



The Game Sinsin and Its Old Turkic Cultural Reflections*

Sinsin Oyunu ve Bu Oyunun Eski Türk Kültüründeki Yansımaları

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ABSTRACT

Sinsin is a game centered around a fire which is typically played by a group of people at weddings. This game is especially seen in Turkey although the name of this game still survives in the Gagauz language as an adverb (*sinsin* “secretly”), too. The word *sinsin* has variations like *sişsiş*, *simsim*, *sişidi*, *çındır* or *yumruk oyunu* in different regions of Turkey. This game has three main elements. The first element is the large fire which is prepared at night in front of the wedding house or in an open field. The second element is musical instruments, *davul* “drum” and *zurna* “clarion”. The third element is a group of people (usually just men), grouped around the fire. *Sinsin* is actually a very interesting game in terms of its Old Turkic cultural elements. Along with the drum, the fire and the player moving around the fire with special dance moves it shows us the shamanic remnants of the Old Turkic culture. To date, various etymological explanations have been made on the word *sinsin*. In this article, we mainly dealt with the special features of the game *sinsin* along with its etymology.

Keywords: Sinsin, fire game, folk dances, shamanism, etymology

ÖZET

Sinsin, bir grup insanın düğün törenlerinde oynadıkları ateş temelli bir oyundur. Sinsin oyun adı Türkçe dışında Gagauzcada zarf olarak (*sinsin* “gizlice”) yaşamaktadır ve bu oyun tespit edebildiğimiz kadarıyla Türkiye dışında görülmemektedir. *Sinsin* sözcüğü, Türkiye’de oyunun oynandığı bölgelere göre *sişsiş*, *simsim*, *sişidi*, *çındır* ya da *yumruk oyunu* adlarını almaktadır. *Sinsin* oyunu esasen üç ögeden oluşmaktadır. Öncelikle, temel öge ateştir. Gece düğün evinin önünde ya da açık bir alanda büyük bir ateş hazırlanır. İkinci öge, *davul* ve *zurna* adı verilen müzik aletleridir. Üçüncüsü, ateşin etrafında toplanan çoğunlukla erkeklerden oluşan insan topluluğudur. *Sinsin* eski Türk kültürel öğelerini barındırması açısından ilginç bir oyundur. Davul, ateş ve ateşin etrafında özel dans figürleri ile dönen oyuncu Eski Türk kültürünün şamanist kalıntıları bize göstermektedir. Ateşin etrafında dans eden oyuncu daima tetiktedir ve sık sık kalabalığı dikkatlice izlemektedir. Kendi ‘yaşam alanı’ nı ‘düşmanlar’ dan koruması açısından *sinsin* oyuncusu için bu oyunun Eski Türklerin savaş stratejilerinin kalıntıları da içerdiğini söyleyebiliriz. Bugüne kadar *sinsin* sözcüğü üzerine çeşitli etimolojik açıklamalar yapılmıştır. Bu yazıda *sinsin* oyunun belirgin özellikleri ile birlikte etimolojisi üzerinde durulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sinsin, ateş oyunu, halk oyunları, şamanizm, etimoloji

Turkey has numerous ‘intangible cultural heritage’ values that are reflected in its rich culture. In accordance with UNESECO’s ‘Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage’, Turkey has been preparing its ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage National Inventory’ since 2006.¹ Now, there are 112 cultural heritage elements in this inventory² and the game *sinsin* was registered in this inventory in 2013 with inventory number 01.0054. Other names for this game recorded in the inventory are *yumruk oyunu* (punch game) and *simsim*. The field of this game in the inventory is noted as ‘performing arts’ and under the heading of ‘geographical distribution’ we see the cities Amasya, Ankara, Çorum, Kayseri, Sivas, Tokat and Yozgat.³ Although there are only seven cities located in central and northern Anatolia recorded in the inventory, this game is also seen in eastern, southern, and southeastern Anatolian regions.⁴

