

Requiem for the Ones Experiencing the Tragedy of Farewells: The Ballad of Narayama

Abstract

The movie 'The Ballad of Narayama' is considered as one of the masterpieces of traditional cinema and of the famous director Shohei Imamura. The movie depicts a very cruel tradition to which people striving to survive in a mountain village of Japan are strictly attached. Tradition, as a founding past, is carried in the movie to the present and the future, with rituals, ceremonies and rites. Thus the community achieves a knowledge through tradition, allowing it to reproduce itself each time. However, this knowledge also manifests itself as a law-maker in the community-life. In the examined film this law is most succulently expressed as "rule is rule, mercy is useless". In particular, persons who reach 70 years of age, are taken by their sons or close relatives to the summit of the 'Narayama Mountain' and abandoned to die. In the cultural codes of the community, such as act is one of the most important tasks and obligations to be fulfilled. Thus, abstaining from such task and obligation is considered as the greatest sin, crime and shame. At this point, the tradition serves the function as a reminder to each member of the community, of the tasks and obligations, to prevent their sins, crimes and shames. For example, in the film, although the character 'Mother Orin' has healthy teeth, she is continuously told by both her grandchildren and other members of the community, that she has turned 70 and must go to the summit of the 'Narayama Mountain'. In short, each member of the community exerts pressure on those who turn 70. Against this pressure, healthy persons who turn 70 "break their front teeth with stone" to give the message to their sons or close relatives, who shall carry them to the summit of the Narayama Mountain, that the time has come for the tragic task and obligation they have to fulfill. In this context, the film 'The Ballad of Narayama' can be considered as a requiem for the ones experiencing the tragedy of farewells. This study is a content analysis and evaluation of the film 'The Ballad of Narayama', specific to the tradition, making use of qualitative research methodology and using the document analysis technique.

Keywords

The Ballad of Narayama, Tradition, Ritual, Collective Responsibilities Principle, Mountain and Sacrifice Cult.

Introduction

It can be said that the series of events that take place in each society or community life, is a pattern of the social structure, rather than the product of simple coincidences. Therefore, detailed analysis of events taking place in a society or community life and making certain inferences, primarily requires taking the social structure as a reference point. This is because, relations, interactions and the mutual reciprocity of these, can provide an idea about the general characteristics of the intended ideal types and styles. Thus, knowing the contextual mutual reciprocities between the relations and interactions between the structure and events, also means knowing the type of spatial memory, thought and sensation style at the place of examination.

In this context, the film entitled 'The Ballad of Narayama', one of the masterpieces of the famous director Shohei Imamura, has attempted to portray how humans perceive, feel and see the world, through the tradition that they are strictly attached to in their society or community life. For this purpose, the highlights of the film 'The Ballad of Narayama' have been examined under the sub-topics of ritual in constructing tradition, the importance of religious ceremonies and rites, acting according to the collective responsibility principle and the mountain and sacrifice cult.

1. Importance of Ritualized Practices in the Construction of Future

Each society or community needs an ideal type of individual to carry itself to a sustainable future. This need is met by constructing desired "culture codes". Culture codes constitute the building blocks of tradition, which can be characterized as the specific founding past of a society or community. However, the condition for the tradition to both maintain its liveliness in the present and also live in the future, as a founding past, is realized through the ability to create "ritualized practices" (Hobsbawm, 2006: 4) through ceremonies and rites, as specified in the discourse of Hobsbawm. In this context, it can be asserted that all societies and communities make arrangements to prevent all uncertainties and randomness, in order to guarantee daily social lives and their futures. Accordingly, ritualized practices provide an idea about the general characteristics of a society or community. Thus, having an idea about the community living on the foothills of the 'Narayama Mountain', requires examination of their ritualized practices. For this it shall be sufficient to observe the values and anecdotes that stand out in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama'.

