

Migration, Memory, and Narrative: Gurbet Koshuks of Uzbek Women Living in Antakya

Göç, Bellek ve Anlatı: Antakya'da Yaşayan Özbek Kadınların Gurbet Koşukları

Aylin ERASLAN^{ORCID}

Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Antropoloji Bölümü, Hatay, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the practice of singing *koshuk* accompanied by the *mouth kopuz*, *def*, or *daira* at women's gatherings, as recounted in the narratives of Uzbek women who were resettled in Türkiye from Afghanistan in 1982. It also examines the songs that survive in memory from this practice, which I call *gurbet koshuks*. I use this term because anonymous and improvised *koshuks* prominently express longing for family and homeland following separation through marriage. The aim of this study is to understand how women transformed this practice into a space for expressing feelings of mourning, longing, separation, yearning, and gender roles through *koshuk*. It also investigates the transformations the practice underwent after migration. In Afghanistan, women gathered to share common emotions, making *koshuk* a reflection of shared feelings, empathy, and solidarity. During the early years of migration to Türkiye, however, the practice took on a different form, as women recorded *koshuks* on cassette tapes and sent them to their families. Today, easier access to communication technologies and the widespread use of social media have contributed to the decline of this practice. As a result, only a small number of women still retain in their memories these increasingly forgotten *koshuks*. Analysis of the narratives and *koshuks* shows that women who were forced to leave their homeland because of war, internal conflict, or marriage experienced intense feelings of *gurbet*, driven by a deep longing for the parents, siblings, and homeland they left behind.

Keywords: Kopuz, Def/daira, Koshuk, Gender, Migration

ÖZ

Bu makale 1982 yılında Afganistan'dan Türkiye'ye iskânli göçmen olarak yerleştirilmiş Özbek kadınların anlatılarında yer alan Afganistan'da ağız kopuzu ve def eşliğinde icra edilen *koşuk* söyleme pratiğini ve günümüzde ise bu pratikten geriye kalan ve göç sonrasında hafızalarla taşınan *gurbet* *koşukları* olarak adlandırdığım şarkılara odaklanmaktadır. Bu *koşuklara* *gurbet* *koşukları* adını vermemin nedeni, kadınlarla yaptığım görüşmelerde söyledikleri doğaçlama ve anonim *koşukların* arasında göç nedeniyle ailesinden ayrılan gelinlerin vatan hasretini ve aile özlemi içeren sitem ve hüznü yansıtan *koşukların* belirgin bir biçimde öne çıkmasıydı. Bu çalışmanın amacı kadınların *koşuklar* aracılığıyla dile getirdikleri yas, *gurbet*, ayrılık, özlem ve cinsiyet rollerine yönelik duygularını ifade ettikleri bir alana nasıl dönüştürdüklerini anlamaya çalışmaktır. Ayrıca, bu uygulamanın göçün ardından geçirdiği değişimleri de araştırmaktadır. Afganistan'da bir araya gelerek ortak duyguların paylaşıldığı, kadın duygudaşlığının ve dayanışmasının bir yansıması olarak yorumlayabileceğimiz bu pratiğin, Türkiye'ye göçün ilk yıllarında kadınların duygularını içeren *koşukları* kasete kaydederek ailelerine ilettikleri bir alana dönüştüğü anlaşılmıştır. Günümüzde ise iletişim araçlarına erişim kolaylığı ve sosyal medya kullanımı nedeniyle bu pratiğin artık uygulanmadığı, geriye sadece kadının hafızasında unutulmaya yüz tutmuş sayısı gittikçe azalan *koşukların* kaldığı anlaşılmıştır. Anlatılar ve *koşuklar* analiz edildiğinde, savaş ve iç karışıklıklar ya da yapılan evlilikler sonucunda ülkelerini terk etmek zorunda kalan kadınların geride bıraktıkları anne ve babalarına, kardeşlerine ve memleketlerine duydukları özlem nedeniyle *gurbet* duygularını yoğun yaşadıkları anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kopuz, Def, Koşuk, Toplumsal cinsiyet, Göç

Sorumlu yazar: Aylin ERASLAN

Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Antropoloji Bölümü, Hatay, Türkiye

E-mail: aylineraslan@mku.edu.tr

ROR ID: ror.org/056hgc41

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Introduction

*I slipped, I fell upon the paths of the palanquin, O Allah,
My Allah, from where I have fallen but into the foreign lands
They say the hue of girls who leave for foreign soils turns to yellow,
They say the eyes of those who depart brim endlessly with tears.
I am homesick, adrift in the estrangement,
If death should come, if death should find me, let it come...
But pray, pray for my grave. (F.G., 65 years old)*

The *koshuk*¹ above is only one of the anonymous *koshuks* that represent the feelings of migration, longing, and *gurbet* (a sense of living away from home) carried in the memories of Uzbek women who migrated from Afghanistan to Türkiye with their families in 1982 due to war and internal conflicts. These *koshuks* are shaped by cultural structures such as gender roles and traditional norms, offering insights into the socio-cultural life of the society. *Koshuk* is the name given to folk songs among the Uzbeks of Afghanistan (Fevzi, 2013, pp.89–90). The Uzbeks living in Ovakent, a neighborhood of Antakya, also refer to folk songs as *koshuk*. In this study, *gurbet koshuks* refer to those *koshuks* collected from interviewees that prominently express emotions such as *gurbet*, longing for home, and love for family. This study contributes to understanding women's perspectives on patriarchal norms offers a modest addition to the limited literature on Uzbek women's folk songs. Through women's narratives and *koshuks*, the study traces its transformation—from intimate gatherings to cassette recordings—as a means of emotional expression. This study also explores how women have transformed the practice of singing *koshuks*, individually or collectively, into a space for freely expressing their emotions and thoughts about otherwise silenced situations. In patriarchal societies, women often suppress their emotions, necessitating an interpretation of their narratives to uncover their true perspectives (Anderson and Jack, 1991, pp.157-158). At this point, it can be said that *koshuks* have been largely instrumental in helping us understand the emotions and thoughts of women. Although few in numbers, there are sociocultural studies pertaining to said gatherings in Afghanistan. Notable contributions include Razia Sultanova's *Afghanistan Disposessed: Women, Culture and the Taliban* (2023), which applies a social anthropological perspective to the music of Uzbeks and other minorities in Northern Afghanistan. As reflected in previous studies, the interviewees also recalled witnessing numerous women's gatherings in Afghanistan where *koshuks* were performed with the accompaniment of instruments such as the *kopuz*, *def/daira* (Doubleday, 1999, p.118; Oyghagh, 2019, p.155; Sultanova, 2023, p.108).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology, using participant observation and in-depth interviews.² The research focuses on Uzbeks who migrated from Afghanistan and were resettled in Ovakent, Antakya/Hatay in 1982. Fieldwork took place between July and August 2024. In the study, 12 women were interviewed, aged 35 to 70, lead home-centered lives; most are illiterate, with only one primary school graduate.

This study focuses on the narratives of 12 Uzbek women who can play the *kopuz*, know *koshuks*, or have experienced women's gatherings in Afghanistan. The improvised *koshuks* infused with the women's narrative are about the process of migration, their families and *gurbet* throughout their lives. When these *koshuks* were analyzed, it was found that the women are expressing their feelings of longing for their parents they left behind, or in other words the feeling of *gurbet* they felt.³ Interviews were conducted in person or online. *Koshuks*

¹ Interviewees call the folk songs they perform as *koshuks*.

² The research procedure was approved by the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University Department Ethics Committee's decision dated June, 04.07.2024, and numbered 10.

