

# Interesting Beliefs and Events in Kilis According to Folk Narratives

## Halk Anlatılarına Göre Kilis'te İlginç İnanışlar ve Olaylar

Hüseyin DOĞRAMACIOĞLU\*

### Abstract

Kilis is a city located on Turkey's Syrian border and 10 km away from the border. Here are some events that have been believed by the people and have survived to the present day. These events are both interesting and extraordinary. Some people claim that these events are completely real. These events also appear in verbal narrative types transmitted from the old generation to the new generation. The deceased doctor who treats the patient, the shrine whose walls are leaning, people who travel in the place and change places at once, mysterious structures and magical events are part of Kilis culture. Cultural values that have been going on for centuries in Kilis combine with legends and emerge as a new system of values. These beliefs are interconnected and consistent. It is understood from people who say they are not imaginary. It is seen that the people living these things do not engage in any gain. For this reason, the credibility of the narratives seems to be quite high. A serious research on these events and places may perhaps solve the mystery of these places.

**Keywords:** Interesting Beliefs, Kilis Culture, Diseases and Traditional Therapy.

### Öz

Kilis, Türkiye'nin Suriye sınırında yer alan ve sınıra 10 km uzaklıkta olan bir şehirdir. Burada günümüze kadar gelen ve halk tarafından hâlâ bilinen bazı inanışlar vardır. Bu inanışlar çerçevesinde anlatılan olaylar hem ilginç hem de olağanüstüdür. Günümüzde bazı insanlar bu olayların tamamen gerçek olduğunu iddia etmektedirler. Bunlar, eski kuşaktan yeni kuşağa aktarılan sözlü anlatım türlerinde karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Hastayı tedavi eden türbedeki doktor, duvarları saygıyla eğilen türbe, bir anda yer değiştiren insanlar, gizemli yapılar ve büyümlü olaylar Kilis kültürünün bir parçasıdır. Kilis'te yüzyıllardır süregelen kültürel değerler efsanelerle birleşerek yeni bir değerler sistemi olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu inanışların birbiriyle bağlantılı ve tutarlı olduğu bu olayları ve inanışları nakleden insanlardan anlaşılmaktadır. Bunları nakledenlerin ve bu olayları yaşayanların bu anlatılardan ve inanışlardan herhangi bir kazanç sağlamadıkları görülmektedir. Bu nedenle anlatıların güvenilirliği oldukça yüksek görünmektedir. Bu olaylar ve yerler üzerine yapılacak ciddi bir araştırma belki bu yerlerin gizemini çözebilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İlginç İnançlar, Kilis Kültürü, Hastalıklar ve Geleneksel Tedavi.

### Introduction

Kilis is a border province known for its historical structure and cultural background. People from different beliefs and cultures have lived together for centuries. Therefore, we can come across beliefs and traditions from almost every culture here. In this geography, wars and migrations have always occurred and people have been affected by these events. These events also affected the cultural structure of the city and an interesting cultural mosaic emerged. Culture and beliefs shaped the life of the people. This lifestyle has produced interesting images.

Beliefs determine the lifestyle in Kilis. Beliefs come into play when people are sick or need to decide on a topic. In fact, these interesting beliefs in almost every subject are embedded in daily life. Some of the public view these interesting beliefs as definitive information.

Oral culture has been going on for centuries in Kilis. *“Some ancient Turkish belief systems still exist vividly in the region where a substantial Turkmen culture treasure lies”* (Alptekin 2017, p. 237). But I would say that this culture from Syria to Turkey in recent years, which begin to disappear along with the increasingly intense waves of immigration. More refugees than its own population have settled in Kilis in recent years. Traditions and oral culture started to change. However, about 20 years ago, I did a folkloric field survey in Kilis for my master thesis. During this time I talked to older people and took notes of what they