The movie depicts, based on a specific cruel tradition, women or men who reach 70 years of age, being taken by their sons or close relatives to the summit of the Narayama Mountain, which can be considered as an outdoor cemetery, to be abandoned for death, regardless of their health. The sanction of the tradition that manifests itself through ritualized practices, is most succulently expressed as "rule is rule, mercy is

useless". However, the film emphasizes that the elderly are taken to the summit of the Narayama Mountain, not because they are inefficient or useless, but on the contrary, to ensure that they meet with god. Crowned with tradition, this knowledge has been internalized by everyone living on the foothills of the Narayama Mountain. Thus, death itself becomes a ceremonial practice within tradition. The film describes this ceremonial practice in the case of 'Mother Orin'. Mother Orin is a healthy person who reached 70, despite being healthy. Her grandchildren, close relatives and other residents of the community remind her that she reached 70 years of age and exert pressure on her, by emphasizing that her teeth are very strong despite her age. Faced with this pressure, 'Mother Orin' is forced to break her healthy front teeth with stone. It can be said that breaking teeth with stone and showing it to everyone has three meanings. The first meaning, according to Haviland, is to "primarily bring continuity to the game of death by breaking teeth" (Haviland, 2002: 422). The second meaning is to indicate which son or relative shall accompany the elder person in the death journey to the summit of Narayama. The third meaning is to inform that it is not possible to go to the meeting with God at the summit of Narayama, in a careless manner and without ceremony. In this sense, breaking teeth means that a ceremony must be held and respect must be shown before the journey, for the elder person to set on the journey of death. Hence, the film includes such a scene. Very serious preparations are made especially at the ceremony house. For example, the house is cleaned, ceremonial clothes are taken out, 'sake' drink is prepared and notice is given to those who previously participated in the mountain journey with close relatives. Visitors of the ceremony house first bow before 'Mother Orin' and show their respect. Thus the preliminary stage of the ceremony is completed. Later the ceremony is directed by one of the visitors who previously experienced a mountain journey. The person directing the ceremony makes a speech for 'Mother Orin' and says the following. It is a difficult task to accept the mountain journey and reach the sacred summit. We wish you strength and courage on this difficult journey. You have gathered us to celebrate the sacred meeting. We are grateful to you, please accept". After the speech, the person directing the ceremony takes a sip of the previously prepared 'sake' drink and gives the floor to the other guests, for their respect speeches. In short, each of the experienced guests make an admirable praise speech for 'Mother Orin'.

Socio-anthropological studies on communities with traditional characteristics, have also found traces that ceremonies were held with praising speeches. According to Russel, the basic common point of all praise speeches in a ceremony, are their inclusion of a rule. According to this rule, persons who are praised are only those who sacrifice their own interests for the interests of others. In this sense, those who fail to make sacrifice have to be condemned. Accordingly, getting praised and fear of condemnation take precedence over all other thoughts when they reach very high levels. Here, praise and fear of condemnation are strong incentives that tend to encourage acts mostly serving the general interest (Russel, 2014: 94–117). This aspect is most noticeable in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama'. Another remarkable point in the ceremony scene of the film, is related to the rules to be followed during the journey to the Narayama Mountain. The rules to be followed are again stated by persons who have experienced the mountain journey in the past. Accordingly, they must "leave the house without being

seen by anyone, they should go around the lake at the mountain three times, pass 7 valleys and climb to the top". The summit is actually an outdoor cemetery. This is because, those previously brought there were abandoned to the mercy of wild animals. Meanwhile, a secret rule is reminded to the son or relative to accompany the death journey, considering that the skeletons encountered on the way can be discouraging. This secret rule should mostly be implemented in case the elder person is discouraged and does not want to reach the summit. In short, the elder person should be left to the summit no matter what. After all is done, the son or relative accompanying the elder person is asked to return from the same path, without looking back. The parties are expected to strictly follow these advices and rules. Because they are binding on both of them.

Based on this, it may be asserted that the ceremony is not specific to the person, but is valid for the whole community. The reason for this is related to the principles of the ceremony. Two main principles are remarkable in the ceremony. The first principle is that any act executed on an individual is also transferred in one way to the neighbors, relatives or allies of that person. The second principle is that similar things generate similar things. In other words, identifying a presence or situation, also constitutes that presence or situation. This is rooted in the rule itself (Durkheim, 2005: 421). The logic of rule and making rule is to fully shape simultaneously and in time (Bourdieu, 2013: 128). Thus, both the cultural and symbolic boundaries of the community are constructed, and it is ensured that community members survive by leaning on these borders (Cohen, 1999: 77). Then, it may be asserted that ritualized practices function as "system shapers reproducing themselves" (Herzfeld, 2012: 327). In this sense, ceremonies held in traditional communities for preparation to death journey are actually nothing but a celebration for realizing a principle that shall ensure the "rebirth and continued life of the community" (Akin, 2004: 27). This issue is greatly observed in the prominent ceremony scene in 'The Ballad of Narayama'. In short, as a ritualized practice, the ceremony held for the death journey serves not death, but the sustainability of life.