³ The reason I call the *koshuks* mentioned in the research *Gurbet Koshuks* is, among the *koshuks* compiled *koshuks* many share a common theme of longing for their family and country after leaving both behind for marriage. This name was given because of the intense *gurbet* feeling. This is not a classification.

that couldn't be remembered or were left incomplete during the interview were recorded and shared with the interviewer when they were remembered. Some *koshuks* were translated by the performer or by a literate Uzbek woman who has lived in Türkiye for many years, works as a caregiver, and is fluent in both Uzbek and Turkish. The researcher was with the translator throughout the process of translation of the *koshuks*.

To prevent loss of meaning, when there were difficulties in understanding the meaning or metaphorical meanings, the performer of the *koshuk* was contacted, asked for clarification and the translation was verified. Women were asked to interpret the *koshuks*, revealing the metaphors. Proficiency in Turkish ensured accurate translation and interpretation. Fourteen *koshuks* and three *alle* (lullabies) about *gurbet* were collected. All participants were anonymized in line with ethical standards.

As the participants were not literate, written consent could not be obtained; instead, verbal consent was secured through audio recordings. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder with the knowledge and permission of the participants. The collected data were analyzed with fidelity to their original form. Interviewees were assured their identities would remain confidential and that audio recordings would not be shared or published. Verbal consent was obtained to publish only their anonymized narratives and *koshuks* performed with the *kopuz*.

The Socio-cultural structure of the Uzbeks of Ovakent

Ovakent, located 20 kilometers from Antakya, was originally settled by 716 Uzbeks (Öztürk, 2014, p.93) and now hosts a community of approximately 10,000. Numerous extended families live together within the Uzbek community. Having lived in Ovakent for 44 years, the Uzbeks identify themselves not as immigrants but as part of the local population (Eraslan, 2024, p.68). After the 2023 earthquake, some of the Uzbeks have resettled into other provinces of Türkiye. Some are residing in the Paşaköy 1st Phase and Paşaköy 2nd Phase container cities. The total number of households in both phases of the container cities is 480. The ones whose houses didn't collapse in the earthquake still reside within their homes⁴. While literacy rates were low among the first and second generations who migrated, they are significantly higher among the third generation. The number of Uzbeks enrolled in university education and working in professions such as medicine and teaching is steadily increasing. Uzbeks have an advanced understanding and command of the Turkish language. However, the women in our interview group are not literate and lead home-centered lives, largely due to economic hardship and cultural norms that have limited their access to education and employment. It can be said that older women who have experienced migration lead relatively isolated and inward-focused lives, which has enabled them to preserve their traditions and customs. This is significant in allowing us to understand the cultural patterns of the Uzbeks in their original form. The Uzbeks have a patriarchal social structure. The roles defined by society according to individuals' gender are clearly separated. For the Uzbeks, who have a worldview shaped by Islamic belief, the concepts of ancestry and lineage are highly significant. To ensure the continuation of the lineage, having many children and polygamy are common.

Uzbek instruments by gender

Music, along with artistic abilities, points out a field where societal gender roles are replicated. Gendering of instruments, or in other words determining which instrument can be played by which gender changes from one society or culture to the next. This is a societal construct. Mostly aspects like religion, gender, status, norms and traditions determine the relations between the individual and music. In some societies women's roles can be limited whereas in others it can be more significant (Koskoff, 2014). Moreso, musical instruments are important cultural artifacts that are imbued with a spectrum of meaning and power (Doubleday, 2008, p.3). The narratives of Uzbeks living in Ovakent reveal that culturally they have different instruments. The narratives of the interviewees reveal that while Uzbeks in Afghanistan traditionally use various instruments like the *sıbzgi* (whistle), *mey*, *harmonica*, *bagpipes*, *dombra*, *ğicek*, *kopuz*/*çankopuz*, and *def/dep*, in Ovakent, only the *dombra*, *gıccak*, *def*, and a miniscule amount of *kopuz*/*çankopuz* were identified. Although no *kopuz* was encountered during the fieldwork and a *kopuz* had to be brought from Afghanistan, interviewees reported that

⁴ The data related to household numbers and population of Ovakent after the earthquake was gathered after a meeting with the former neighborhood representative.

a small number of elderly women still possessed *mouth kopuzes*. Therefore, rather than claiming that the *kopuz* is absent in Ovakent, it would be more accurate to state that it survives among only a negligible number of individuals. The interviewees' accounts indicate that Uzbeks categorize musical instruments according to gender⁵: the *dombra* and *gıccak* are considered instruments for men, while the *def/dep*, *çankopuz*, *sıbizgi*, and harmonica are associated with women. Instruments such as the *sıbizgi* and reed *kopuz* are regarded as children's instruments.

In Ovakent, I encountered the use of the *gıccak* and a two-stringed wooden *dombra*. (see Figure 1A-C). The *gıccak* features two strings, a stick made of mulberry wood, two tuning pegs, a case crafted from iron, a *harak*, and a bow made of horsetail (Oyghagh, 2019, p.153; Sultanova, 2023, p.107).



Figure A-B: *Gıccak*⁶ ; **C:** *Dombra* (from A. Eraslan's archive, Antakya/Ovakent, 2011)

The *dombra* consists of two strings, two tuning pegs, a handle, a boat-shaped body, and a *harak* that secures the strings to its cover (Oyghagh, 2019, pp. 153–158). The *def/dep*, in contrast, is a drum featuring a stretched skin on one side of a circular hoop, with the other side left open and surrounded by loose cymbals. The *def* is traditionally played at weddings and festivals, most notably during the ceremonial removal of the bride from her father's house, often accompanied by a *koshuk* (Doubleday, 1999, p.118; Oyghagh, 2029, p.155; Sultanova, 2023, p. 108).

An analysis of the interviewees' narratives of their time in Afghanistan reveals that although the *kopuz*, *def* were all used in festive contexts such as weddings and celebrations, the *kopuz* was distinct in its use—not only in joyful events but also, and more significantly, in soothing emotions of sorrow, mourning, and *gurbet*. The *def*, in contrast, is a drum featuring a stretched skin on one side of a circular hoop, with the other side left open and surrounded by loose cymbals (Doubleday, 1999, p.118; Oyghagh, 2029, p.155; Sultanova, 2023, p.108) (Figure 2).

⁵ For detailed information on the gender-based classification of musical instruments, see Doubleday (1999)

⁶ All the photographs used in this study are from the archive the researcher has created during the field study researcher has carried out in 2011 in Ovakent.



Figure 2. Def/daira (from Aylin Eraslan's archive, Antakya/Ovakent, 2011)

The *mouth kopuz* is internationally known as the Jew's harp. In Russia, it is referred to as *vargan*, while in Afghanistan, it is called *çang*. The Buryats name it *kur*, Pakistanis call it *penevar*, the French term it *gimbard*, Norwegians refer to it as *moonharp*, and the Chinese call it *kuçin* (Aycil and Çubukcu, 2022, p. 50; Bapaeva, 2011, p. 10; Göher and Vural, 2021, pp. 67–68; Oyghagh, 2019, p. 159). Among the Turks of the Saka–Yakut regions and various Turkic communities, including Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs, the term *kopuz* functions as a generic name for musical instruments, much like the term *saz* in Türkiye. (Gürdal, 2007). Over time, it has been used to describe various forms, including the stringed, bowed *kopuz*, as well as the *iron kopuz*, *mouth kopuz*, *singing kopuz*, and *temir komus*. (Göher and Vural, 2021, p. 67; Ögel, 1991, p. 4). The *mouth kopuz* is known by different names among various Turkic peoples. The mouth kopuz is referred to as *şan-kopuz* (*şan-kobız*) by Kazakh Turks and *kopuz* (*gopiz*) by Turkmens. In the Tuva region, it is known as *ıyaç* (“wooden kopuz”), *hubuzun-komus* (“reed kopuz”), and *cang*; among the Yakuts as *homus*, among the Uzbeks as *çang-kobuz*; and among the Khakas Turks as *temir-komız* (Ögel, 1991, pp. 388–392). In Ovakent, Uzbeks refer to the *mouth kopuz* simply as *kopuz* or *çankopuz*. Therefore, in this article, the term *kopuz*, commonly used by Uzbeks, will be employed in place of *mouth kopuz* (see Figure 3).