\* Prof. Dr., Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, [hdogramacioglu@gmail.com](mailto:hdogramacioglu@gmail.com)

talked and told. I've included the names of these people and what they do at the end of the article. Many of these people are not alive today. The events they told helped us to understand the ancient Kilis culture. I mostly compiled interesting events and beliefs in Kilis during the folkloric field research. However, the new generation is now unaware of most of these beliefs. Kilis is a cultural city with a long history. There are many places that are visited and known as sacred in Kilis:

It is seen that some of these places called zeyrat in the region are a tomb, a grave or a wooded area. The transitional periods connected with season such as Nevruz, Hıdırellez are widely celebrated in wide geographical areas in Turkish culture. At first sight, the days of Zeyrat seem to be one of these ceremonial practices depending on the season. But this practice is a synthesis practice involving ancestors cult, tree cult, and sacrifice ritual. (Erol 2018, p. 113).

These places are places with historical roots and enriched with rituals from Turkish culture. However it has a historical appearance with its streets and old buildings. The fact that this city is very close to the Syrian border and therefore suffered from the refugee flow caused cultural change. However, the events and beliefs written in this article are still alive.

### **Doctor in Tomb**

In cases where modern medicine cannot cure, people turn to folk beliefs. In this case, folk medicine gains importance. "Especially, during times of the non-existence of modern medicine, folk medicine was one of the common practice for people" (Alptekin 2018, p. 879). Folk medicine is seen as a concept that the public attaches importance to and firmly believes. In Kilis, there is a visit tomb in the place called Kartal Park. It was built by covering it in the form of a dome. According to popular belief, a famous Ottoman doctor was buried here. In his period, he easily treated many diseases. Today, there is a known event related to this mausoleum. The sick person takes the key of this shrine from the night watchman. In the evening, he lies near the grave and sleeps there. Before he sleeps, he locks the door on himself and sleeps when it becomes impossible to open it. At night, the doctor woke up from the grave and examined this patient. The person sleeping there says that one hand massaged him at night. This hand touches her with a gentle massage style. The patient is medically recovered when he gets up in the morning. However, those who do this practice are not willing to share this with anyone. These events told by people appear as simultaneous fictions.

<sup>1</sup> They claim that this is a mystery and if they describe it, the mystery will be broken.

It is an event that the old generation knows but young people are not aware of. In Kilis, this shrine still stands in the middle of a park with all its mystery.

### **Mausoleum of Şeyh Efendi and Interesting Events**

Mythological events are frequently encountered in folk culture. Such events are full of rich materials for folklore. "Mythology is an area that for centuries an important place in the literature of many nations" (Karabulut 2015, p. 618). There is one such event in Kilis.

There is a large facility in Kilis known as Şeyh Efendi Tomb. There are graves of people who have been here here for centuries. The sheikh system that passed from father to son is still here today. In this tomb, someone called Şeyh Efendi and his ancestors were buried. It is reported that when the sheikh of this tomb died, they washed it and prepared it to be buried. As they were lowered into the grave, the surrounding walls bent to respect him. Hundreds of people saw this. Also, a tradition that has been going on since ancient times lives here. If someone cannot find a suitable wife and get married, he comes here. Before the morning sunrise, before the Morning Prayer, the key of the shrine is taken from the son of

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information on this issue, see: Prof. Dr. Abide DOĞAN, Tarih ve Mekan Odağında Türk Romanı İncelemeleri (Turkish Novel Studies in the Focus of History and Space), Hece Yayınları, Ankara 2018

Sheikh. And this person gets the big key. It opens the door of the tomb for the first time. Thus, his fortune and luck open, it is believed. This key is not one of the keys today. It is an average of 15 cm in size and made of iron. It is a key made in ancient times. In this tomb, bread is distributed on Fridays and it is believed that this bread multiplies as it eats. Hundreds of people flock here on Fridays to eat this bread. Also here is another tradition: In this shrine, stray cats are hosted. Free bread and water are distributed to them. That's why hundreds of cats walk around and eat. One of my relatives, engaged in farming, said: he bought fruit saplings, but took them to the sheikh here before planting. The Sheikh read some prayers to this sapling. Then he said he sowed apple seedlings. Last year, those apple seedlings grew rapidly. Then he said that there were such apples on the tiny tree that it could not bear the branches. The branches were broken due to the weight of the apples on some of them.

