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LINGUISTIC, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS OF KURDISH DENG BÊJS AND WESTERN MINSTRELS

KÜRT DENG BÊJLER VE BATILI MİNSTRELLERİN ESERLERİNİN DİLSEL, KÜLTÜREL VE TARİHSEL AÇIDAN İNCELENMESİ

ABSTRACT

This study aims to comparatively analyze the works produced by the Kurdish dengbêjs and the Western minstrels from a linguistic, cultural, and historical perspective. The works produced by the dengbêjs mainly deal with disasters, wars, heroes, and loves, separations, stories, and epics that profoundly affect society, while the works of the minstrels present wars, heroism, loves with entertainment elements. The dengbêjs usually perform their works with a bare voice, whereas the minstrels use musical instruments in their performances. The performers of both traditions have contributed to the preservation of the linguistic elements of the language they use and their transfer today, reflecting the cultural values, and life norms of societies by reinforcing the identity and sense of belonging of the people. Both the dengbêjs and the minstrels have been the spokespersons of their societies during the important social and political periods of change in terms of history by recording the events with their poems and songs and keeping the collective memory alive. In this context, the study adopted the document analysis method within the scope of the survey design and applied an interdisciplinary approach that brings together the fields of linguistics, history, and music. The study draws attention to the contribution of oral narration traditions to cultural continuity and prepares the ground for suggestions for the protection of this heritage

Keywords: Dengbêj, Minstrel, Linguistics, Culture, History

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Kürtlerin dengbêjlik geleneği ile Batılıların minstrellik geleneğinin ürettiği eserleri, dilsel, kültürel ve tarihsel açıdan karşılaştırmalı analizi etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dengbêjlerin ortaya çıkardığı eserler, ağırlıklı olarak toplumu derinden etkileyen afetleri, savaşları, kahramanları ve aşkları, ayrılıkları, hikâye ve destanları işlerken, minstrellerin eserleri savaşları, kahramanlıkları, aşkları, eğlence unsurları ile sunmaktadır. Dengbêjler, genellikle eserlerini çıplak sesle, nadiren bir müzik aleti eşliğinde icra ederken; minstreller, bütün performanslarında müzik aleti kullanmışlardır. Her iki geleneğin icracıları, kullandıkları dilin dilsel özelliklerinin korunmasına ve günümüze taşınmasına katkıda bulunarak toplumların kültürel değerlerini, yaşam normlarını yansıtır insanların kimlik ve aidiyet duygularını pekiştirmişlerdir. Hem dengbêj hem de minstreller, toplumlarının önemli sosyal ve siyasi değişim dönemlerinde toplumun sözcüsü olmuş, olayları şiir ve şarkıları ile kayıt altına almış ve kolektif hafızayı canlı tutmuşlardır. Bu bağlamda, çalışmada tarama deseni kapsamında belge analizi yöntemi benimsenmiş; dil bilimi, tarih ve müzik alanlarını bir araya getiren disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşım uygulanmıştır. Çalışma, sözlü anlatım geleneklerinin kültürel sürekliliğe katkısına dikkat çekerek, bu mirasın korunması yönünde önerilere de zemin hazırlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dengbêj, Minstrel, Dilbilim, Kültür, Tarih

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Introduction

The tradition of oral narrative holds a significant role in preserving the cultural memories of societies and in the formation and construction of social identities. This tradition appears in various forms in several communities in different periods of history. Some individuals in societies standing out with their artistic characteristics have undertaken the mission of conveying important events they have witnessed or experienced throughout history to the communities they live in.

Fırat Taş, in his book *Dengbêjlik Geleneği ve Dönüşümler (The Dengbêj Tradition and Transformations)*, states that oral traditions capture the feelings and thoughts of everyday people, as community members share and pass down their own stories. Through their poets, societies convey daily experiences, emotions, desires, and struggles—elements that often do not find a place in written records—transmitting them from one generation to the next. These narratives reflect a society's reality and, by embodying the cultural expressions of everyday life, offer valuable insights into folk culture (Taş, 2023, p. 12). Such folk culture-related cases are still available in those societies; thus, human beings consider themselves as integral parts of them.