2. Acting According to the Collective Responsibility Principle

Another feature of the tradition sustained by the people living on the foothills of the Narayama Mountain, is its very strict rules. The strictness of the tradition arises from the necessity to survive community life under very harsh conditions. For example, in one scene of the film, it is mentioned that "in order to sustain life under harsh conditions, girls are being sold, because they have economic value, while on the other hand boys are getting killed, because they have no economic value". So much that even 'Mother Orin' explains that she had to "sell her newborn daughter because of a year of bad harvest". The people living in this living space, where economic poverty and deprivation are at extreme levels, are so much preoccupied with their own troubles, that they "do not even show the sensitivity to bury a swollen dead baby on a paddy field". Both issues are regarded as ordinary by the people living on the foothills of Narayama. What really matters for the people living there is "to stay alive". For this, community members are expected to be very good hunters and gatherers, in order to supply

foodstuffs. Lack of these qualifications means seizing the right of other community members to live. Those who commit seizure, thus crime, are punished by death and it includes their whole families. In short, the punishment of any crime is implemented not only on the person, but also on the whole group of that person. In this context it can be asserted that the tradition, which exists with ritualized practices, also acts a law. Then, it becomes vital in terms of the continuity of the community, to "learn the knowledge constructing the law and loyalty to the law" (Clastres, 1992: 79). Otherwise the community cannot survive.

In the film this issue is explained as follows: "Mother Orin lives in the same house with her sons, brides and grandchildren. There are also unborn children and very small children in the house, in need of care. Along with financial difficulties of a large family, there is also very serious shortage. So much that, even the worms on tree branches are utilized to eliminate hunger". In short, each family has serious problems. These problems are encountered even further by families who do not sufficiently cultivate their fields and achieve efficient products, thus fail to achieve successful results with hunting and gathering. One of these families is the 'Ameyan's, the family of Matsu, who is the prospective spouse of Kesakichi, the grandchild of 'Mother Orin'. Matsu secretly steals potatoes and corns from 'Mother Orin's house when she finds to opportunity and takes them to her own family. However, Matsu is unaware that 'Mother Orin' has noticed this theft. The food that Matsu takes to her own family each time is only sufficient to save the day. Thereupon, Matsu's father decided to take the food of the community at the rain house and started to slowly carry them to his own house. Unfortunately, in the last one he got caught while carrying the sack of beans. A wide range of foodstuffs were found as a result of examination at the house of 'Ameyan's. As a result, they were told that their field could not efficiently produce such diversity. Thus, the attempt is a crime of theft. The punishment of the crime was death and covered all the members of the family. Hence in the movie it is said that "If we decide to kill the Ameyan family, we cannot exclude Matsu". However, Matsu is the prospective bride of 'Mother Orin' and in her womb carries her grandson and the child of Kesakichi. Nevertheless, she cannot be excluded from the death sentence. All the community members act together with a consciousness to prevent theft. In particular, it is considered that theft must quickly be prevented, otherwise the 'Ameyan' family shall continue stealing. And in order to implement the given sentence on all members of the 'Ameyan's, Matsu has to be sent to her father's house. Thereupon, 'Mother Orin' gives food to Matsu and asks her to take them to her own family. What "Mother Orin" does here, in fact, is to send her prospective bride to her death, together with the child in her womb, in order to protect her own family. After Matsu arrives in her father's house, all family members are buried alive by leading figures of the village and farm laborers. All goods left from the killed family are equally divided among the persons who carried out the act.