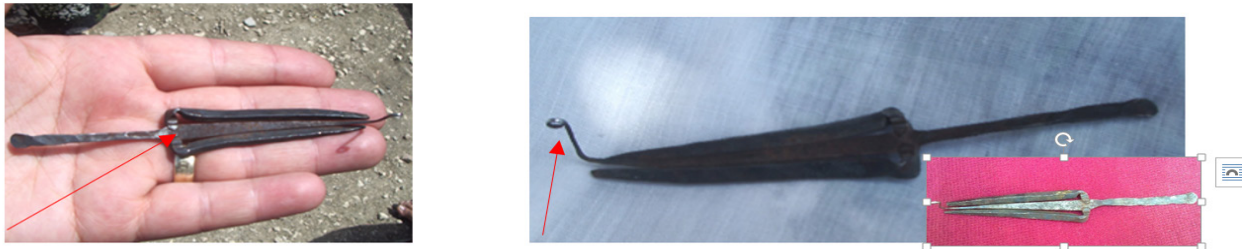


Figure 3. Photographs 7-8: Iron Kopuz and the thin wire on the tip of it (from A. Eraslan's archive, Antakya/Ovakent, 2011)⁷

The upper and lower front teeth grasp the fork, while the thin, flexible iron wire (the tongue) in the middle is pushed backward with the fingers. The air remaining in the oral cavity causes the flexible tongue to vibrate according to the movement of the tongue and the breathing, thus producing various sounds (Göher and Vural 2021, p.69; Sultanova, 2023, p.109)

After the first years of the migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye, the *kopuz* could be found rarely in Ovakent but now there is a miniscule amount left. Interviewees have explained this with following reasons: Firstly, they could only take what's essential with them for their migration journey. Secondly, the deep sorrow and moral and

⁷ During my field study in 2011, the interviewees had mentioned how few *kopuzes* in Ovakent there are in Ovakent. Throughout the study I couldn't access a *kopuz* no matter how much I tried. Because of this, I asked an interviewee whose relative travels between Afghanistan and Türkiye to bring one. I gave the *kopuz* photographed here to the women and asked them to demonstrate how it's played. They became very happy and started playing immediately. I also archived and used the photographs to demonstrate what kind of *kopuz* we were talking about. Most of the women interviewed said that they used the *kopuz* in the photograph and some said that they also used metal ones with slight changes. However, they also stated that they had no way acquiring one or no motivation to play one after the move to Türkiye because of the material and spiritual difficulties during their adaptation period.

motivational loss caused by the war and internal disputes in Afghanistan. Lastly due to the economic hardships rendered the procurement of a *kopuz* the practice became inapplicable in Ovakent. It was apparent that only few women who brought *kopuz* with them during the first years of migration have *kopuz*. It was found that the *koshuks* performed without *kopuz* to signify the interviewees' emotions of longing for their families and homeland were recorded and sent to their families in Afghanistan. Today, while there are no *kopuz* in Ovakent, *def* is still being used by women. A reason for this is *def* being easy to access in Türkiye. During the field study, it was observed that *def* is only played by the women on the groom's side when they are picking up the bride from her parent's house.

According to Eshonkul (2024), *koshuks* represent one of the oldest and most significant genres of folklore. In contrast to individually authored *koshuks*, folk *koshuks* originate within communities, reflect everyday social life, circulate in multiple versions, and are preserved and transmitted through oral tradition (p. 66). The *koshuks* analyzed in this study have the qualities of being anonymous and improvised depending on the life experiences of the interviewees and what they remember from the ones they heard from the women's gatherings in Afghanistan. When looking at the literature, some studies found that the *koshuks* of Uzbeks in Afghanistan are performed not only with the *def*, but also with the *kopuz*. These studies briefly mention this practice. For example, Karimullah Oyghagh (2019) states that the *kopuz* is played by young girls and sometimes by women during special and important gatherings like weddings to excite people with folk songs. He specifically notes that in Tahhar, the *kopuz* is widely played when village girls come together during winter nights. Similarly, Firuz Fevzi (2013) mentions that the *kopuz* is played by elderly women at weddings to excite the people through songs. Azizullah Aral (2022) emphasizes that in the north of Afghanistan, the *kopuz* is frequently played by elderly women during women's parties to entertain people. Razia Sultanova (2008) notes in her field research conducted in 2006 with Uzbek musicians in the cities of Mazar-i-Sharif, Shobergan, and Akcha in northern Afghanistan that, at a women's gathering held at the end of Ramadan, many songs were sung by women accompanied not only by the *def* but also by the jaw harp. As these studies indicate, interviewees participating to the present study too stated that the *koshuks* were performed with the *kopuz*. The interviewees reported that the practice of singing *koshuks* with the *kopuz* was frequently carried out in the mountainous and rural areas of Afghanistan during the years they migrated to Türkiye and that this practice gradually declined after the war. In Ovakent, it is understood that in the early years of migration, this practice continued in a different form for a while, as women recorded their voices singing *koshuks* onto cassette tapes and sent them to Afghanistan. Although many women in Ovakent today know how to play the *kopuz*, it is understood that women's gatherings are no longer held due to both the lack of access to the *kopuz* and the loss of motivation to play the *kopuz* and sing *koshuks*. However, the women have preserved many *koshuks* in their memories. The analysis of *koshuks*—memorized and orally transmitted by non-literate women and reshaped through their experiences of migration and *gurbet*—reveals how these expressions were recontextualized in Türkiye.

As Sultanova (2023, p.57) notes, interviewees noted that they themselves have played the *kopuz* during women's gatherings in Afghanistan, especially while participating in activities like needlework. Singing with their children was also a common practice, serving both social and educational purposes. Despite many women in Ovakent being skilled in playing the *kopuz* and having a rich repertoire of *koshuks*, they reported no longer engaging in these practices due to the changing living conditions in Turkey.

The interviewees described the *kopuz* as a female instrument. Doubleday (2008, p.3) argues that the gendered associations of instruments arise from the interaction between people and instruments. One interviewee remarked, "*Men do not play the kopuz. If someone sees it, his charisma will be diminished.*" suggesting that playing the *kopuz* is socially unacceptable for men. The rationale for classifying the *kopuz* as a female instrument remains uncertain and requires further exploration. The following poem illustrates this perception of the *kopuz* as a female instrument:

Jonn kopuzumi changlattim
 (I played my dear kopuz)
 Onajon men nimalar atlattim

(Mummy, the things I've been through)

Kızligimi hech kimga bilintirmadim.

(I didn't let anyone know I was a girl)

Kamarimi hech kimga korsatmadim.

(I didn't show my belt to anyone)

Oyna tozim oyna hech kimga uzimni bildirmadim.

(Play, my hound, play, no one realized I was a girl)

Men oshik boldim boşligimga onajon.