These artists have conveyed what they wanted to say by making it into music. This situation is seen in almost all societies with minor differences. While this tradition continues in some, it has been forgotten in others due to modern technological advances. In this study, the works produced by Kurdish dengbêjs and Western minstrels are examined based on a linguistic, cultural, and historical perspective. Thus, comprehending the cultural and historical importance of both traditions may contribute to revealing the socio-cultural structures and values of the artists who perform these activities and communities in detail.

The works produced by dengbêjs have some common topics such as pain, joy, history, and oral memory of Kurdish people. These works have served to convey Kurdish linguistic aspects, history, and cultural values from generation to generation. The dengbêjs have performed works related to stories, laments, and epics, through which they have tried to preserve cultural diversity. On the other hand, the works of minstrels included poems, music, stories, and epic, through which these artists tried to not only convey linguistic elements, cultural values, and historical truths to the community but also to entertain the audience present there. In their works, the minstrels studied old historical events, love affairs, events related to heroism in company with music, and some acrobatic activities. Accordingly, when the dengbêj tradition is considered within the framework of the concept of memory, it may be asserted that it contains a significant part of the Kurds' collective memory; both individual memory and collective memory formed through social events and phenomena within the dengbêj tradition (Taş, 2023, p.11).

In the literature review, it has been found that there are many sources highlighting the dengbêj's and the Western minstrel's traditions separately. However, no definite study has been found that evaluates the works of these two traditions from a linguistic, cultural, and historical perspective. Therefore, in this article, the linguistic richness, performance styles, roles in the societies they live in, and historical developments of the Kurdish Dengbêjs and Western minstrels will be emphasized and similarities and differences between these two traditions will be revealed.

1. Linguistic analysis

1.1. The works of Kurdish dengbêjs

Kurdish dialects—primarily Kurmanji, Zazaki and Sorani—are used by dengbêjs to narrate stories. Complex rhyming patterns, symbolic vocabulary, and a strong bond with the natural world and Kurdish history are characteristics of this oral tradition. Alliteration and parallelism are used to highlight how visually appealing their performances are. For example, their stories frequently use idioms and antiquated terms that appeal to listeners, retaining linguistic components that could otherwise be lost via daily usage (Bocheńska, 2022, p.919). In dengbêj works, rhythm and intonation have a deepening effect on meaning, which ensures that the works have an intense impact both in meaning and emotional context (Blum, 2007 & Hasanpour, 1996, p. 328). In the works performed by the dengbêj, the intensive use of repetitions, idioms and metaphors allows a stronger bond to be established with the listener; thus, it is possible for the listeners absorb and utilize these linguistics aspects efficiently. The following example shows the linguistic elements used in the Kurdish song performed by a dengbêj, Cahit:

Eviya jî kilama mîrê min eynî kilama Şêx Seîd Efendi Xalit Begê Cibirî ye
 Ax mîrê min
 Dîwar xalî ye ez nizanim ka şêxê min
 Mîrê min li heyran ca rabe çû me Diyarbekra şewitî bira weliyane
 Taqîba bavê Şêx Elî Riza qutbê zemanê çiyayê Bîngolê derketiye
 Ji Erzûrûma Qerekilîsê bira ji Wanê Bilîsê destê bi destê ye
 Taqîba bavê Şêx Elî Riza qutbê zemanê çiyayê Bîngolê digere cotê qanûna
 Polês e law dewriya ne
 Ez çû me li derê mehkema Diyarbekra şewitî distînin îfada bavê Şêx Elî Riza
 qutbê zeman e çiyayê Bîngolê li min rebenê ji Kurda ra îdam qerar dane
 Lo lo bira ji Kurda re idam qerar dane
 Kesekî xwe danî xêra tune ca begê berê Kerkûk û Silêmanê.... (Taş, 2023, p. 51-52)

The partly given Kurdish song, which is analysed above, is a lament that reflects both the individual sorrow of the dengbêj and the collective suffering of the Kurdish community through powerful metaphors and emotive expressions. Phrases such as “demolished Diyarbakır” and “the wall made of carpet” convey surreal grief and disbelief, while references to cities and regions depict the Kurdish geography and reinforce cultural identity. The dengbêj narrates the event with vivid detail and idiomatic expressions, including appeals to divine justice, thereby preserving the memory and intensifying the emotional resonance of the performance. Repetitions throughout the song enhance its musicality and memorability, culminating in a poignant longing for the absent spiritual leader.