The elements of crime set forth regarding food theft in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama', are also noted in social and cultural anthropological studies on communities that 'live in semi-starvation'. It is believed that especially with the act of theft committed in these communities, a certain taboo is violated and this activates magical powers and endangers the whole life of the tribe. Thus, in order to evade facing such a danger, not

only the criminal, but her/his whole clan is held responsible. Such course of action is defined in the framework of "collective responsibility principle" in primitive communities. This principle provides us with an example of the individual identifying oneself with the community (Wells, 1994: 149–152).

Thus, it is not possible for the individual in such a structure, to perceive himself/herself as separate from the group. Because in these communities, "the indivisible is not a characteristic of the individual, but of the group". In short, people in such communities are born with certain rights and obligations. In this sense, my obligation expresses the right of another person to live (Bruhl, 2006: 69–71). In other words, any act performed on behalf of individuality, is actually performed on behalf of the group. It can be said that all the life and existence of the group have almost been summarized in the individual. Accordingly, it is possible to put forth the general characteristics of the community by observing an individual, and of the individuals by observing the community. In other words, a judgement can be made about the overall based on a small essence. All this is based on ritualized practices shaping the experience of individuals through taking root in tradition. This aspect is captured in the messages conveyed in the relevant scenes of the film 'The Ballad of Narayama'.

3. Mountain Cult

The 'Narayama Mountain God' is mentioned in certain scenes of the film 'The Ballad of Narayama'. Almost a personality and holiness is attributed to the mountain. It is observed in the film that "wishes are made and forgiveness is asked from this mountain god". It is also emphasized that "the mountain god must not be annoyed and all community members turning 70 must wish sincerely desire to meet with him at the summit". This willingness binds not only the elder person, but also the son or relative accompanying the journey. This is because the accomplishment is a difficult task and obligation. Acting otherwise is considered as extremely disgraceful. Then, those who do not want a curse on the community should not avoid their tasks and obligations and fulfill them worthily. However not everyone in the community life can experience the honor of climbing up to the Narayama Mountain. For example, the cursed, those who wish to escape from duty and not fulfill their obligation and those who are discouraged are excluded from this honor.

In the film it is possible to capture some traces that there is a 'mountain cult', based on anecdotes in certain scenes. For example, 'Mother Orin' says to Tama, the new wife of her son Tatshuei, "the earlier you go to the summit, the more praise you shall get from the mountain god, otherwise the mountain god will get annoyed and the clan here may face bad luck". Then she says "it is not good for a person who turned 70 like me, to be healthy. This is because I am good for nothing but eating. That is why I want to go to the summit. We shall all meet with the souls who went there before us anyhow". In another anecdote, the mountain god is mentioned in a speech between 'Mother Orin' and old Matayan. In this conversation, 'Mother Orin' advises Matayan, who does not wish to go to the summit and shows weak will and says "Do not shame yourself before the Mountain God, do not turn your back on your son or the Mountain God when you are

alive". In this context, 'Mother Orin' is presented in the community life as an enviable role model character with her behavior for the Narayama summit.

The 'Mountain God' is mentioned no in the conversations of role model personalities, but also in the conversations of cursed persons who shall not go to the summit. For example, the words of old Arayashiki on his deathbed, in his conversation with his wife are very significant. Arayashiki, attributes the cursing of his whole family, his illness and thus, his inability to go to the Narayama summit, to the curse of a young farm laborer who impregnated his sister". This is because Arayashiki's father killed this young farm laborer by beating with a stick. Arayashiki asks "his soul and all his family to be freed of the curse of the young farm laborer, after his own death". For this, "Arayashiki's wife Aen has to be the wife of all single farm laborers in the village for one night and meanwhile has to pray to the 'Mountain God' in order to remove the curse". The redemption to be paid here for the sins, has been left as a will by Arayashiki to his wife Aen. It is believed that if the will is not fulfilled, the curse of the killed young farm laborer shall never leave Arayashiki's family. Therefore, Arayashiki's wife Aen starts to fulfill her task and obligation to be a one-night wife for all the single farm laborers of the village, in order to remove the curse.