(I'm in love with my boss, Mummy)

Erkak emas kızligimi ayytim bahtli bolib yashadim.

(I said I was a girl, not a boy, and I got married)(T.H., 55 years old)

According to the *koshuk* recounted in T.H.'s narrative, a young girl tells her mother's story while playing the *koshuk*. Her boss notices and comments: “*Why do you play the kopuz? It's a female instrument*”. The girl responds: “*My mother enjoyed it, so I do too*”, but the boss doubts her. Eventually, after falling in love with her boss, she reveals the truth. This narrative highlights the *kopuz*'s perception as a women's instrument.

The intergenerational transmission of the practice

Many interviewees recalled attending gatherings during their childhood, where they listened to *koshuks* accompanied by the *kopuz*, often with their mothers, relatives, and neighbors. In rural Afghanistan, the *kopuz* served as a primary source of entertainment for women, often carried with the familiarity of a mobile phone. Yet, patriarchal norms—such as requiring male accompaniment to the city—limited their access. As one interviewee recalled, ‘*Our mothers wouldn't give us the kopuz because they thought we'd break the string.*’ Another shared, ‘*I learned playing kopuz from my grandmother when I was 12 years old by watching her hands and mouth. I broke her kopuz once.*’ These accounts illustrate the intergenerational transmission of the *kopuz* tradition.

Today, the phone is what the *kopuz* was back then. Our mothers never let it out of their hands. It was just like a telephone. It was very precious to them. That's why they never gave it to us. Because if the thin wire inside the *kopuz* was broken, it would no longer sound good. Thus, our fathers would craft *nay* (*kaval*) or *kopuz* for us children. I also made and played it a lot. (T.H., 55 years old)

The narrative reveals that the *kopuz* was not given to children due to its delicate and fragile structure. Instead, alternative instruments were crafted for them, such as the *nay* and a simplified *kopuz*, using reeds known as *ğarov* that grow in marshy areas. Interviewees explained that a *nay* was made by creating 4-5 holes in a thick reed, while a makeshift *kopuz* was fashioned by placing an iron wire between two thin reeds. Children learned to play the *kopuz* through observation and imitation, reflecting a natural, socially embedded learning process. This highlights the intergenerational transmission of musical traditions. The following account illustrates how this skill was acquired in practice.

I made a lot of *kopuz* from reed. We used to make many *ğarovs*, mostly for children. It was usually made for children because children didn't have *kopuz*. We used to put the reed between our lips, in the middle of our teeth, and then start playing. We would hold it with one hand and start playing with the other. We used to imitate the *kopuz*. In Afghanistan, I used to play *ğarov*... (H.L., 54, years old)

The narrative indicates that H.L. engaged with the *kopuz* and learned the *koshuks* at an early age, suggesting an early immersion in cultural practices. Furthermore, the interviewees highlighted that they passed down *koshuks* through word of mouth.

The *kopuz* became the language of women. There was no television, and literacy was not widespread. They were making it up as they went along. I know everyone said these things. I heard them from their mouths, too. It stuck in their minds through word of mouth. It's not like I lived a bright life myself. Maybe I listened to them because of my inner sorrows, and I liked it. That's how it stuck in my mind. (A.T., 55, years old)

Like other interviewees, A.T. also memorized the *koshuks*, which evoke female solidarity by eliciting shared emotions among women. The interviewee explained, 'Maybe the sadness in me listened to them, and I liked it. That's how I remembered them'. This aligns with Narayan's (1997) observation that some *koshuks* 'sit in your heart' and are learned through emotional resonance, stating, 'You can only understand the *koshuk* when you know the pain,' and "When someone sings, you remember your own story'. The analysis suggests that *koshuks* are retained in memory as they evoke shared or similar emotions.

The practice of singing *koshuk* as a medium of sharing emotions for women

The Uzbeks maintain a patriarchal social structure with distinct gender roles. Men typically perform *koshuk* in public settings, while women sing *koshuk* and play the *kopuz* in private spaces among family and neighbors. This reflects Doubleday's (2008, p.3; 2011, p.4) findings on gender-segregated musical practices in Afghanistan. Although men may also perform *koshuks*, they are regarded as women's songs, orally transmitted across generations (Sultanova, 2008, p. 15). Some women perform both *kopuz* and *koshuk*, while others specialize in one. Most interviewees reported the ability to do both and had taken part in women's gatherings in Afghanistan, as performers or listeners.

In Afghanistan, it was customary to ask women to sing a *koshuk* they knew. Women would begin to commiserate, with one of them saying, 'This person I knew has died. Play your *kopuz* and let us mourn. Let us create a lament. Let us cry.' Then, someone would play the *kopuz* and sing a *koshuk*. Women expressed their emotions—joy, sadness, grief, and everything else—through the *kopuz*. It was predominantly used to convey sorrows. A woman would sit somewhere and share her troubles with her friends, using the *kopuz* as a medium. The *kopuz* was considered to belong to women; in a sense, it served as their telephone. (T.H., 55, years old)

The interviewees described women's gatherings in Afghanistan, where they would come together for entertainment or to cope with distress, sharing emotions like sadness, mourning, and lamentation (Sultanova, 2023, pp. 60–61). T.H.'s narrative reveals that these gatherings often involved playing the *kopuz* and singing *koshuk* to express sorrow. Her statement, 'Play your *kopuz* and let us mourn and lament,' echoes Caraveli-Chaves' concept of the 'sisterhood of pain,' where women connect and show solidarity through lamentation (Caraveli-Chaves, 1986, p.181, as cited in Fishman, 2008, p.268).

While engaging in needlework, women would play their *kopuz*. They often held friendly competitions with their *koshuks* as they worked. One would say, 'Come on, girls, let's play the *kopuz*. Let us sew and play our *kopuz*. Let us sing a *koshuk* and have a competition.' There were also Fars women who frequently participated, and they often won these competitions by singing more *koshuks*. The one who performed the most *koshuks* would be declared the winner. They would sing a mix of *koshuks* expressing sadness, longing for expatriates, or simply for entertainment. The group would clap in celebration, acknowledging the winner. (A.T., 55, years old)

The narrative suggests that in Afghanistan, this practice extends beyond Uzbeks and serves as a socializing space for women from various ethnic groups. The *koshuks*, shaped by common experiences, promote female empathy and create connections among women across cultural boundaries. Additionally, women who express shared emotions and possess a large repertoire of *koshuks* are more likely to succeed in these performances.

In Afghanistan, my parents were neighbors of Persian women. When we sat together, the Persian women would sing in Farsi, while my parents would sing in Uzbek. They understood each other's languages, and my parents also learned to sing in Farsi. We were born and raised among them. Their *koshuks* were deeply ingrained in their memories. Pashtu women often sang compositions such as *landay* and *tappay*, but the *koshuks* sung by Uzbek women were known as *koshuk*. (T.H., 55, years old)

The narrative reveals that women from different ethnicities learned each other's languages through cultural exchange. Many interviewees sang *koshuks* in both Uzbek and Persian and were able to translate them into Turkish. Uzbek women sing *koshuks*, while Pashtu women perform *koshuks* called *mesri*, *tape/tapa/toppay*, or *landay* in various parts of Afghanistan, continuing until their repertoires are exhausted. Pashtu *landays* often address themes of love, longing, gurbet, and sorrow, including laments for husbands awaiting return from abroad or for family members lost in wars (Bilquees, 2012, p.17; Haqyar, 2020, p.129; Zaheer, 2023, p.57; Schuster and Shinwari, 2020, p.23; Rahimi, 2017, p.2). These *koshuks* also tackle broader issues such as war, education, gender discrimination, social injustice, and other challenges faced by Pashtuns (Zaheer, 2023, p.61; Momand and Firky, 2022, p.62). In Afghanistan, other forms of poetry like *chaharbayti* are prevalent among Afghan women and men (Doubleday, 2011, p.3; 172; Sultanova, 2023, p.105). *Chaharbayti*, is the name of a type of stanzas in late Persian. These stanzas are the backbone of the Afghan folk songwriting in Persian and signify especially emotions of longing, melancholy, deprivation (Doubleday, 2011, p.3). The *koshuks* of the interviewees seemingly don't follow a rule and they are sometimes composed of stanzas or couplets. In line with traditional culture, some *koshuks* portray young women who have passed the typical marriage age. These women, while playing the *kopuz*, sing *bekla biyov kuyov koshuk* ('bridegroom *koshuk*' or 'unmarried girl *koshuk*') from rooftops, expressing their wish to find a husband.