In stanzas given above, we can observe traces of linguistic elements such as “*Dîwar xalî ye*”, a Kurdish idiom that has been passed down from the past to the present. Additionally, some Arabic-origin words—such as “*mehkema*”, derived from the Arabic root *h-k-m*—are pronounced using Kurdish phonetics. Many Kurdish words and verbs that are still in daily use today have also been preserved and transmitted through the oral tradition of dengbêj performances. It is also possible to observe a significant historical event having taken place in Diyarbakır such as the

execution of Sheikh Said, and this event has been encoded in those Kurdish songs. Besides, there are numerous cultural references, such as “*Diyarbakra şewitî*”, which provides us with information about a major fire that occurred in the grand bazaar of Diyarbakır in 1895, destroying all commercial establishments (Çakırtaş, 2022, p. 3). Metaphorically, the phrase also suggests that the city has endured deep sorrow.

In Kurdish society, dengbêjs are artists who perform important past events usually without any instruments and rarely with the tambourine accompanied by the billur (a kind of wind musical instrument). Dengbêj is a master of words, music, and presentation who expresses an event that he has experienced, witnessed, been influenced by, or heard from someone else, in a style unique to him, within a certain flow and scenario. He sometimes makes a story, presents it to the audience, and sometimes performs it with his bare voice in an appropriate musical mode. Dengbêj has a very strong memory. With this feature, he attracts the attention of the listeners. Dengbêj keeps an epic that lasts for hours in his memory without depending on any source and voices it without breaking the flow during the performance (Akcan, 2014, p.10). This lets the performers come up with a great capacity for transferring cultural values among human beings and holding their singing ability in a vivid manner. The dengbêj preserves Kurdish history and cultural identity through oral performances, transmitting epics and cultural values while blending narrative, music, and personal interpretation to enrich the community's cultural fabric, as shown in the sample photo below:

Photo 1. Dengbêjs performing their art. (Source: Guney24,2025)



1.2. The works of Western minstrels

The works of minstrels reveal the spoken language of the people of the period and the linguistic reflections of social stratification. The language in these works constitutes an important source for understanding medieval dialects today.

While the minstrels generally employed local dialects in their poems and songs, they adopted a more formal and Latin-influenced language in their works addressed to the aristocracy (Winiarski, 2017, p. 2). Common metaphors in medieval literature are also frequently used in the works of minstrels. These metaphors carry multi-layered meanings regarding the religious and social structure of the period (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 15). Therefore, the performances of minstrels are highly valuable indicators of life experiences of the period. Besides, Western minstrels, who

mostly performed in Middle English, Old French, or other regional languages to enthrall audiences, employed lyrical and rhythmic frameworks. Their writings, which were distinguished by vivid imagery, repetition, and refrains, frequently included ballads, epics, and romance tales. Minstrels' vocabulary, which combined moral teachings, chivalric ideals, and folklore, represented the social mores and standards of the day (Price, 1964, p. 140). Minstrels were people who made their living by performing poetry and music in the Middle Ages. These artists would sing poems written by themselves or others, accompanied by a harp. In addition, it is understood that they accompanied their presentations with imitations and comical acts and performed various types of entertainment that the public liked very much, thus satisfying the people's need for entertainment. The art that the minstrels put forward made them extremely popular and accepted both in the country they lived in and in neighboring countries. Minstrels were called by names such as Bards, meaning folk poets, and Scalds, meaning tongue correctors or tongue polishers (Percy, 1857, p.2).

