, a person will experience them once in his life. One of the most important aspects of the transition period is to know in advance of their realization. Because it needs to be prepared in advance during its realization. In the Thrace Region, the opinion adopted against the shackle ritual is that this ritual is not performed and is unnecessary. However, contrary to this situation; Karaman (2010, s. 230) frequently states that rituals have an active role in ensuring the continuity of sociocultural life as a whole. This phenomenon experienced in the shackle ritual in the Thrace Region can be explained by the thought of Aktan and Tutar (2007, s. 10). Culture has two dimensions: material and spiritual. Changes can occur between these dimensions during cultural changes. The change of material culture elements is faster and easier than the change of spiritual culture elements. This situation can be seen in industrial societies and societies that are in the transition phase to another social development period.

Should the ritual of the shackle be performed in future generations? and 33.7% no, 34.7% yes and 31.6% no idea. Rituals that reflect cultural and social values are accepted behavior in society. Rituals help individuals feel as part of society (Önk and Gökaliiler, 2020, s. 688). The belief in the necessity of continuing the traditions, the ritual being a social activity, the happiness of gift giving during the ritual and the social pressure are the factors that those who defend the necessity of this ritual put forward respectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the Thrace Region, the population in the village areas has rapidly shifted and is shifting towards the urban areas. Those who remain in the village constitute the elderly population. The shackle ritual, which used to be intensely celebrated in the village areas, could not find a place for itself in the city life. The reasons for this are problems arising from urban planning such as the scarcity of green spaces in cities, the fact that children and adults do not know each other in the apartment, and the playgrounds where children can run and play are far from the home campus.

In addition to these, the main reason is that the shackle ritual needs much less material tools than other rites such as birthdays and six-month henna. For example, there are products or services that can be an expense item in many separate items such as henna clothes for a six-month henna, a place rented for that day, gifts, gifts decorated with henna, tambourines, musicians, dancers, and photographers. This visually appealing ritual is supported by social media and various communication channels and serves capitalism under the name of concept. The financial aspect of the work is very important. However, the purpose of the ritual of the shackle is based on the celebration of the first step to walk, and the spiritual dimension is at the forefront.

Because the first purpose of its celebration is the importance of the first step in life, standing on one's own feet. It is thought that this ritual, which is a very old Turkish tradition, is not well known, and because the ritual cannot be performed in urban areas, it is thought that it will not be adopted by future generations and a culture will disappear.

As a social being, human beings have internalized many rituals throughout history, developed, changed, or given up on doing them over time. Breaking the shackle, which is one of the transition rites, is important in terms of solidarity, gift giving, and the transfer of cultures between generations. Today, with the effect of neo-liberal policies, many popular cultures are tried to be ritualized and encouraged. The most common of these today is Halloween (Güzel and Kurnaz, 2020, s. 167). Taking the first step, which makes us who we are, and which is very important by all nature creatures, is a rite celebrated throughout history. It is important to protect our own culture instead of trying to adapt it by taking different cultures from other cultures in terms of transferring our culture to future generations. In order for our culture not to be forgotten, it is necessary to organize various cultural activities. For example, these rites can be performed in neighborhood playgrounds in urban life. Adım çöreği can be made by cooperatives where village women, which have been established in almost every province in the urban forests of municipalities, sell local products.

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