If an unmarried woman wished to marry, she would reflect her emotions via the *kopuz*. Whether it was the woman herself or her mother, they would ascend to the roof and play the *kopuz*, symbolizing their desire for a husband by the sounds alone. The message was understood through the music, as the *kopuz* was played in various emotional states—expressing both sorrow and joy. For an unmarried girl, the *kopuz* became a vehicle for unspoken feelings, concealing secrets within its tones (T.H., 55 years old).

Bekla biyov⁸ biyov kuyov

(Bridegroom, come, come)

Kel kuyov, kel kuyov.

(Come, bridegroom, come, bridegroom)

The narratives reveal that women expressed their troubles, thoughts, demands, and expectations through the *kopuz*.

The interviewees reported singing anonymous and occasionally improvised *yar-yar* (dead), *nay-nay*, and bride *koshuks* accompanied by the *kopuz*. Upon analysis, themes such as entertainment, migration, reproach, and family love emerged. Notably, many expressed reproach and sadness, with women addressing gender-related issues in a patriarchal society, including early marriages, often with a significant age gap, and the practice of sending women as homesick brides. Therefore, this study emphasizes the *gurbet koshuks* (homesick *koshuks*), which are particularly prominent. Other themes will be explored in a separate study.

Migration to Türkiye: emotions encapsulated in a cassette

This section first explores *koshuks* expressing women's longing for sons in military service and young brides' yearning for their families after early, transnational marriages. It then presents narratives on the emotional expressions conveyed through *koshuks* performed at women's gatherings in Afghanistan, which were later recorded on cassettes and circulated between Afghanistan and Türkiye after migration. It can be understood that the migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye after the war and the internal disturbances had affected the

⁸ 'Biyov' means 'come' in Persian.

social structure in a plethora of ways. It was gathered that the women were feeling especially homesick after the loss and mourning and being separated from their families because of marriage or migration. It was found that the ways they could express their emotions with *koshuks* while in Afghanistan has changed along with the living conditions in Türkiye, so the *koshuks* that encompass their feelings were recorded on to cassettes to be sent to their families in Afghanistan. It was gathered that while this practice was commonplace just after the migration, its use receded later. According to the interviewees, this practice receding is about access to communication services becoming more commonplace with relative socioeconomic welfare and the use of mobile phones becoming widespread, therefore this practice not being needed anymore.

My mother and I used to play the *kopuz* together in the mountains. My brothers remained in Afghanistan. We used to miss them. My brother was separated from us for five years during the war, so I would play and cry. We play the *kopuz* for those who are far away, those who are in a foreign land. My late mother used to play for my brother. She was very sorrowful. (T.H., 55, years old)

T.H.'s narrative reflects a mother's and a sister's longing for their expatriated loved ones. One interviewee shared, 'My mother was alone in Antakya. She was separated from her family. That is why she used to play and cry.' Another noted, 'When you go to a foreign state, you sit and play because you long for your parents. I played and cried until our parents came back.' These stories highlight how girls who marry and move abroad express their longing for their families by playing the *kopuz* and singing *koshuk*. One interviewee described the *kopuz* as the '*confidant of Uzbek women*,' where they pour out their emotions, particularly when separated from family or mourning loss. A different interviewee recalled her mother-in-law, who played the *kopuz* and cried, expressing her sadness after leaving Afghanistan and missing her homeland. These narratives demonstrate how women use the *kopuz* as a means of coping with loneliness and separation through song. The above narratives reveal poignant accounts of girls separated from their families, with the recurring themes of *gurbet*, *longing*, and *familial love*. It is understood that, due to marriage, girls had to cope with feelings such as *gurbet* and loneliness from an early age. These women articulate their yearning for their families through the *koshuks* they sing, accompanied by the *kopuz*. In Ovakent, numerous women were encountered who had lived there for many years, holding onto the hope of reuniting with their families, only to eventually received news of their deaths. Although they sought to assuage their longing by recording their voices on cassette tapes and sending them back to their families, this effort frequently culminated in the devastating news of bereavement. The expressions in their words, body language, tone of voice, and the frequent silences conveyed the depth of their feelings of *gurbet*. A.G.'s narrative encapsulates the sorrowful experience of not being able to reunite with the family she left behind in Afghanistan:

When we came to Türkiye, I recorded a cassette for Afghanistan. I played the *kopuz* and sang two expatriate *koshuks* for my brother. When my brother listened to this cassette, he cried and cried. That cassette is still with me. He said, "We kept it." Fifteen years later, they sent a tape. My heart starts pounding, I get excited. My sister sang *koshuks*, and my brothers recorded them. I cried so much that my eyes swelled up. Here, everyone keeps the tapes with their mothers' voices. (A.G., 64, years old)

A.G.'s narrative reveals how women, within a patriarchal society, express their unspoken emotions and longings by recording their voices on tapes and sending them to their families, often located far away. Her account reflects the emotional impact of reconnecting with her family through a voice recording, even after years of separation. In Ovakent, many stories were shared about the exchange of cassette recordings of women's voices between families. Another interviewee shared a similar experience as follows:

Some women send them on tape. When I came to Türkiye, my parents were in Afghanistan. I made a cassette and sent it. My parents laughed and cried afterwards. That's what happened to me. Everyone in Ovakent sent cassettes to their families. Then I sang a few *koshuks* that came to my mind. I said I would come to my mother, but I couldn't go right away. Then I heard that they had died. I sang some of them from my heart, and some of them I took from manuscripts. I filled

the cassette and sent it to Afghanistan. I also sent it to my brother. I said hello to some relatives, to my aunt, to everyone. (T.H., 55, years old)

Tomdi keti tandirça, tandir tola ok kulcha.

(White ingot full of tandoor behind the roof.)

Meni onamdan sorasam Hızır korgan boybicha

(If I ask my mum, she saw Hızır, madam, in proof.)

Jaynomozi koli da ozi Hudoning jolida

(With his prayer rug in hand, on his path to Allah.)

Men onanamdi surasam hich kim bermaydi bucha

(If I ask my mum, no one will give me an ingot.)

In T.H.'s narrative, she highlights his mother's skill in baking bread, a key female activity in Uzbek culture. She also expresses deep admiration and respect by stating that *Hızır*, a revered figure in Islamic belief who appears only to the righteous, visits her mother, described as 'With his prayer rug in hand, on his path to Allah.' This portrays her as a virtuous and respected woman in their community.

Salom ayting otam ey uzokdagi enamga.

(Say Salam, my father, to my distant mother.)

Kup sog'indim Allohjon otam bilan enamdi.