### **Meatballs Father (Köfteci Baba) Tomb**

The person buried here was a cook. In a large mansion, he was staying with a rich family. Here he cooks to the family and takes care of household chores. One day, the host man decided to go on a pilgrimage. They used to go on pilgrimage with horses. The road to Madinah in Saudi Arabia lasted for months. One day the chef, known as the Köfteci Baba, baked stuffed meatballs. Hot and warm meatballs were brought to the landlady woman on the plate. The woman said to her: my husband loved these meatballs; I wish he would eat them if he was here.

The woman said to her: my husband loved these meatballs; I wish he would eat them if he was here. The meatball father said when he heard this, give it to me and I'll take it. The landlady is surprised. I suppose he'll eat it, he thought. However, the chef head went to Madinah suddenly. He gave the meatballs warmly to the host man. He ate these meatballs there. Then, after several months of traveling, he told him that he lived and returned to his home. People who used to do such extraordinary things used to leave there when these features were heard. Köfteci Baba left there so that people could not come and show interest in him. There are many cloths and candles on this person's grave. People who wish come here and tie shoddy pieces and light candles. Then they make a wish. It is believed that these wishes will come true.

### **Dusty Grandfather (Küt Küt Dede) Tomb**

In the area of Kilis, where there are ancient baths, there is the Küt Küt Dede tomb. The peculiarity of this place is that: healing dust accumulates in the window of the wall built for the grave. If someone with a pimple-type disease at the edge of the eye passes through this powder, the disease passes. Today, there are still people who go here and apply this powder to the eye rim. The public has a common belief that this powder is medicinal. The number of people who apply this powder to the edge of the eye and get better is quite high. It is interesting that this powder has not been scientifically studied to this day. It is widely accepted by the public that the dust accumulated on the windowsills of the tomb is magic. We do not have enough information about the life story of the person buried here. Now there is still this shrine and people still believe it. However, it is not as widely known as before.

### **Underground Tunnels**

According to the old Kilis rumors, there are said to be large connection tunnels under the Kilis from the historical years. It is stated that hidden underground waters pass through these tunnels. However, we do not have any information or evidence about where these tunnels have not been identified until today, when and why they were built. Perhaps if these tunnels are found in later ages, it will be revealed whether this is true or not. However, I heard that Kilis had an underwater map left from the Ottoman period and that only one copy of this

map was in a person from Kilis. If this map is found, tunnels will appear. The places from Sabah Pazarı (Morning Market) to Odun Pazarı (Wood Market) region in Kilis are historical places. Large water tunnels passed under these places. One of our relatives who lived there said that the sound of water was heard early in the morning when no one was outside. There was even a well in the house, when a handkerchief fell there, this handkerchief was found in the water well of the house on the other street. These tunnels are not known today. But the older local people know them.

### **Wide Street Walls**

An old belief widely spoken by the people in Kilis is also related to street walls. The old street walls of Kilis are very wide. The wall of our house, where my childhood passed, was about 1 meter wide. We walked over this wall. It was built like a fortress wall. In the past, Jews lived intensely in Kilis. They usually buried their precious stones, gold and jewels between these thick walls. When the Jews left Kilis in bulk, our grandparents used to say that they had valuable belongings, gold and jewels between these walls. Today, amateur gold hunters who know this want to investigate these walls from place to place. It is unclear whether these walls have gold or jewels, but these structures mysteriously exist.