The following lines, the old Provencal lines, attributed to Blondel and accompanied by Dr. Burney's imitation, reflect the minstrels' role in blending lyrical expression with narrative storytelling, using rhyme and metaphor to explore love, conflict, and the unattainable nature of romance. This tradition is evident in historical examples, such as the tale of a knight rescuing a heiress by adopting the role of a minstrel. In the United States, minstrel performances, including blackface and dialect literature, reinforced racial stereotypes and shaped public perceptions of Blackness, as seen in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which, despite its moral intent, contributed to distorted portrayals of Black identity in 19th-century America (Bloomquist, 2015, p. 416):

BLONDEL

Your beauty, lady fair,
None views without delight;
But still so cold an air
No passion can excite:
Yet this I patient see
While all are shunn'd like me.

RICHARD.

No nymph my heart can wound
If favor she divide,
And smiles on all around
Unwilling to decide:
I'd rather hatred bear
Than love with others share. (Percy, T. 2015, p.27)

The names of Western folk poets vary depending on the art and country where they performed. Those who performed by singing, juggling and making acrobatic actions were called jongleurs, while minstrels in France were called troubadours and in Germany, they were called minnesangs (Conklin, 1964, p.5). Minstrels, known by various names, entertained, informed, and preserved cultural traditions through performances, bridging social divides and shaping cultural landscapes, as shown in the sample photo below:

Photo 2. Minstrels performing their art (Shutterstock, 2025)

In sum, thanks to the combination of poetry, music, and performance, it is possible to assert that minstrels were significant figures of medieval society since they were able to employ rhythmic patterns and strong imagery to modify their discourse for various audiences, and their writings encompassed moral lessons and metaphors to pinpoint societal and religious concerns. They were also well-known for their humorous performances in addition to their singing. Through their artistic manifestations, these individuals known by a variety of names, including minnesangs, bards, and troubadours held vital role in maintaining cultural values, chivalric ideals, and folklore.

2. Cultural analysis

2.1. The works of Kurdish dengbêjs

Dengbêjs are not only artists, but also mediators who create the cultural memory of society. For this reason, the role that the dengbêjs hold in the community in terms of cultural values is significant.

As Fırat Taş notes, the dengbêj, as a key figure in Kurdish oral tradition, has served both as a minstrel and a folk poet though kilams rarely predate the 1800s, their stylistic features suggest much older roots (Taş, 2023, p. 18). Due to late literacy, Kurds have largely preserved their history through oral forms, especially the dengbêj tradition (Taş, 2023, p. 15). The tradition of dengbêj, as the memory of its society, has been a means of remembering historical events and traumas experienced by the Kurds. For example, social events such as the events of 1915 or exiles have left deep traces on their works (Erdal, 2019). There are important references to Kurdish mythology and religious beliefs in dengbêjs' works. These works are a treasure trove in which culture is conveyed in a poetic language (Makâs, 2014). Dengbêjs have become a means of communication and entertainment by bringing communities together. This socio-cultural function has further increased the importance of dengbêjs in the society (Kardaş, 2013, p. 24). In the face of cultural assimilation and political repression, dengbêjs act as cultural guardians, maintaining Kurdish identity. To promote unity within the community, their performances frequently touch on themes of love, resistance, and historical memory (Schäfers, 2015, p. 7). Because it is oral, the dengbêjs' works are flexible, with each performance catered to the audience. This adaptability keeps the tradition relevant by enabling the inclusion of current events (Aslan, 2014, p. 513). The "dengbêjs"

are the folk storytellers, who are traveling amongst Kurdish tribes. Dengbêjs present old stories or current events in a melodic way in detail. They also add songs and long folk song melodies between the stories (Akpınar, & Aydın, 2019, p. 25). Besides, considering the word dengbêj by separating it into its root and suffix, the following situation emerges; the word “Deng” means “sound” in the Kurdish language. The word “Bêj”, added to the end, means “to say”. In this sense, “dengbêj” resembles the words “poet, folk lover, vocal artist” as a reflection of the expressions “sound” and “say”, and these definitions fully meet the meaning of the word “dengbêj”, who is the most important conveyor of oral tradition (Dit, 2018, s. 1; Taş, 2023, p. 15). The authors hold common meanings for its definitions.