Sinsin is a game centered around a fire which is often played by a group of people at weddings. This game is especially seen in Turkey although the name of this game, *sinsin*, still survives in the Gagauz language as an adverb, with the meaning “secretly”: *sinsin* (Gaydarci et al., 1991, p. 219a) → *sinerek* “secretly” (Gaydarci et al., 1991, p. 218b).⁵

Although the game *sinsin* is seen in Turkey, a similar wedding ritual or entertainment related to ‘fire’ exists among those Uzbeks living in China and Mongols. Ma (1994, p. 188) gives the following information about the Uzbek wedding ceremony:

Sometimes, relatives and friends of the bride would “carry the bride off” after the wedding ceremony, and the groom has to offer gifts to “redeem” her. When the “carried-away” bride is “redeemed,” she has to make a circle round a fire in the courtyard before entering the house. This is perhaps a legacy of ancient nuptial ceremonies.

1 See T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı (n.d.c).

2 See T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı (n.d.b).

3 See T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı (n.d.a). The city names within the geographical distribution are actually determined according to the game information given by the official institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in the cities.

4 Other than the seven cities officially given in the inventory, we can give some place names where the game *sinsin* is performed in Turkey. According to Gâzîmihâl (1999, Vol. 3, p. 25): Sinop, Samsun, Bahçe, Kozan, Adana, Cebelbereket [Osmaniye], İncesu, Zencidere, villages of Kırşehir, Genezi-Avanos, Merzifon-Amasya, Çorum, Güdül, Şabanözü, Polatlı, Saray-Çankırı, Beypazarı. According to And (2016, p. 458): Amasya, villages of Çankırı, Çorum, Erkiilet, Kayseri, Kırşehir, Malatya, [Kahraman]Maraş, Samsun, Seyhan [Adana], Sinop, Yozgat. According to *Derleme Sözlüğü* (TDK, 1978, p. 3644a, entry *sinsin*, *sînsîn* (I)): Tokat-Eskişehir; Kurşunlu-Çankırı; İskilip-Çorum; Erciş-Van; Afşin-[Kahraman]Maraş; Şarkışla, Gürün-Sivas; Yozgat; Çanlı, Ayaş-Ankara; Bünyan-Kayseri; Bahçeli, Bor-Niğde; Mersin-İçel. According to *Derleme Sözlüğü* (TDK, 1978, p. 3637b, entry *simsim*): Merzifon-Amasya; Tokat; Pınarbaşı-Kayseri. According to Tor (2004, p. 328, entry *sişsin*): Aslanköy → İğdir, Ayvagediği, Evrenli-Mersin; Kisecik-Çamlıyayla. According to Tor (2004, p. 327, entry *sişidi*): Dalakderesi-Mersin.

5 Gâzîmihâl (1999, Vol. 1, pp. 217-218) in his work, under the heading ‘Gagauzlarda Oyun’ [Dance (Performance) among Gagauz People] gives some information about Christian nomadic herdsmen, Karakachan (Sarakatsani) people who live in Bulgaria, by quoting Dr. Kristof Aymendorf [Christoph Haimendorf]. Here, Gâzîmihâl tries to show some similarities between the game *sinsin* and a wedding ritual performed at night organized around the fire among Karakachan people.

Roux (2002, p. 234) quotes information from J. B. Chabout, that Mongols had used fire to purify the new bride: “Among Mongols, until forty or fifty years, the new bride went to the [groom’s] family, had to pass through two fires in order to be purified.”

In Turkey, *sinsin* has variations like *sişiş*, *simsim*, *sişidi*, *çındır*, and *yumruk oyunu* according to the region where this game is performed.⁶ This game has three main elements. The first, as mentioned above, the bonfire which is prepared at night in front of the wedding house or in an open field. The second element is musical instruments, *davul* “drum” and *zurna* “traditional Turkish clarion”. The third element is a group of people, formed only of men, around the fire.