The 'Mountain God' is met once again during the fulfillment of the will. In particular Risuke, one of the single sons of 'Mother Orin', considers that the wife of Arayashiki, who is on his deathbed, shall be with him. Thus, he makes a wish to the 'Mountain God' to cure his problem about his bad smell as soon as possible. We encounter another example when 'Ameyan's steal the bean sacks. It is emphasized that according to tradition, 'Ameyan's, who committed the crime of theft, should "ask forgiveness from and pay redemption to" the Narayama Mountain God. Finally, the Narayama God is encountered in a conversation between 'Mother Orin' and her son Tatsuhei. 'Mother Orin' gives advices her son so he "may not fail on his task on the sacred journey like his father Rihei and feel ashamed". Tatsuhei, on the other hand, says her mother "should "not get worried and her advices would not go in vain. As proof, Tatsuhei tells his mother "that actually, when he was 15, he himself killed his father Rihei, who did not wish to take his grandmother to the mountain and shows where he buried him". Against this proof, 'Mother Orin' says to her son 'you did not kill your father, the Mountain God did'. After this reply, she says the following: "our ancestors went to the summit like us for centuries. Everyone has to move to the summit in certain intervals. This is because god awaits us at the summit. We have no other way". As said in a chant, 'snowing' is accepted as the most important sign that the Mountain God is at the summit. "The elderly person abandoned at the summit is considered to be very lucky if it snows when they climb to the summit. This is because death shall take place quickly." Hence, in the movie it snows on 'Mother Orin', who is abandoned on the mountain summit. In the final scene of the film, Tatsuhei, returning home "mutters by himself before the fireplace, thinking both that his mother is lucky to die without pain and that she met with the God at the summit of the Narayama Mountain"."

It should be noted here that the mountain cult is not a characteristic unique to the Japanese society. Socio-cultural anthropological studies have determined that suggested that many other societies with traditional characteristics also had a mountain cult. Mountains have been considered in general as the place of superhuman beings or deities

(Artun, 2005: 101). In other words, mountains both directly associated with god and also accepted as the seat of gods. Thus, mountains are chosen places of cult (Baydur, 1994: 1). Therefore, accepted as the house of god, mountains themselves become the subject of worship (Baydur, 1994: 91–93). For example, mountains are given personality and spoken to, praised and appealed. Mountains are also sometimes regarded as the closest path to god, and sometimes as a cemetery (Ögel, 1995: 438–459). It is possible to observe all this way of thinking in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama'. There is no doubt that ritualized practices that construct tradition underlie this way of thinking. In this sense, it may be asserted that the ritualized practices in the case of Narayama Mountain, are "continuously institutionalized cults, rather than irregular and temporary events" (Price, 2004: 32).

Within such institutionalized cult, it is inevitable that ancestors sent to death are also "turned into a cult object" (Clastres, 1992: 80). This is because the ancestors to be sent to death are on hand left in the heart of nature for the birth in the future, and on the other hand, abandoned to the mercy of wild animals. In other words, the elder are both exhibited and abandoned at the summit. Roux considers this issue in terms of the rituals performed to ensure remaining skeletons of the elder are cleaned (Roux, 1999: 184–227). Thus, both the Narayama Mountain and all the elders to be abandoned to death at the mountain summit, can be regarded as cult objects. Hence, those who participated in the death farewell ceremony of 'Mother Orin' and who previously experienced the mountain journey, have turned their ancestors into cult objects with their statements.

4. Sacrifice Cult and Altruistic Suicide

One of the natural consequences of the mountain cult in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama', is the sacrifice cult. This cult consists of altruistic suicides, to express in a Durkheimian discourse. In the film 'Mother Orin' is depicted as "a person who lives because some others once sacrificed their lives". Now the turn to give up own life for the lives of others, has come to 'Mother Orin'. In this sense, 'Mother Orin's desire to reach the Narayama summit at once, is an altruistic suicide and is a subject that should be evaluated as part of sacrifice cult. This is because, everyone in the community life thus becomes indebted to each other. Thus those who must pay their debts, have to fulfill their task and obligation to give up their own lives for others when the time comes. This is expressed as "know how to give as you know how to take, everything will be fine" in a Maori proverb (Mauss, 2005: 355).