The dengbêj gains a pseudonym after completing the master-apprentice training and receiving permission from his master. The dengbêj, who has reached a certain level in improvisational ability, must prove his skills to the audience in the bickering and competitions with his opponents. In dengbêj art in which the instrument is secondary, a beautiful voice that attracts the attention of the listener and the ability to use this voice for oral performance are required. It is important for dengbêj presentations to be understandable and their improvisational skills. In addition, dengbêj must be able to compose works and their compositions must be compatible with the text. In addition to artistic talent, knowledge, improvisation, sparring and presentation mastery, they are expected to know and apply traditions and social values. They must have knowledge of history, religion, morality and social issues, be patient and dignified, pay attention to their clothing and stay away from situations that negatively affect their voices (Barlık & Ağaçkaya, 2023, p.75). They must be careful to reflect on their natural tone of voice.

2.2. The works of Western minstrels

Minstrels acted as connectors of both local and international cultures. These traveling artists combined stories and melodies collected from different regions to create a cultural interplay.

Minstrels popularized genres that appealed to the upper classes, such as chivalric romances, by bringing them down to the level of the people (Huizinga, 1924, p. 67). Religious references in the works reveal the synthesis of both Christian and pagan cultures (Le Goff, 1980, p. 285). The belief that Middle English romances were part of minstrels' repertoire has been questioned, as most surviving manuscripts date from later periods, with few indicating minstrel ownership, and those before 1350 are rare (Taylor, 1991, p. 53). Also, the term "minstrel" is derived from the Latin word "ministrare", meaning, "to serve". In the Middle Ages, minstrels were versatile performers who entertained audiences with music, storytelling, and poetry. They were often considered a class of itinerant entertainers who made a living by traveling from town to town. (The Minstrel: Musician of the Middle Ages. 2025, p. 3). Western minstrels served as both entertainers and historians, reflecting historical events, moral principles, and social hierarchies through their art. They frequently acted as go-betweens for the affluent and the general populace (Anastasi, 2023, p. 4). Western minstrels made sure their tales were heard by a variety of audiences by performing itinerantly, going from court to town. The preservation of minstrel works was also made easier by the introduction of early manuscripts (Price, 1964, p. 43). The manuscript de jongleur, introduced in the mid-12th century, was a small, affordable manuscript created by professional scribes to aid jongleurs in memorizing poems, used for memory refreshment between performances but never during recitations, as jongleurs relied on memorization (Taylor, 1991, p. 45-46).

In England, Thomas Percy, in his work “Essay on the Ancient Minstrels”, regards minstrels as the continuation of a brilliant and uninterrupted line of bards, Celtic bards, German scalds and even the heirs of the privileged character of the Norman and English courts. Percy stated that the minstrels composed most of the works they performed themselves and therefore their profession was a prestigious one. However, Joseph Ritson strongly opposed many of Percy’s claims. According to Ritson, the French minstrels had a different status. According to him, the English minstrels were vagabonds, tramps and beggars (Shuffelton, 2008, p. 2). In the Middle Ages, the profession of the oral wandering poets was highly respected among all the Danish tribes; and therefore, even if history is completely silent on this subject, these artists were also respected among their Saxon brothers in Britain (Percy, 1857, p. 4). Their status is still holding a great deal of respect in society currently.