One of the players moves around the fire and while he performs his theatrical dance, he tries to keep control of the main area around the fire. At the same time, a person from the crowd attempts to sneak up on the fire’s guardian and attack him, attempting to punch him - mostly in the back or on the upper arm. However, one cannot punch the *sinsin* performer by directly approaching from behind. The man assailing the *sinsin* performer has to attack him within his field of vision. The game continues in this way, with players running away from or chasing their opponent, and sometimes the *sinsin* performer jumps over the fire. The game goes on until the fire dies down. *Sinsin* ends with the *halay* (folk dance) which is performed by the *sinsin* players and spectators. In some regions, the *sinsin* game is performed at the end of the wedding, and in these places, it is thus indicates the end of the wedding ceremony.⁷

The game’s name, *sinsin* is also used as a name of a folk dance, a part of a dress, and a melody. In the southern region of Turkey, there is a folk dance, *halay*, called *sinsin*. This *sinsin halayı* is a large circle folk dance where men and women join together around the fire after the *sinsin* game. All of the folk dances and halays, performed around the fire are called *sinsin* in the southern regions. It is very common among Alevis (Demirsipahi, 1975, p. 239). Koşay (1944, p. 264) mentions this folk dance’s name while he gives information about ‘Gelin Göçürme [Bringing the bride to the groom’s house]’ in the village of Yağlıbasan. According to Koşay, after the bride comes to the groom’s house, bridal candidates perform the folk dance, *sinsin*, and play the game *tura*.

We see that the game *sinsin* gives a name to a part of an important national woman’s folk dress in Turkey, too. In *Derleme Sözlüğü* (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 1978, p. 3644a, entry *sinsin*, *sînsîn* (III)) the third meaning of *sinsin* is “one of the pieces of *üçetek*”.⁸ The *Üçetek*

6 As we mentioned above in Turkey’s ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage National Inventory’ just two names of this game -*yumruk oyunu* and *simsim*- are given.

7 *Sinsin* is performed in a wide range of locations in Anatolia, so some variations is seen in terms of the rules applied in this game. For other descriptions of *sinsin* see Ülkütaşır (1941), (Caferoğlu, 1994, p. 91), Demirsipahi (1975, p. 239), and Gâzimişâl (1999, Vol. 3, pp. 19-21). For the basic description of *sinsin* see Karabaşa (2014, p. 87). A brief documentary on the game *sinsin* was made by a TV channel, TRT Anadolu, under the documentary series, *Derin Kökler*. In this documentary, also a description of *sinsin* performed in Yeşilkent-Kayseri, is given by a *sinsin* player. See Altıparmak (2012).

8 There are also the words *sin* “skirt, hem” and *sinliyelek* “üçetek (dress with three skirts)” in *Derleme Sözlüğü* (TDK, 1978, pp. 3637b, 3643b).

(literally “three skirts”, namely ‘dress with three skirts’) is a long three pieced dress (two-pieces at the front side and one-piece at the back side) worn by women while performing folk dances today.⁹ Although *üçetek* is known as a woman’s dress, in old times, it was also worn by men (TDK, 1979, p. 4056a, entry *üçetek*; Demirsipahi, 1975, p. 21, entry *üçetekli entari*, under the heading ‘Dictionary on the Clothing Section’). It is possible to think that because the name of a part of *üçetek* is the *sinsin*, this dress, *üçetek*, may have been worn by men performing the *sinsin* game in old times.¹⁰

In addition, the game *sinsin* gives the name *sinsin havası*¹¹ (*sinsin* melody) to the music played during the game. *Sinsin havası* is played by the *davulcu* “*davul* player” and the *zurnacı* “*zurna* player”. In Ankara, Yozgat, Akdağmadeni, Çorum, Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Malatya and Çankırı regions, jereed (Turkish *cirit*¹²) melodies are used as the *sinsin* melody. Since, like jereed, the *sinsin* game includes a chase activity, the rhythms and the melodies of *sinsin havası* reflect excitement and fear (Demirsipahi, 1975, p. 239). During the *sinsin* game, music (like *Köroğlu Havası*¹³), which represents bravery and manhood, is preferred.

Like most village dramatic games, *sinsin* is based on physical skill and requires the ability to dance. Sometimes the performer raises his hand to his forehead while carefully surveying the spectators - he exaggerates this gesture as if he is observing the enemy. Through such movements, a theatrical atmosphere is created in the game.