Debt in general can be said to be a sign of the strength and willingness of a person to support social obligations that accommodate herself/himself and the family in social life. Debt is also a bond where community members express mutual confidence and social obligations. Thus, debt turns into a mechanism ensuring the continuity of both the persons and the system in the society or community life (Pritchard, 1998: 120). As a result of this mechanism, societies or communities with close kinship are part of one another and live the lives and die the deaths of each other. People in such a structure continuously keep others in mind and work and act in the context of relations. In short, humans neither live alone or die alone. In other words, both life and death are shared realities in such communities. What is shared is the mostly the humanitarian and

transmissible characteristic of experience. And this is under the responsibility of the community, rather than something specific to the individual. The, the body itself also ceases to be the property of the individual. This is because, the place where the body is shaped, is realized under the sphere of responsibility of the community (Sahlins, 2012: 61–63). Thus the individual feels indebted to the society in which he/she was born and raised and begins to view the world by following the requirements of being indebted.

It may be asserted that this way of thinking highly matches the Japanese system of thought. In particular, the condition for a person to be virtuous and fair, requires "realizing her/his place in the wide and mutual debts relations that include both the ancestors and the contemporaries". And this means knowing the meaning and content of obligation. The word 'on' in Japanese means the obligations including all the large or small debts of a person. The word 'on' means "a burden, debt and obligation that a person can endure as much as possible". 'On' is a heavy burden and the individual almost always has to waive his/her rights under its pressure. The indebtedness of a person, in other words undertaking 'on' is not a virtue, but paying 'on' is a virtue. This payment usually starts with the person acting to express her/his gratitude. Therefore, Japanese give value to suicide and turn this event into an honorable and meaningful act (Benedict, 2011: 84–144). Death itself is not regarded as a right here, but as an obligation. One is faced with danger of losing honor and respect if the obligation is not fulfilled. The society exerts pressure on the individual and commands her/him to die, to prevent facing such danger. In other words, the individual is obligated by the society to die. In short, each society member is asked to make a sacrifice for social purposes when they reach a certain age (Durkheim, 1992: 221–222). This sacrifice can be observed to a great extent in the Japanese society in general and in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama' in particular.

Other researchers tend to consider "sacrifice cult and altruistic suicide" from other perspectives than indebtedness. These researchers considered that cultures, in general, can provide the framework where genes can be transferred or disappear. Especially Lumsden and Wilson mention an altruism against relatives. In this context it is asserted that "a certain society or community can increase its biological health when the altruistic person sacrifices her/his own life" (Trigg, 2005: 201–204). Thus, "life must be sacrificed" to the society or community for its members to live. Aging, from this aspect, consists of a narrative towards being sacrificing oneself. This is because it consists of a series of narratives (Gullette, 2013: 190). However, with these narratives "attempt is made to recreate life through death, which is the negation of life" (Caudwell, 2002: 101). In particular, shared sad feelings, allow for increasing social vitality by enabling the communication of minds. In such case, the society or community feels its power by gradually turning to itself, hopes and begins to live again (Durkheim, 2005: 471–472).

As a result, in any case no one is able to escape facing the "tragic end" in the mentioned narrative of "The Ballad of Narayama". What generates the tragedy here is "simultaneously on one hand realizing a highly positive value, while on the other hand, destroying another highly positive value" (Kuçuradi, 2009: 22). In this sense an admirable effort is put for others to live, in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama', while it is shown that for this sake, own life is ended by the person under the command of life.

There is no doubt that action is taken with a sense of obligation in such attitude, rather than with arbitrariness. In the case of 'The Ballad of Narayama' we face two types of these obligations. One of these is 'loyalty', the other is 'gratitude' (Feldman, 2012: 222). With these obligations, each member of the community can show acts of kindness to both each other and to persons they do not know. All these are experienced within ritualized practices. Thus, experiences become "constituent elements of reality" in the mentioned communities (Searle, 2005: 211). Hence, the film 'The Ballad of Narayama' in this context depicts a very cruel tradition that is experienced in the context of ritualized practices and which has become the constituent element of reality.

Conclusion

Each society or community requires individuals considered to carry on its cultural heritage. It constructs cultural codes to do so. These codes are continuously circulated through ritualized practices, within the tradition that is a founding past and ensures that they remain dynamic. Thus, the society and the community gains the opportunity to carry itself to the future. In this sense, the film 'The Ballad of Narayama' depicts a community carrying itself to the future through its traditions. The depicted tradition provides how the community constructs, arranges and manages its vital information, customs, law, rites and ceremonies. Though the commandments of the depicted tradition are very cruel. However, the sustainability of community life, requires observance of mandates. The requirements of these commandments are fulfilled in the framework of the "collective responsibility principle". Thus, each decision taken by individuals actually function as a decision of the community. In short, the body of the individual together with his/her thoughts, are constructed under the sphere of responsibility of the community.