(I miss so much, O Allah, my father and my mother.)

In the koshuk above, the interviewee expresses her longing for her family.

Ochog'imi loylagan kampirimi chaylayan

(Beautifying my stove, beautifying my man.)

Arkek kardashimga bir solom bolsin

(A salute to my brother.)

T.H. highlights the stove in the house's courtyard, where women cook. Uzbek women craft tandoors by mixing goat hair and straw with mud, creating durable and aesthetically pleasing structures that elevate their societal respectability. In this *koshuk*, the final phase of hearth-making, where women showcase their skills, is emphasized. The phrase '*ochog'imi loylagan*' (one who beautifies the hearth) is connected to '*kampirini chaylayan*' (one who beautifies his wife), with the interviewee praising his brother for allowing his wife to beautify her home, just as women do with their hearths. In another narrative, the interviewee stated that the *kopuz* was played to express the longing, and *gurbet* felt by girls who had to part from their families prematurely due to marriage.

My mother died when I was one year old. My aunt raised me. I got married when I was 16. My brothers sent me away. He didn't show me, didn't make me talk. My brothers sent me away. They gave me to a person they had never met. Then I came here. There were no mobile phones back then. I said, 'They left me in the middle of Türkiye.' I recorded it like that and sent it. My brother put a tape recorder on, listened to it, and cried. Our life became a story, just like us. After 27 years, I went and saw my brothers and sisters. Some of them are dead, some are alive, some I recognized, some I didn't. (K.H., 65, years old)

Lattim⁹, lattima lattim sug'a bottimi nay nay

(I lapped, lapped, lapped, I sank in the water nay nay.)

⁹ A headscarf that extends from the top of a woman's head to her feet.

Kardoshlarim, akalarim sottimi nay nay

(My brothers, my elders, have you sold me, nay nay?)

Muradig'a yettimi meni berib nay nay

(Did you find your wish, giving me away, nay nay?)

Meni Türkiyani ortasiga surgun kildimi nay nay.

(You sent me to the heart of Türkiye, far away, nay nay.)

K.H.'s narrative illustrates how she was forced to migrate to Türkiye due to a marriage arranged by her brother. The interviewee recorded her feelings in the aforementioned *koshuk* and sent it to Afghanistan. In the *koshuk*, she openly reproaches her brother for marrying her off to an unfamiliar person at a young age, highlighting her dissatisfaction with cultural norms that limited her autonomy.

The interviewee conveyed her pain and her perspectives on gender roles constrained by cultural norms in her *koshuks*. For instance, in K.H.'s *koshuks*, the phrase 'Have you attained your desire?' illustrates how women can express their criticism. Such poems reveal women's feelings about the social roles shaped by traditional culture. However, this is not universally applicable. Nevertheless, examples like K.H.'s narrative and her *koshuks* demonstrate that this perspective cannot be generalized. The interviewee openly expresses her dissatisfaction with his *gurbet*. The fact that the brother listens to the reproachful *koshuk* written and performed by his sister, crying, can be interpreted as an indicator of the brother's regret. In societies where marriage is viewed as a family alliance, the decision to 'choose a mate' lies with the family, not the woman (Kandiyotti, 2007, p.80). Similarly, Abu-Lughod (2004, pp.241-249) notes that in Bedouin society, the family often makes the marriage decision, with girls obeying the decision but expressing their true feelings through *ginnaves*. For the Bedouins, a good woman was not one who opposed a marriage arranged by her brothers; anything else was considered rebellion. In most cases, the brothers acted as the guardians of the household, responsible for arranging marriages. K.H.'s marriage was similarly arranged by her brother.

K.H., like many women, got married and migrated to Türkiye. The line 'You sent me to the middle of Türkiye, nay nay' sheds light on marriage traditions. This situation is associated with the Uzbek proverb '*Kız bola palahmon toshi kayerga otilsa osha yerda koladi*,' meaning 'A girl child stays wherever she is thrown, like a catapult or a sling stone.' According to the narratives, in the past, the stone placed in a fabric circle was rotated and thrown, and the girl was married off to whoever's house the stone landed in. This proverb illustrates that who the girls marry and how far they will go (*gurbet*) is seen as predetermined, a matter of fate.

The following narrative describes the emotions experienced by the interviewee after her daughters go into *gurbet*:

Women who experienced *gurbet* often played the *kopuz*. In Afghanistan, girls were married off at very young ages, sometimes as young as 10 or 12. The pain of *gurbet* would remain with those girls. This pain would never leave them throughout their lives. These girls would suffer this hardship. As the saying goes, 'those girls would have 40 souls'—they would turn into stones. They were given away to strangers and left, but they did not die from fear. They became women, gave birth to children, became grandmothers, and life went on. Eventually, they adapted. Their sorrow and joy were both expressed through the *kopuz* (C.G., 55, years old).

C.G.'s narrative highlights the profound loneliness and helplessness resulting from women's early marriages and their feelings of *gurbet*. Another interviewee stated, 'In the past, the *kopuz* used to be women's confidant, their confidant. When she saw the *kopuz*, she would rejoice as if she had seen a relative, mother, or father she had not seen for years.' This statement is significant in demonstrating how the *kopuz* served as a mediator for women's emotional expression. It can be argued that these shared experiences and emotions fostered a sense of solidarity among women, creating female sympathy. In women's gatherings, impromptu songs reflecting emotions such as *gurbet*, mourning, joy and longing are passed down orally. In the following *koshuk*, P.G., who lives abroad, expresses her longing for her mother.

Opokkina kollaring nega hinoli onajon.

(Why are your eyes open, mummy?)

Nima uchun yig' laysan onajon.

(Why are you crying, mummy?)

Yig'lomagin onajon hech ham foydasi yok.

(Crying is of no use, mummy.)

Yig'lomagin onajon dushmanlar.

(Jealous enemies, may they be blind, mummy.)

This *koshuk* describes the strong relationship between daughters and their mothers, expressing the sorrow of the daughter leaving home as she shares the same fate. The phrase 'Crying is of no use, mummy' expresses her dissatisfaction with having to go into *gurbet*. Furthermore, almost all the interviewees used the expression 'Onajonim, Bobojonim degan koshiklarni kop aytardik' ('We used to sing many *koshuks* for our mothers and fathers.') Similarly, Haqyar (2020, pp.134) noted that in Pashtu society, when women leave their homes on their wedding day, they sing *koshuks* called *tappa* to emphasize that the girl's family home is as beautiful as heaven, expressing the sadness of leaving it forever. The other *koshuk* P.G. sang to her mother is provided below:

Oppokina kullari hinolidir onajon.

(Why are your white hands amy mother, with henna?)

Nima uchun yig' laysan onajon.

(Why are you crying, mummy?)

Yig'lomagin onajon.

(Don't cry, mummy.)

Dushmanlar kur bolsin kurolmaydi onajon.

(Jealous enemies, may they be blind, mummy.)

Yig'lomagin onajon .

(Don't cry, mummy.)

Dushmanlar, kur bolsin kurolmaydi onajon.

(Jealous enemies, may they be blind, mummy.)

In this *koshuk*, P.G. questions why her mother hennaed her, highlighting the emotional complexity of the henna night, which symbolizes the last night a girl spends at her parental home before marriage. The mother is portrayed as sorrowful, unable to attend the wedding the following day at the boy's house. To comfort her, the girl tells her mother not to mind the rumors, suggesting that there are people who cannot find joy in others' happiness. The other *koshuk* sung by P.G. is as follows:

Tomda bir dona bug'doy onajon.

(A grain of wheat on the roof, mummy.)