3. Historical analysis

3.1. The works of Kurdish dengbêjs

The works of the Dengbêjs are primary sources for comprehending the historical process of Kurdish society. Oral culture, characterized by its ever-changing nature, offers a more diverse and multifaceted narrative of historical events, in contrast to written history, which is often shaped by dominant powers and presents a singular, constrained perspective (Taş, 2023, p. 23). However, the primary issue concerning oral culture arises during the process of transcribing oral texts, as the meaning contained within the text often becomes detached from its original essence, resulting in a loss of diversity. They include various events happening in society and each of these masterpieces aims to develop cultural values. Many dengbêj works deal with wars and the resistance of the Kurdish people in the Ottoman, Safavid and modern periods (Nikitin & Massignon, 1956, p. 258). That is to say that the opportunity for Kurds to reflect on their own experiences and issues has been made possible through the dengbêj tradition's transmission of historical events (Taş, 2023, p. 20). Criticisms of social problems such as landowner-villager relations are frequently included in the works; therefore, dengbêjism, as a reflection of the experiences of exile and diaspora, contributed to the preservation of Kurdish identity. In addition, the dengbêj tradition has shaped, matured, and transformed into an original form throughout history. It has significantly influenced Kurdish literature, cinema, theatre, and especially music. The origins of dengbêj are unclear, and this tradition began to be studied when it was on the verge of extinction. Its recent examination indicates that this tradition is ending or about to end. The survival of dengbêj for such a long time can be attributed to the Kurds' relationship with modernity (Akcan, 2014, p. 94). Dengbêjs' historical rise can be linked to the Kurdish people's sociopolitical conflicts. Their stories frequently depict historical occurrences, such the tribal treaties and some local and comprehensive wars, instilling in their audience a sense of historical awareness. Additionally, dengbêjs have responded to contemporary themes by tackling pandemics, disasters and displacements (Bocheńska, 2022, p. 922). These masterpieces act as fundamental samples for retrospection of events in society. It is also claimed that dengbêj, who performed nature ceremonies at least twice a year, used to watch wars in the old times and memorize the events, heroism, victories, defeats and victories. “The storyteller is the person with whom the honest man confronts himself” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 78). Thus, it is possible to claim that the performance style of the dengbêj enhances the authenticity of oral narratives, allowing listeners to deeply engage with the events being recounted.

3.2. The works of Western minstrels

The works of minstrels are of critical importance in understanding the historical events and social structure of the period. The works contain criticisms of the feudal system and subtle allusions to social problems (Bloch, 1961, p. 258). Many minstrels' songs included references to major events such as the Crusades (Riley-Smith, 2005, p. 38). The feudal and courtly systems of medieval Europe are intimately linked to the emergence of Western minstrels. Using their art to honor noble achievements and courtly love, they thrived during periods of relative peace and prosperity. They did, however, also adjust to times of social unrest, like the Hundred Years' War, which reflected the shifting social dynamics of medieval civilization (Rastall, & Taylor, 2023, p. 216). These are efficient to act as commemorations for countries since people may develop deep senses.

Minstrels, or traveling theatricals, existed throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. The term minstrel refers to any type of professional entertainer from the 12th to the 17th centuries. Minstrels typically played musical instruments, but were also jugglers, acrobats, and storytellers. Although they no longer exist today, minstrels played an important role in medieval history and once existed in one form or another throughout the European continent (Medieval Minstrels: History & Significance. 2025, p. 1). They were crucial ways of connecting people with each other as they were able to get socialized. During the 14th and early 15th centuries, minstrels, fiddle players, and trumpeters in Western Europe gathered annually at professional assemblies known as "schools," resembling conferences or trade fairs. Musicians often received travel subsidies from their employers and gifts such as wine from local authorities. Records of these payments and gifts provide insights into minstrel schools, though they offer only a partial understanding of these events (Wegman, 2002, p. 11).