There is no doubt that in this construction process, each individual is indebted not only to each other, but also to their community. The best part of being indebted is to know that it is something that is payable. So much that "I have to pay now, what was once paid for me". Thus, the greatest profit of those who have to pay a price, is to be happy in thinking about the people they kept alive. In this context, examples of cult are encountered in the film 'The Ballad of Narayama'. For example, there is an altruistic suicide act in the case of a personalized mountain cult and a sacrifice cult. However, although some community members are very willing in performing this action, some are very reluctant. The community expects sacrifice from individuals who do not wish to pay a price. Continuous reminders are made for this in order to ensure the health, peace and harmony of the community are not disrupted. In this sense it can be said that the film 'The Ballad of Narayama' is a reminder where community members question their existence.

Vedaların Trajedisini Yaşayanlara Yakılmış Bir Ağıt: Narayama Türküsü

Öz

Narayama Türküsü filmi, geleneksel sinemanın ve ünlü yönetmen Shohei İmamura'nın başyapıtlarından biri olarak gösterilmektedir. Eserde, Japonya'nın bir dağ köyünde hayatlarını idame ettirmeye çalışan insanların sıkı sıkıya bağlı oldukları çok acımasız bir gelenek anlatılmaktadır. Filmde, kurucu bir geçmiş olarak geleneğin kendisi, ritüel, seremoni, ayin ve törenler ile şimdiki zamana ve geleceğe taşınmaktadır. Bu sayede topluluk, gelenek vasıtası ile kendini her defasında yeniden üretebilecek bir bilgiye kavuşmaktadır. Ancak bu bilgi, topluluk yaşantısında kendini kural koyucu bir yasa olarak da göstermektedir. İncelenen filmde bu yasa, en özlü biçimde, “kural kuraldır, acımak bir işe yaramaz” şeklinde ifade edilmektedir. Özellikle 70 yaşına gelmiş kadın veya erkeklerin, oğulları veya yakın akrabaları tarafından “Narayama Dağı”nın zirvesine çıkarılarak ölüme terk edilmeleri söz konusudur. Topluluğun kültür kodlarında böyle bir hareket tarzı, yerine getirilmesi gereken en önemli görev ve ödev olarak bir karşılık bulmaktadır. Dolayısı ile topluluk üyelerinin bu görev ve ödevden kaçmaları, en büyük günah, suç ve utanç sayılmaktadır. Geleneğin kendisi bu noktada, topluluğun her bir üyesine, günaha girmemeleri, suç işlememeleri ve utanç duymamaları için görev ve ödevlerini hatırlatıcı bir işlev görmektedir. Örneğin filmde “Orin Anne” karakterine hem torunları hem de topluluğun diğer üyeleri tarafından sağlıklı dişlere sahip olsa da sürekli olarak 70 yaşına geldiği ve “Narayama Dağı”nın zirvesine gitmesi gerektiği söylenmektedir. Kısaca topluluğun her bir üyesi, 70 yaşına gelenler üzerinde bir baskı kurmaktadır. Bu baskılar karşısında 70 yaşına gelmiş sağlıklı yaşlı insanlar, “ön dişlerini taşla kırarak” kendilerini Narayama Dağı'nın zirvesine taşıyacak olan oğullarına veya yakın akrabalarına yerine getirmek zorunda oldukları trajik görev ve ödevin zamanının geldiği mesajını verirler. Bu bağlamda “Narayama Türküsü” filmi, vedaların trajedisini yaşayanlara yakılmış bir ağıttır, denilebilir. Ele alınan “Narayama Türküsü” isimli filmde bu anlamda nitel araştırma metodolojisinden yararlanılarak ve doküman analizi tekniği uygulanarak, gelenek özelinde bir içerik çözümlemesi yapılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Narayama Türküsü, Gelenek, Ritüel, Ortak Sorumluluk İlkesi, Dağ ve Kurban Kültü.

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