### **Old Bathing Genies**

Another mysterious event known in Kilis takes place in old baths. There are Turkish baths built in Kilis for the public. These baths are public and large places made with old chipped stones. These baths in many old neighborhoods of Kilis still retain their old mystery. According to folk beliefs, night jinn appear in these baths and play and play until the morning. *The narrators of these events do so with the awareness that they are the product of a fictional world.* (Ergeç 2020: 1818). For this reason, the ancients would advise that they should not be alone in the bath at night. In Kilis, baths serve women and men at different times. According to the local culture, women and men cannot be washed in the same bath. Today, this rule is still applied. These events that women tell today actually emerge from the comparison of powerful beings with powerless people. This situation can also be understood as the struggle of the weak and the strong, especially for women. (Doğan 2019: 353). Therefore, daytime ladies; In the evening, the men go to the bath. I heard in a fairy tale told in Kilis: A man was locked in the bath at night. He did not notice the closing time of the bath. When the guard locked the door and left, he stayed in this bath until the morning. Midnight demons appeared. The jinn playing naked in the hammam in the form of a young girl surrounded this man. They made all kinds of offers to the man. Some offered to marry, some wanted to play together, some wanted to fulfill all their wishes. One of the jinn told him the location of the treasures. But in the morning the man's mental balance was disturbed. An important part of the public believes in these beliefs.

### **The First Human Encounter in the Morning**

One of the beliefs in folk culture is The First Human Encounter in the Morning. This subject has been studied in folk culture. A number of beliefs in folk culture have been researched throughout history:

Folklore, which has been well-nourished by traditions throughout history, has incorporated oral tradition elements for centuries. Folk culture, an endless treasure, has excited the attention of quite a few researchers and writers in all periods. (Alptekin & Alptekin 2017, p. 193).

According to old people in Kilis, if the person who leaves the house sees someone he likes in the morning, all his work will come across. If you see someone you don't speak or love, then all your work goes wrong. Old people who believe in this way would be very happy if the first person they met on the road was a person they loved. When they meet someone

they don't like, they turn left and spit. Thus, they believed that that person's bad luck would not affect them.

People with this belief predict whether the day will be a good day or not based on the people they meet when leaving the house in the morning. This belief is also seen in old Kilis tales.<sup>2</sup> This belief, which is a continuation of a very old tradition, is not as common today as it used to be. The new generation, who has met the universal culture, started to forget these old beliefs in recent years. This situation occurs not only in Kilis but also in the whole world as a dual culture. On the one hand, local cultures and beliefs, on the other hand, universal culture has brought people into a bi-cultural identity:

Then also most people in the world now develop a bicultural identity, in which part of their identity is rooted in their local culture while another part stems from an awareness of their relation to the global culture. (Paul Narh Doku and Kwaku Oppong Asante 2011, p.1)

Local cultures and beliefs are increasingly forgotten. These beliefs are cultural values that define local identity and help us better understand the past.

### **Deciding with Dreams**

Before deciding on a job, ancient people decided based on what they saw in a dream. When they were buying a house, starting a new business, they were deciding what they had dreamed at night when they were in the decision phase before getting married. In holy nights, especially before going to sleep on Friday night, cleaning with water, hand and face are washed. Prayer before going to sleep the feet is washed. He/she turns to the right and goes to bed. Then he/she prays: If this is good for me, let me see green or white in my dream. If that work is sinister, the color of the dream is red or black. Black color means a little bad. Red means disaster at the end of the work. If you see the red color in a dream, it will do more harm than work. The person who sees red or black color in the night dream does not believe in this dream and if he starts to work, the disaster he will face will be more severe. They would also apply this technique to commercial businesses that were estimated to be profits at the end of the job. In my meeting with people who applied this technique, I saw that they all confirmed that they made the right decision in this way.

### **Result**

Interesting events and folk beliefs that existed in Kilis for centuries are still alive today. The people of Kilis have some beliefs about diseases and other conditions. The most interesting of these beliefs are listed here. Especially going to the doctor's grave for treatment is an interesting practice that is still applied today. It is more interesting for the doctor to get up and examine. The strange thing is that no one has a monetary gain from this business. People believe that this is true. This mystery can be solved if what is happening in this tomb and tomb is investigated. There are some other beliefs that I have not mentioned in the above article. Another interesting belief is that some people can travel to very distant cities at the same time. Old people used to say that they saw people who could go to very far cities all of a sudden. Others believe that there are those who travel and return to the past. According to all these, we can say that interesting beliefs and events are still alive in Kilis. However, I did not find any concrete information about them. Kilis is a city that has existed since ancient times. People from different beliefs and nationalities have lived here throughout history.