In England, minstrels accompanied their performances with harps; in America, on the other hand, the original minstrels were the clowns of an agricultural farm, whose juggling and acrobatic acts included music. "Every agricultural farm had a group of talented negroes who could do clowning and lark, sing and dance to the accompaniment of banjo and 'bones.' These were the real ribs of a sheep or other small animal, cut to length, cleaned and bleached in the sun," writes Weldon Johnson. "When the owner of the agricultural farm wanted to entertain his guests, all he had to do was to call in the troupe of minstrels." These groups traveled around the area and became semi-professionals, but slavery imposed strict restrictions on this (Suthern, 2000, p. 24). That is why a great deal of time was entailed to come up with the real values of these traditions. In the early 16th century, minstrelsy thrived in England, playing a key role in secular entertainment. By the century's end, however, minstrels lost their court roles and were replaced by actors and professional musicians, becoming confined to lower-class events. Walter Woodfill cites repressive laws against vagabondage and changing musical tastes as major factors in the decline of minstrelsy, which became obsolete with the swift adoption of new trends (McGee, T. J. 1995, p. 98). Similarly, the United States has a long history of White people creating caricatures of Black individuals, particularly during the period of enslavement when Black people entertained White audiences on plantations. This trend grew with the rise of minstrel shows in the late 1820s, shaping national interest in African American life as a form of popular entertainment (Bloomquist, J. 2015, p. 411). With technological developments and changing entertainers, the tradition of minstrelsy disappeared in Western communities.

Conclusion and discussion

The writings of Western minstrels and Kurdish dengbêjs provide important insights on the historical, cultural, and linguistic makeup of their respective communities. The universal significance of storytelling and textual tradition in forming human experience is shown by their shared dedication to cultural preservation, despite the differences in their mediums and settings.

Thus, the cultural, artistic, and linguistic similarities between Kurdish dengbêjs and Western minstrels have been explored in this study, providing valuable insights into their respective linguistic, cultural, and historical frameworks. The results demonstrate how both traditions make comparable efforts to preserve and pass on their cultural heritage. Both Kurdish dengbêjs and Western minstrels have been crucial in preserving and transmitting the cultural identity, collective memory, and values of their respective communities, despite disparities in their medium and modes of expression. According to Demiral et al. (2023, p. 112), both customs have played a crucial role in maintaining cultural values over time. Their universal significance in forming the human experience is highlighted by this common dedication to cultural preservation, proving that storytelling traditions are vital links between the past and present. Besides, with its distinct emphasis on voice as the main storytelling medium, the dengbêj tradition concentrates on recounting historical events, social gatherings, and individual tales of love and suffering (Keskin, 2015, p. 68). This tradition emphasizes the importance of the voice in Kurdish cultural expression by relying on the dengbêj's vocal performance, frequently without instrumental accompaniment. On the other hand, minstrels entertained with juggling, mimicking, and songs and poetry that were frequently accompanied by instruments. The findings of the current study are compatible that minstrels became more concerned with providing entertainment than with imparting historical and social values (Medieval Minstrels: History & Significance. 2025, p. 1). Despite the various media and techniques employed, both traditions place a strong emphasis on passing down stories that are essential to their cultural and historical identities (Smith, 2017). On the other hand, minstrels were artists who earned their living by performing poems or songs written by themselves or others, accompanied by a musical instrument. Their performances were also accompanied by imitations and juggling. In this context, they performed various methods of entertainment. With this regard, minstrels focused on entertainment primarily, they conveyed social and historical and literary aspects secondarily (Percy, 1857, p. 2). It is asserted that dengbêj is a person who transforms a sound into a word, and a word into a folk song, and recites it in a melodic way specific to him. This action is like that of Homer, the first performer of written literature in history.

On the other side, minstrels became extremely popular both in their own country and in neighbouring countries with the art they performed. No entertainment where they did not demonstrate their talents was considered a festival. The study also revealed that people of the time protected and respected these artists throughout the continuation of the spirit of chivalry. Because the songs they sang showed respect to the sovereign authority of the time; and they kept the warrior spirit of the people alive and nourished it (Crook, 2020, p. 77). Based on the findings of the current study, it is possible to assert that in dengbêj tradition, there are very few women performers, yet they have been popular within the Kurdish community. There are still both men and women dengbêjs performing the art (Bozkuş, 2011, p. 56). Also, the findings put forward that a minstrel's privileged persona was used to ensure easy admission, and a woman was assigned to assume it in the hopes that her sex would soothe the king's displeasure because it would be simple to discern. This assumes that she was not a true minstrel because of her gender; and the other sex should have

been seen to have existed, and our ancient bards have consistently credited no achievement to ladies more than their playing of the harp and singing in company. A dengbêj creates the story s/he expresses within its plot, including the characters in the event, their names and their relationships with each other, and presents the lines of poem to the audience by vocalizing this through a harmonious rhythm and melody. In addition, the Minstrels appear to have been the true descendants of the ancient bards, whose works were revered and admired from the beginning by the people of Gaul, Britain, Ireland, and the North under various names.