Sinsin is a very interesting game in terms of its Old Turkic cultural elements. First of all, the drum, the fire and a player who moves around the fire with special dance moves reminds us of the shamanistic remnants of the Old Turks. In Turkey today, while there are no longer shamanic rituals (like those performed by some Siberian Turks), we can find its traces in village theatrical games such as *sinsin*. As mentioned above, sometimes during the game, the performer leaps over the fire and we know this was done amongst the Old Turks in order to purify foreigners.¹⁴

Secondly, the player who dances around the fire is always on guard and he frequently watches the crowd carefully. This caution is necessary in terms of protecting his ‘living space’ from the attackers or, metaphorically, from ‘the enemies’. We can compare this game with the *battue* in terms of its functions. In old times, the *battue* was one of the most important

9 Until recently, *üçetek* was worn by women in daily life or on special occasions such as weddings. Koşay (1944, p. 328) describes *üçetek enteri* [entari “dress”] under the heading ‘Bridal Gowns and Veils Worn in the Past’. For other descriptions see Pakalın (1993, p. 556, entry *üçetekli entari*) and Koçu (1969, p. 236, entry *üç etekli*).

10 For some samples of the dress *üçetek* see Koşay (1944, p. 263) and Erden (1999, pp. 44-46, 96-98).

11 For the musical note of *sinsin* see Gâzîmihâl (1999, Vol. 3, p. 264).

12 For *cirit* see Demirsipahi (1975, pp. 226-229).

13 For the *sinsin* game performed with *Köroğlu Havası* in Pazar village, Kızılcahamam-Ankara, see Arslan (2017).

14 When the Byzantine embassy headed by Zemarkhos reached the Soghodian country in 568, Turks purified them by fire before visiting Istemi, the khan of the Western Turks. By doing so, Turks were believed to purify themselves, too (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2010, pp. 16-17).

military exercises and because players of *sinsin* play out theatrical war scenes, this game may also contain the remnants of the war strategies of Old Turks.

In the course of time, it is possible that a religious ritual or a war ritual can change into a dance performance purely as a means of entertainment. This process is mostly related to the change of the social structure or lifestyle. It is not difficult for us to imagine that the dances performed with a sword, a dagger or a shield seen today are the remnants of war dances (And, 1996, p. 62). Even if the underlying causes of the behaviors performed in the dance are erased from the memories of the villagers or the behaviors change their shape in the dance, the villagers follow the tradition blindly or unconsciously (And, 1996, p. 100).

Sinsin, as a dramatic ritual, includes the element of entertainment as well as the element of competition. Because *sinsin* is an attack game, personal competition between individuals may sometimes be seen during the game and two people may show hostility to each other throughout the game. In addition to this, the individual - namely the performer of the game - actually struggles against the whole community, or rather, against the spectators. *Sinsin* performers sometimes exhibit strong behaviors and this harshness can be seen in most of the dramatic village games in rural areas. The game *tura*¹⁵ “braided rope” is one such violent game. This game is a field game played with a braided rope or a belt in some regions of Anatolia. During the wedding festivities, the players take turns to hit each other with these thick ropes with their full strength. Weddings, and religious festivals like *bayram*, are important means for having fun and dancing. During these important days of celebration, people hitting each other with ropes or punching each other mercilessly may seem extremely odd. However, social differences, such as status and wealth, disappear among the villagers during these kinds of games. The players get a chance to prove their strength in the group via these games.¹⁶

The name of a folk dance or a theatrical village game may originate from various sources, like from the name of a region, a city or a village (e.g. *Çorum halayı*, *Aydın zeybeği* etc.). The steps or movements in the folk dance (e.g. *üç ayak oyunu* “three steps dance”) or animal names (e.g. *arı oyunu* “bee game”) etc. are also used as the names of the folk dances or the village games.¹⁷

The variations of the game name *sinsin*¹⁸ in Turkish dialects are *sişsiş* (Tor, 2004, p. 328),

15 For the game *tura* and *sinsin* see Ercan (1955, p. 379); for the game *tura* performed in Arguvan-Malatya, see Parlak (2011).