When cultural values are not recorded, they are deleted from the history scene. Oral culture in Kilis is based on a very old history. This situation also makes us feel that there were

---

<sup>2</sup> For detailed information on this issue, see: Hüseyin Dođramacıođlu, Kilis Tales Compilation and Analysis, Master Thesis, Thesis advisor: Doç. Dr. Fuzuli Bayat, Gaziantep University, 2002.

ancient civilizations here before. As it is understood from the historical excavations, Kilis has been home to many civilizations since ancient times.

Kilis has an interesting and mysterious cultural structure in the period of ancient civilizations and until today. In this culture, there are recommendations and beliefs that have passed through the ages. Research and discovery of these will be possible with a comparative study between the past and the present.

### References

- Alptekin, M, Alptekin, D., (2017). İskender Pala'nın Şah ve Sultan adlı romanında halk bilimi unsurları, *Injosos Al-Farabi International Journal On Social Sciences/ Al-Farabi Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Volume 1, Issue: 2, pp. 193 - 224
- Alptekin, M., (2018). Meddah Behçet Mahir'in halk anlatılarında halk hekimliği ve baytarlığı, *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, c. 17, s. 3.
- Alptekin, M., (2017). Kilis'te ateş ve ocak kültürüyle ilgili inanışlar, beliefs on fire and fireplace culture in kilis, *Uluslararası Mercidabık'tan Günümüze 500 Yılda Orta Doğu Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi Yayınları*
- Doğramacıoğlu, H., (2002). *Kilis folk tales compilation and analysis*, Master Thesis, Thesis advisor: Doç. Dr. Fuzuli Bayat Gaziantep University, 2002.
- Doğan, A. (2018). Tarih ve mekân odağında Türk romanı incelemeleri, Hece Yayınları, Ankara 2018
- Doğan, Mine Nihan (2019), *Metalaşan bir özne: Asılacak kadın*, XIV. Uluslararası Büyük Türk Dili Kurultayı Bildiri Kitabı- Bakü/Azerbaycan.
- Doku, P. N., Oppong Asante, K., (2011). Identity: Globalization, culture and psychological functioning. *International Journal of Human Sciences [Online]*. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>
- Ergeç, Z. (2020), *Orhan Pamuk'un "Benim Adım Kırmızı" romanına yeni tarihselci bir yaklaşım*. *Turkish Studies - Language*, 15(4), 1809-1821. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47845/TurkishStudies.41709>
- Erol, M., (2018). Kilis ve çevresinde zeyrat günleri geleneği, *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 17 (1), 113-122
- Karabulut, M., (2015). "Edip Cansever'in şiirlerinde mitoloji / Edip Cansever's poems mythology", *TURKISH STUDIES -International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic-*, ISSN: 1308-2140, (Prof. Dr. Şefik Yaşar Armağanı), Volume 10/12 Summer 2015, ANKARA/TURKEY, [www.turkishstudies.net](http://www.turkishstudies.net), DOI Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.8505>, p. 617-630.

### Old people I get information:

I have given the information about the source persons we have received information in the following order:

1. Name and surname
  2. Place of birth
  3. Age
  4. Collectible status
  5. Job
  6. From whom he learned the event he told
1. Duran Kale
  2. Kilis
  3. 74
  4. High School

5. Retired from Municipality Science Affairs

6. From his father

1. Sevim Çimen

2. Kilis

3. 55

4. None

5. Housewife

6. From Mom

1. Mehmet Doğramacıođlu

2. Kilis

3. 74

4. University

5. Retired teacher

6. From Dad

---