Additionally, the results revealed that both the medieval Western minstrel tradition and the Kurdish dengbêj tradition were essential to the transmission and preservation of social, historical, and cultural narratives in their respective civilizations. Mutlu et al., (1996, p. 57) define dengbêjs as folk poets who recite epic stories, legends, and historical accounts orally, with music frequently accompanying some of their recitations. Due to their long-standing history of vocal performances that do not follow a set pattern but rather permit improvisation, these storytellers, who represent an oral culture characterized by creative freedom, have preserved Kurdish cultural legacy. The Kurdish community has preserved its collective memory through the dengbêj tradition, which has helped it adapt and be resilient, especially during times of political unrest and cultural persecution. Similarly, the cultural landscape of medieval Europe was significantly shaped by the itinerant poets and musicians known as Western minstrels. It is also asserted that minstrels contributed to the cultural legacy of their era by disseminating stories of bravery, romance, and chivalry throughout courts and geographical areas, and thus, they are able to convey social and cultural connotations, had a crucial role in promoting values of bravery, honour, and courtly love (Butterfield, 2002, p. 260; Crook, 2020, p. 77; Smith, 2017). Furthermore, the exchanges between minstrels promoted the sharing of instruments and musical genres, which had an impact on the evolution of Western music (Page, 1993). The Western world's cultural legacy was enhanced by the minstrel tradition, which served as a foundation for subsequent literary and musical traditions.

Finally, it is noted that due to its centuries-long preservation and transmission of the Kurdish people's cultural legacy, the dengbêj tradition has become historically significant, and Kurdish bards, who sing epic tales and folklore, frequently narrating historical events, mythology, and cultural ideals, are referred as dengbêj, which means "sound saying" in Kurdish (Diyarbakır Dengbêj Evi, 2025). Particularly, during difficult times, these oral histories have been essential for preserving the Kurdish community's collective memory and identity. In addition to being a method of cultural expression and record, the dengbêj tradition has influenced many other art forms. Dengbêj's long history and cultural significance have been highlighted by its recent institutionalization and recognition. As entertainers and oral history preservers, minstrels were essential to medieval European society. Their performances, which frequently blended storytelling, music, and poetry, helped spread news and cultural narratives across regions at a time when literacy was restricted to a small elite. They helped preserve historical events, myths, and legends, which they adapted to appeal to a variety of audiences (Anastasi, 2023, p. 3). They travelled between towns and courts, promoting cultural exchange and the development of vernacular literature, influencing genres such as epic poetry and ballads. Their legacy can be seen in contemporary performance arts, where aspects of their craft are still present in storytelling and musical traditions.

Suggestions for further studies

The value of oral traditions, such as the minstrel and dengbêj traditions, might be further explored in various significant areas in further studies. Analysing the connection between oral and written narratives could be a crucial step, regarding both traditions support cultural resilience and the generational transfer of collective memory. This might be rather helpful in protecting cultural heritage—particularly in underserved communities—at a great rate. Furthermore, given its recent institutionalization and acknowledgment (Scalbert, 2009, p. 2), the dengbêj tradition's changing place in modern Kurdish society may provide insight into its evolving cultural and social significance. This could also lead to conversations about the paths in which political, societal, and technological variables affect the dengbêj performances today. The gender dynamics within these traditions, with an emphasis on the changing roles of women in both minstrel and dengbêj performances, is another important subject for research. In addition to examining new patterns in women's participation in these formerly male-dominated fields, this study may reveal how gender roles have influenced how women have been received and involved in these cultural traditions. Another suggestion for further studies is that it may be examined how contemporary media and technology hold impacts on these customs including the roles of social media, digital platforms, and new forms of cultural expression while preserving their historical and cultural value.

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