Men boshka joylarda g'ariplikdaman.

(I am a stranger in distant lands.)

Gurbatlarda yurib holsiz koldim onajon.

(I fell tired in the expatriates, mummy.)

Kimsazizman, yolgizman o najon.

(I'm lonely, I'm alone, mummy.)

The *kopuz* was played between these *koshuks*. Women would then play the *kopuz* and cry. After the sound of the *kopuz* left their mouths, they would put it down and continue singing before their tears had dried. They would pass these words from mouth to mouth, singing them as they came from the heart. Those who were truly sorrowful would collect these lines, one after another, and form a *koshuk*. Eventually, it would spread from person to person, becoming a larger, collective *koshuk*. (P.G. 55, years old)

In her narrative, P.G. explains that *koshuks* emerged as a way for women to express shared emotions like longing, sadness, and loneliness. She compares herself to a grain of wheat, feeling ‘*strange, lonely, tired, sad, desolate, and alone in foreign countries.*’

I spent a lot of time in *gurbet*, I came to Türkiye separated from my parents. While I was singing lullabies to my children in the cradle, my mother was crying in Afghanistan when she was singing lullabies to her grandchildren. My mother was very sad because her sister was martyred by the enemy. First, she was sad for her sister, then she was sad for me when I went abroad. At that time, after putting her grandson to sleep, she would go to the other room, play her *kopuz* and cry. She would cry when she was already crying, and she would also go to the other room and sing *koshuk* while playing her *kopuz*. Like my mother, I also lost my brother in the earthquake. I am now suffering the same sorrow that my mother suffered. My sister-in-law also lost her husband and son in the earthquake. She is always sad. Therefore, he used to play *kopuz* and sing *koshuk* all the time. When they were putting the children to sleep, they would play the *kopuz* in the cradle, shaking and shaking, saying *allala*. (T.H. 55, years old)

*Alla*¹⁰ (lullaby) 1

Tokka chiktim, tokka chiktim tog' jilanday tulg'onib alla bolam alla.

(I went up the mountain, I went up the mountain, I wandered like a snake, alla baby alla.)

Toshtga yendim, toshtga yendim rangi royim sarg'ayib.

(I looked at the stone, I looked at the stone, my face is pale.)

Alla bolam alla men alla kilay sen uhlagin bolam alla.

(Alla my child alla, I will tell you alla, sleep alla.)

Uzoktagi oylamni hush habarlarini eshitayin alla bolam.

(Let me hear the good news from afar, of my distant family.)

Hush habarini eshitib hursand bulayin alla bolam alla.

(May I be very happy when I hear pleasant news, my dear child.)

¹⁰ 'Alla' means lullaby in Uzbek.

Alla 2

Tokka chiktim, tokka chiktim tog' jilanday tulg'anib.

(I climbed the mountain, I climbed the mountain, entangled like a mountain snake.)

Pastga yendim, pastga yendim rangi royim sarg'ayib.

(I descended down, I descended down, my face pale, my spirit weak.)

Men oylami jog'attim ey sari jag'dey eriyib alle ey alle.

(I lost my family, I melted like butter, my baby alle alle.)

Alla 3

Sarg'ayganim, sarg'ayganim sari toldi bargidey alla ya alla

(I turned pale, I turned pale, like a yellowing willow leaf, alla, oh alla,)

Jilag'anim, jilag'anim tog'u toshti eriganidey alla ya alla

(I cry, I cry, my tears melt mountains and stones, alla, oh alla.)

Men oylamdi men ukamdi sog'indim alla ya alla

(I miss my family, I miss my brother, alla, oh alla.)

Hudoyjonim, Hudoyjonim bunga yok bir chora alla ya alla.

(Oh my God, oh my God, is there no cure for this pain, alla, oh alla?)

Alla alla bolam uhlasin, alla alla bolam uhlasin alla ya alla.

(Alle alle let my baby sleep, alle alle let my baby sleep alle ya alle.)

T.H. migrated to Türkiye from Afghanistan with her family in 1982. Her narrative reveals that she married young, came to Türkiye, and was separated from her family for many years. While in Türkiye and her mother in Afghanistan, they sought to ease their longing by singing lullabies. The interviewee connected her fate with her mother's, likening her mother's singing a lullaby with the *kopuz* for her deceased aunt to her own singing a lullaby for her brother, who was lost in the 2023 Maraş and Hatay earthquakes. In *Alla 1*, the interviewee describes traveling over mountains like a snake and going into *gurbet*, turning yellow and pale with sadness while longing for news from her family. *Alla 2* similarly reflects on migration and *gurbet*, but expresses her sadness more intensely, describing herself as melting like butter. In *Alla 3*, she describes turning yellow and withering like willow leaves, her tears melting mountains and stones, and deeply missing her family, asking Allah for relief from her suffering. These *Allas* illustrate how the interviewee copes with *gurbet*'s emotional toll, seeking solace in God. The following narrative demonstrates how this practice helps alleviate sorrow.

If a bride left her home, moved to a distant place, or stayed far from her parents, she would sing *koshuks* based on her thoughts and feelings. Women would gather together and play the *kopuz* at home, crying as a way to ease their sorrows. My mother lived far away from her parents. My father took her far from her family, and for this reason, my mother expressed her troubles through

the *kopuz*, as she missed her family. She played the *kopuz* because she longed for her mother and sister. She was engaged at the age of 9, and my father married her when she was 13, taking her far away. My mother used to sing her *koshuks* and play the *kopuz* while crying. (S.G.,35)

This narrative, like many others, elaborates on *gurbet*. S.G.'s account of her mother's life reflects the shared experiences of many women, emphasizing the common challenges of early separation from families. A *koshuk* sung by the interviewee's mother, F.G., is as follows:

Tokka chikim, toyga chiktim tog'larda tolgonib

(I climbed the mountain, I went to the wedding, swaying like a snake.)

Paslayandim, paslayandim rangi royim sargayib.

(I grew weary, my face pale and faint.)

Sargayganim, sargayganim sarik toldi bargiday.

(I turned yellow, like a willow leaf in the fall.)

Kizorganim, kizorganim osh pichok yuzudey.

(I blushed, I blushed, like a cook's knife.)

Osh pichokning yuziday, yuz bormikan Hudojon.

(Is there a face like a cook's knife, Allah?)

Ota, ona uyiday uy bormikan Hudojon

(Is there a home like a mother's, a father's, Allah?)

Ota, onam uyuday uy bolsaku Hudojon,

(O Allah, if there was a house like my parents' house.)

Tahtu ravon yollariday yol bolsaku Hudojon.

(If only the path were as smooth as a royal road, Allah.)

Tahtu ravon yollaridan toyib tushtim Hudojon.

(I slipped and fell on the palanquin's road, O Allah.)

Musofirlik joylarga kaylardan tushdim Hudojon.

(To foreign lands, from where did I stray, O Allah?)

Musofir ketgan kizlarning rangi sarik deydilar.

(They say the girls who leave turn pale as gold.)

Kozidagi yoshini mulku Popa deydilar.

(They say the eyes of those who leave home are full of tears.)

Musofir men, musofir men bozoriga.

(I am expatriate, I am in the place of expatriates.)

Kizoriban, kizoribman tuzoginga.

(I am crimson, caught in the trap.)

Ajal kelib, ajal kelib ulib ketsam

(If death comes, if death comes, and I pass away.)

Duo ayla, duo ayla mozorimga.