16 In Turkey’s rural areas it is seen that sometimes people joke with one another by hitting each other. This situation can, in some ways, be considered as a type of communication. Hitting each other in a friendly way means touching each other and this makes people happy and thus it has also socializing function in rural areas. Group dances, like *halay* may also be seen as a vehicle of ‘touching each other’ and this group dance performance increases its members’ self-confidence.

17 For detailed information on the formation of the names of Turkish folk dances and dramatic village games, see And (1964, pp. 18-31). It should be noted that And (1964, pp. 29-31) is not able to categorize some folk dances and dramatic village games, like *sinsin* in his classification. Demirşipahi (1975, pp. 11-16) also determines some factors for the formation of (the names of) the folk dances and dramatic village games. In his work, Demirşipahi (1975, p. 14) mentions *sinsin* under the heading ‘Military Order and Titles’.

18 In Modern standard Turkish *sinsin* has two meanings: 1. A folk game performed at night by young men around

*siñidi*¹⁹ (Tor, 2004, p. 327), and *simsim*²⁰ (TDK, 1978, p. 3637b). *Sinsin* game is known in Urfa as *çındır*²¹ (TDK, 1968, p. 1179b., entry *çındır* (II)). The other names of the game *sinsin* are *zamah* and *zamak oyunu* in Çorum (Gâzimizihâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 23). In *Derleme Sözlüğü*, we find four meanings for *sinsin* (TDK, 1978, p. 3644a, entry *sinsin, sînsîn*): (I) a game played around the fire at night; (II) 1. insidiously²² 2. numb; (III) one of the pieces of *üçetek*; (IV) a kind of tree with a strong fire.

The fourth meaning of *sinsin*, namely *sinsin* tree is actually the tree *süksük*²³ which was recorded by Kâşgarî in his work, *Dîvânü Lugât 'i-Türk* (Ercilasun & Akkoyunlu, 2015, p. 212). This tree name is also seen in Chagatai and some modern Turkic languages as *saksa(v) ul* or *sekse(v)ül*.²⁴

sinsin (II) “insidiously; numb” is used as an adverb, and its variations also have similar meanings: *sim sim* “slowly, quietly” (TDK, 1978, p. 3637b) and *siyim siyim* [*siğim siğim -I, siğin siğin, sim sim -2, sin sin, siv siv -I, siyem siyem, siyen siyen, süyüm süyüm (I)*] “slowly, finely (for falling of rain, flowing of water or tears etc.)” (TDK, 1978, pp. 3637b, 3651b). All these meanings actually match well with the structure of the *sinsin* tree in terms of its slow burning nature.

Until today, few explanations on the etymology of *sinsin* have been made. Given that the game *sinsin* is performed at night around the fire and may reflect a fire cult or is reminiscent of a religious ritual, some try to relate it with the name *Sin*²⁵, the moon god of the ancient Mesopotamian (Babylonian) civilizations (Gâzimizihâl, 1999, Vol. 3, pp. 26-27).²⁶ Secondly, because a fire made from the wood of the *sinsin* tree burns for a long time, this tree species is

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- the fire, accompanied by drum and zurna. 2. The music of this game (Akalın et al., 2011, p. 2119b).
- 19 *siñidi* < *siñ-i-di*. Compare with *bastı* “vegetable cooked with minced meat” (Akalın et al., 2011, p. 262b). For the deverbal nominal suffix *-dl* in Turkish, see Banguoğlu (2004, pp. 225-226). Also, compare with Old Turkic *ögdi* “praise” (Clouston, 1972, p. 102b). For the deverbal nominal suffixes *-(X)ndi*, *-dl* and *-dU* in Old Turkic, see Erdal (1991, pp. 332, 339).
- 20 It is the labialized form of the word *sinsin*.
- 21 Although Gâzimizihâl (1999, Vol. 1, p. 121) compares *çındır* with the game *çandır*, the game *çandır* is quite different from the *sinsin* game. According to Gâzimizihâl (1999, Vol. 1, p. 113), *çandır oyunu* is mainly performed with rifles in Giresun.
- 22 For this meaning also see the entry *siñ siñ* in *Tarama Sözlüğü* (TDK, 1996, p. 3487).
- 23 The Arabic equivalent of Turkish *süksük* in Kâşgarî’s dictionary is *al-ğazā* اَلْغَزَا. Ercilasun and Akkoyunlu (2015, p. 212) give *dağdağan*, *sinsin ağacı* as the meaning or equivalent of the Arabic word *al-ğazā*. Apart from Kâşgarî’s definition of *süksük*, they additionally give the explanation of *ğazā*: “a kind of tree whose wood fire does not go out for a long time - Haloxylon ammodendron”. In *Tarama Sözlüğü* (TDK, 1996, pp. 3487-3488) we find Persian *tāg* تَاغ, *tūg* تُوغ and Arabic *el-gadat* [ğazāt] اَلْغَزَاة as an equivalent of *siñsiñ ağacı* “*siñsiñ* tree”. For *süksük*, see Doerfer (1967, p. 261, entry 1256, *süksük*).
- 24 See Şeyh Süleymân Efendi-i Buḥārî (1298 [1881], p. 181, entry *saksa(v)ul* سَاكْسَاوُل). Also see Shaw, 2014, p. 215b, entry *saksaul*.
- 25 Korkmaz (2012, pp. 164-169) mentions the moon god *Sin* while he quotes an opinion on the etymology of *Dersim*. Evliyâ Çelebi (2012, IV. Kitap) records the word *sin/sîn* in his work, *Seyahatnâme* as a city name (p. 275), a town name (p. 320), a castle name (pp. 131, 378) and a mountain name (p. 47). In Persian, *sîn* means “a man who hems and haws very much; natural magic, alchemy; China; name of a village near Ispahân; Muhammad” (Steingass [1892], p. 718b). In Arabic *sin* means “tooth; age etc.” (Steingass, [1892], pp. 698b-699a, entry *sinn*, under the entry *sann*).
- 26 For the moon god *Sin* see Sin [I] (2004) and Sayce (1902, pp. 297-322).

thought to be the main element used in the *sinsin* game. Therefore, another explanation is to relate the tree name *sinsin* with the game name, *sinsin* (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, pp. 28-29). Thirdly, according to what we know, in shamanic rituals, the *kayın / kayıñ* tree “birch tree” is used by some Turkic people and during this ritual a shaman moves around the *kayın* tree. Relying on this situation, the *kayın* tree (according to Ahmet Adnan Saygın another name of *sinsin* tree) is compared with the game *sinsin* (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 28).²⁷

As mentioned above, there are certain factors for the creation of game or folk dance names. Actually, because the game *sinsin* is not common among Turkic people outside Turkey, researchers have attempted to find its origin in and around old Anatolian cultures. However, sometimes, something that looks simple may really be as simple as it looks. Thus, in terms of the etymological analysis of a word, the folk etymology may also be reliable and work accordingly. Gâzimişâl (1999, Vol. 3, p. 27) gives the folk etymology of the game name *sinsin*, based on villagers’ view:

During the *sinsin* game the performer who dances around the fire is repeatedly warned against the other performer’s ‘tura’ attack with the caution word *sin! sin! sin!* [“slink away!, hide yourself!"]. Therefore, upon this situation, villagers say that the name of the *sinsin* game is formed as the nominalized imperative form of the verb *sinmek*.