Pray, pray, for my grave, where I lay.) (F.G., 65, years old)

F.G.'s first *koshuk* narrates her marriage, while the second *koshuk* tells the story of her migration journey to Türkiye. The imagery in the opening lines, where she describes gliding through the mountains and feeling her color turn yellow with sadness, mirror's common themes found in other expatriate *koshuks*. The first three lines of this *koshuk* bear resemblance to numerous others. Yet, in the fourth line, a figurative expression is introduced. The interviewee equates the best cook's knife with the ideal home, idealizing the parental home. Similarly, she emphasizes that the best road is the path leading to her home, where she was treated with care. In the fifth line, the interviewee likens the house where she grew up to a throne on which she was cared. She connects her slipping from this throne with leaving her home and embarking on the journey of *gurbet*. In the sixth line, she highlights how the color of girls fades, and their eyes age in *gurbet*. In the seventh line, she laments, 'I am helpless in *gurbet*. If fate comes and I die and go away, pray for my grave.' Through this expression, she conveys her resignation to fate and associates her condition with death. Particularly by requesting prayers for her grave, she underscores her helplessness and a sense of defeat by destiny. This vividly captures the intense loneliness of a woman who married and embarked on a migration journey years ago. Simultaneously, it reflects the constraints imposed by traditional norms and the helplessness experienced by women. At this point, it becomes evident that *koshuks* serve as a medium for women to articulate their innermost feelings. The following *koshuk* is significant for expressing the *gurbet* feelings of girls separated from their families at an early age. This aligns with Caraveli-Chaves' (as cited in Fishman, 2008, p.268) argument that laments act as a space where women voice criticisms of the patriarchal social structure. Similarly, it can be argued that, like elegies, *koshuks* create a space, enabling women to express their complaints against society. The other *koshuk* sung by F.G:

Ay shopira ay shopir, piyolaga, piyolaga choy shopir

Turkiyaning Turkiyaning dashtiga muştuparlar, muştuparlar musofir.

With bowls in hand, tea cooling in delay,

We came to Türkiye's provinces, far away.

Tayog'otim tayog'otim soyga tushtu soylardan surhon oshti.

Avg'oniston Avg'oniston ota, onamiz kuzimdan kuzimdan pir pir uchti.

(I threw the branch in my hand into the river, the branches crossed the waters

Afghanistan, my parents who stayed in Afghanistan flashed before my eyes.)

Bilagimda bilagimda bilakuzuk toldi menin toldi mening bilagim.

Musofirlar musofirlar sohtekin gulday rangim gulday rangim buzuldi.

(Bracelets on my wrist, bracelets on my wrist, bracelets

My face faded like a rose in expatriates, in expatriates.)

Tolg'a tomchi tolg'a tomchi buloyin, kulg'a kamchi kulg'a kamchi buloyin.

Oylalarim, onalarim jirokta, men hudoycha men hudoycha buloyin.

(Let me be a drop by drop, let me be a whip in your hand.

My family, mum and dad are far away. May God keep me safe.)

F.G.'s first *koshuk* reflects her marriage, while the second depicts her migration to Türkiye. In the first line, she describes leaving with bowls of tea that cooled before traveling to rural Türkiye (specifically Antakya). In

the second line, her departure from Afghanistan is compared to a branch thrown into a river, leaving everything behind, including her parents. The third line, she describes traveling to the expatriate with the wedding bracelets still on her wrists, feeling like that she ‘withered like a rose’ from sadness. Her final line expresses her loneliness, far from her parents, and ‘entrusted to Allah.’

In addition to the prominent mother and father *koshuks* shared by the interviewees, there are also brother and sister *koshuks*, which express the deep longing expatriate women feel for their siblings. The following *koshuk* reflects the relationship between the brother and sister:

Arzlangani og’am jok

(I have no brother to ask.)

Sır atgani singlim jok

(I have no sister to tell my secret.)

A girl in the countryside sang this *koshuk* to her brother. The *kopuz* served as the confidant of women. If a woman faced a problem, she would run to her brother to share it. The woman who shared this narrative had no brothers or sisters. She stated, ‘I have no brother to ask for help. I have no sister to tell my secret.’ For women, the *kopuz* became their confidant. (N.D., 42, years old)

N.D.’s narrative plays a crucial role in understanding sibling relationships. As revealed in the accounts, brothers are instrumental in fulfilling their sisters’ needs, while sisters share a relationship built on trust, exchanging secrets, and providing mutual support. Sisters who grew up together acted as each other’s confidants, but after marriage and separation, they expressed their feelings through the *kopuz* in place of their sisters. The frequent mentions by the interviewees help explain why the *kopuz* is regarded as a confidant for women. The following *koshuk* is sung for the elder brother:

Bir g’arip bechoraman yurak bag’ri poraman.

(I am a strange helpless, my heart is longing)

Turkiyadan borsam ey soat olib boraman.

(I will bring you a watch when I come from Türkiye)

It is understood that the interviewee is attempting to cope with the feelings of *gurbet*. In the following line, a woman, an expatriate in Türkiye, expresses her longing for her brother and states that she will bring him a watch as a gift when she returns to Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Based on women’s accounts, it appears that *koshuks*, sung by Uzbek women in Afghanistan in the past, were used not only for entertainment but also to express many emotions such as sadness and longing. This tradition, practiced during leisure time, can be said to have transformed into *gurbet koshuk* (poems of longing) after migration, expressing homesickness, nostalgia, and yearning for home, and essentially becoming the language and voice of women. According to the women’s narratives, the practice of singing *koshuks* is a very old tradition in Afghanistan, with *koshuks* inspired by real-life stories and performed in women’s gatherings accompanied by *def* and *kopuz*. Additionally, unlike other instruments used by women, the *kopuz* is described by the interviewees as serving the function of being ‘women’s confidant and companion in sorrow.’ These accounts reveal that prior to the widespread availability of modern communication technologies, this practice served as a culturally embedded medium of connection functioning analogously to contemporary telecommunication devices. It created a communal space for women to socialize, exchange emotional narratives, and cultivate solidarity. Interviewees have stated the practice of playing the *kopuz* and singing *koshuks* were significant among women for expressing their emotions during a time where communication technologies weren’t commonplace in Afghanistan. According to interviewees just like how telephones are important today to talk about their troubles, *koshuks* were just as important to talk about their feelings in women’s gatherings. From

the interviewees' statements we can gather that telephones have replaced *kopuz* and that they use telephones often whether to talk to their families or to listen to music. Interviewees noted that the *kopuz* was often carried sometimes kept close like a mobile phone, or concealed within sewing materials, underscoring its intimate and symbolic value. *Koshuks* holds significant importance for women in coping with difficult emotions, as well as managing the feelings of *gurbet* and homesickness experienced during their youth. It is understood that women tried to cope with the feeling of *gurbet* at a young age and that the sense of loneliness persisted throughout their lives. Additionally, it has been understood that the *koshuks* created a collective emotional unity among women and formed a distinct space where they could freely express their own thoughts with words, they chose themselves. This practice, which is reported to have declined due to war and internal conflicts in Afghanistan, is understood to have continued for a while in Türkiye during the early years of migration, albeit in a transformed form. Emotions, once expressed in women's gatherings, are now recorded on cassettes and sent to families after migration. Although the practice of recording on cassette and sending back and forth is no longer applied today due to developing communication opportunities (such as mobile phones, the internet, and social media), it is understood that *koshuks* still remain in the memories of women. Furthermore, expressions related to migration and *gurbet* have become dominant themes in the content of *koshuks*. Additionally, the feelings of *gurbet*, longing, and deep loneliness caused by migration—whether from a nearby village or as far as Türkiye—are especially prominent.

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