I think this folk etymology for the game name *sinsin* is the correct one: *sinsin* or *siñsiñ* are the compounds which are composed of the nominalized imperative form of the repetitive verbs *sin-* or *siñ-* “to slink and crouch into the smallest possible space; to cringe; to hide oneself” (other meanings: “to sink in; to subside; to be absorbed; to be digested; to suit, to fit”).²⁸ This can be proved with some linguistic data, too. First of all, apart from the above mentioned *sinsin*’s adverb usage with the meanings “secretly, insidiously, slowly”, which corresponds with the main strategy of the game, we can give some examples of this type of word formation in Turkish:²⁹

- 27 Firstly, I was not able to find the word *sinsin* (tree) as an equivalent of *kayın* (tree) in Turkish as far as I could check the sources. Secondly, the tree used during the shamanic ritual among Siberian Turks is actually the ‘birch tree (Betula)’. However, in modern Turkish, *kayın* tree means “beech tree (Fagus)”. See Clauson (1972, p. 602b, entry *kađıñ*). For ‘birch tree’ used in a shamanic ritual among Altai Turks, see Radloff (1893, p. 20ff.). Ahmet Temir, the translator of the Radloff’s work *Aus Sibirien*, translates the German word *birke* “birch tree” into Turkish as *kayın ağacı* “beech tree” (Radloff, 1994, p. 23ff.). Also, Gürsoy-Naskali and Duranlı (1999, p. 102a) give the meaning “*kayın ağacı* [beech tree]” for the Altai word *kayıñ* although in Baskakov and Toshchakova (1947, p. 68b), the Russian meaning of the word *kayıñ* is *берёза* “birch tree”.
- 28 For *sin-* and *siñ-* in Turkish see these entries: *sinmek* (Akalın et al., 2011, p. 2119b), *sinmek* (TDK, 1978, p. 3643b), *siñmek* (TDK, 1996, pp. 3484-3487). In the Old Turkic, we see the verb with velar nasal /ŋ/, *siñ-* “to sink into; to be absorbed, digested” and the like (Clauson, 1972, p. 833b-834a). Compare with the Mongolian *siñge-* “to be absorbed into something; to dissolve (in liquid); to be imbibed, saturated; to be digested (of food); to set (of the sun)” (Lessing, 1960, p. 711b-712a) and *siñgu-* “to dive, plunge; to wade in water” (Lessing, 1960, p. 711b).
- 29 In *Dîvânu Lugât’i-Türk* (Ercilasun & Akkoyunlu, 2015, p. 145), there is a compound *sak sak* “a particle used by a guard to keep the soldiers awake and alert in keeping castles, fortresses and horses from the enemy; *sak sak* “Be alert!”” which also semantically resembles *sinsin*. Also, see entries *sak* and *sak-* in Clauson (1972, p. 803b, 804b). Apart from *sak sak*, Kâşgarî also gives some combined phrases formed by the imperative form of

*alver*³⁰ “shopping, trade” (Tietze, 2016, Vol. I, p. 364).

basbas “step of the digging shovel” (Tietze, 2016, Vol. I, p. 596).

çekçek / çekçek arabası “formerly, a kind of horse-drawn carriage” (Tietze, 2016, Vol. 2, p. 174).

kaç göç “a tradition of Muslim women to stay away from unrelated (namahrem) men” (Tietze, 2016, Vol. 4, p. 37).

kaçkaç “migration” (Tietze, 2016, Vol. 4, p. 38).

Secondly, some folk game names, like *sinsin* are also formed with the nominalized imperative form of the verbs:

silgeç “leapfrog” (Koşay, 1944, p. 60).

kaç kurtul oyunu ‘a children’s game played in Erkilet-Kayseri’ (Caferoğlu, 1994, p. 102).

*simdut*³¹ “in a game, determining the person who is ‘it’ via punching” (And, 1964, p. 31).

vargel ‘a folk dance performed in Bozüyük-Bilecik’ (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, pp. 192-193).

Some folk game names are formed in an imperative or a desirative sentence structure:³²

al beni arkana ‘a children’s game played in Sivas’ (And, 2016, p. 272).

gel de geç ‘a children’s game played in Elazığ’ (And, 2016, p. 272).

o olmasın bu olsun ‘a folk dance performed in Erzurum’ (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 184).

sen de gel ‘a folk dance performed in Kütahya’ (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 265; Vol. 2, pp. 150-151).

varagele ‘a folk dance performed in Osmaneli-Bilecik’ (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 190).

var anam gel anam oyunu ‘a folk dance performed in Soma-Manisa’ (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 190).

varıp gelme ‘a folk dance performed in Zonguldak’ (Gâzimişâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 193).

the repetitive verbs, e.g. *çiş çiş, zak zak* (Ercilasun & Akkoyunlu, 2015, p. 144) *çok çok, çik çik* (Ercilasun & Akkoyunlu, 2015, p. 145).

30 Under this entry, Tietze gives a brief explanation and some examples of this kind of word formation in Turkish. See also Atalay, 1946, p. 98, item XVIII.

31 It is a combination of *sin* “hide yourself; be sneaky!” or “suddenly” and *tut* “hold!”.

32 The previously given folk game names, of course in Turkish also grammatically have syntactic structure with the third person imperative verb form. However, without any particle, suffix or a component of a sentence, these verb compounds exhibit something much more characteristic of a noun structure, like the game name *sinsin*. Therefore, we practically formed this category.

Some game names are formed with the adverb *sin* “insidiously; suddenly”:

*singitti*³³ “blind man’s buff” (And, 1964, p. 31).

*sinkurdu*³⁴ ‘an animal imitation game’ (And, 1964, p. 31)

For the game ‘hide and seek’ we find some words related to the verbs *sin-* or *siğ-*: *siğilmeç*, *siğlemeç*, *siğmeç* (Tor, 2004, pp. 327, 328); *sinmeç*, *sinbeç* (Gâzimiñâl, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 21); *sinenbeç* [*siğnebit*, *siğnebitti*, *siğnenmeç*, *sin (III)*, *sinebit*, *sinembitti*, *sinenbitti*, *sinlenbiç*, *sinmece*, *sinmecek*, *sinmecik*, *sinmemmeç*, *sinneci*, *sinnenbeç*, *sinnenbözü*, *sinnenmece*, *sinnenmeç*] (TDK, 1978, p. 3640a); *sinlenbeç*, *siğnengeç* (TDK, 1982, p. 4698a).

In Turkish, the imperative form of repetitive verbs is also used as adverb:

Yol git git bitmiyor. “Although one walks too much, it is not possible to reach the end of the road.”

Ye ye doymuyor. “Although he eats too much, he does not feel full.”

Gül Gül öldük. “We laughed a lot (*literally* we died because of laughing a lot).”

Lastly, as mentioned above, until today few explanations on the etymology of *sinsin* have been made. Among these, perhaps, the most interesting was an attempt to relate it with the name *Sin*, namely, the moon god of the ancient Mesopotamia (Babylonia).³⁵ Of course, we can find or see the traces of the old Anatolian or neighboring cultures in Turkish customs. However, the folk etymology, the format of the game, and the linguistic data show us that the game name *sinsin* (*siğsiğ*) is a nominalized imperative form of the repetitive verb *sin-* (*siğ-*).

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- 33 For this kind of word formation (adverb + third person singular preterit form of a verb) in Turkish see Atalay, 1946, p. 93, item II. Similar usage of *sin* is seen in these compounds: *sinkapan* “one who attacks suddenly [for dog etc.]” (TDK, 1978, p. 3643a); *Singeç* stream “a stream flows into the Keban Dam”; and *Singeç* bridge (Pertek-Tunceli) that was inaugurated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1937. Atatürk has also named this bridge himself (“Köprüyet”, n.d.). The derivative word, *siğil* (< *siğ-il*) “a dog which quietly approaches and bites” (TDK, 1978, p. 3640b) is another form of the compound word, *sinkapan*. *siğil* has also the meaning “numb (person)” as *sinsin*, *sinsin* (II-2) (TDK, 1978, p. 3644a). In *sin tut-* “to attack and bite suddenly (for dog)” (TDK, 1978, p. 3644b), we see again *sin* “suddenly, insidiously, secretly”.
- 34 It is probably a compound made of *sin* “suddenly” or “sneaky?” and *kurdu* “(its) wolf”, namely “a sneaky wolf?” or “a wolf which bites suddenly”.
- 35 This etymology is certainly not valid because along with *sinsin*’s variations, *siğsiğ* and *simsim*, we also have *siğidi* which clearly comes from the verb *siğ-*.

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