

## CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema and the construction of space and meaning in a Turkish fairy tale

**Abstract:** The article analyzes a Turkish fairy tale (The Stag-Prince) of the ATU 450 Brother and Sister tale-type via the CENTER- PERIPHERY image schema and certain related conceptual metaphors. It is demonstrated that the CENTER- PERIPHERY image schema (and respective conceptual metaphors) constructs the space and basic meaning of the fairy tale. Also, a parallel has been made between the realization of the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema in the tale and the socio-political reality of the Ottoman Empire, the center-periphery polity model in particular.

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### 1. Introduction

Conceptual Theory of Metaphor highlighted the crucial role of cognitive metaphor in human conceptual system and language. Moreover, the authors of the theory hold that not only language but also the conceptual systems of cultures and religions are metaphorical in nature and the most fundamental values in a culture are coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in that culture (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 22; 40). Therefore, conceptual metaphor analysis is a useful tool in culture analysis. Also, if our conceptual system and understanding of the world are structured by metaphor, then the shared understanding on the basis of which anthropologists define the notion of culture is often a metaphorical understanding (Kövecses 2005: 2).

On the other hand, image schemas are closely correlated with conceptual metaphor. In contemporary cognitive linguistics, an image schema is considered an embodied pre-linguistic structure of experience that motivates conceptual metaphor mappings – image schemas are structural patterns which can function as source domains of conceptual metaphors. In conjunction with the capacity for conceptual metaphor, which allows human beings to map experiential structure from the “imagistic” realms of sensory-motor experience to non-imagistic (“abstract”) ones, image schemas were hypothesized to provide one of the “embodied” anchors of the entire conceptual system (Hampe 2005).

Marie-Louis von Franz, a renowned Jungian analyst of myths and fairy tales, assigns to fairy tales the same pivotal function in mutual understanding that cognitive scientists ascribe to conceptual metaphor. She argues that “fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes” and are very important if one analyzes people “from the other end of the world” because they represent a “human bridge” to the representative of the other culture by depicting the “general human basis” (M. L. von Franz 1996: 1; 27). She backs up her arguments with an example of a missionary in the South Sea Islands who reported that the simplest way for him to contact those people was to tell them fairy tales (Ibid.).

At the same time, from a linguistic point of view, universal patterns in fairy tales across cultures may be explained by the potentially universal primary metaphors functioning in the tales (see Dimitrova 2016). However, as demonstrated in the present analysis, the tales can also be structured by

certain image schemas. The postulated pre-conceptual and unconscious nature of image schemas entails their assumed status as universal cognitive primitives (Hampe 2005).

Also, though folk tales are not records of real events they still contain some traces of reality and of the epoch in which they are told. The most common characters of fairy tales – kings, queens, princes, princesses, soldiers, peasants, etc., reflect the social stratification of a feudal society and it is very easy to recognize that the social structures, institutions, and economic networks of many fairy tales are based on medieval or, at least, premodern models (Tatar 2003: 48-9). As Tatar argues in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, “there is much in every folktale that requires awareness of social realities, just as there is much that defies historical explanation” (Ibid.: 50). Some of the basic situations depicted in fairy tales reflect reality in premodern times. Likewise, as I argue in the present article, the analyzed CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema in the tale is correlated with the center-periphery polity model of the Ottoman Empire.

## 2. **CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema**

Johnson defines image schemas as basic concepts derived from human embodied (sensory) pre-conceptual experience of the world. These concepts are skeletal patterns that have their own roots in our sensory and motor experience (Johnson 1987, 205; Turner 1996, 16-18, cited in Taheri and Alvandi 2013).

These rudimentary embodied concepts provide the conceptual basis of more complex concepts, and they can construct more abstract concepts and conceptual domains. One of the grounds of the conceptualizing capacity is the image schema, by which spatial structure can be mapped onto conceptual structure (Taheri and Alvandi 2013).

The image schemas SPACE, CONTAINMENT, LOCOMOTION, BALANCE and FORCE are some of the common schemas. The CENTER-PERIPHERY schema is a sub-category of the SPACE image schema. According to leading scholars in the field of cognitive linguistics, the SPACE schema can be found not only in the structure of human perceptual field but also in the structure of human cultural spaces, like economy, politics, and philosophy, to mention a few – for example, CENTER-PERIPHERY schema can manifest itself as a structure of religious territory (Evans 2007, 108; Johnson 1987, 125, cited in Taheri and Alvandi 2013). As I argue in the present article, the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema manifests itself in a state's polity model, the political and economic model of the Ottoman Empire in particular (see respective center-periphery, or core-periphery, model in political geography, political sociology, and studies of labour-markets).

In *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987) Lakoff gives the following account of the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema:

“The schema arises from bodily experience since we experience our bodies as having centers (the trunk and internal organs) and peripheries (fingers, toes, hair). Similarly, trees and other plants have a central trunk and peripheral branches and leaves. The centers are viewed as more important than the peripheries in two ways: Injuries to the central parts are more serious (i.e., not mendable and often life threatening) than injuries to the peripheral parts. Similarly, the center defines the identity of the individual in a way that the peripheral parts do not. A tree that loses its leaves is the same tree. A person whose hair is cut off or who loses a finger is the same person. Thus, the periphery is viewed as depending on the center, but not conversely: bad circulation may affect the health of your hair, but losing your hair doesn't affect your circulatory system.

The structural elements of the schemata are: an ENTITY, a CENTER, and a PERIPHERY.

It is grounded on the basic logic that the periphery depends on the center, but not vice versa.

Sample metaphors of the schema: Theories have central and peripheral principles. What is important is understood as being central.” (Lakoff 1987:274-5).

## 3. **Tale analysis**

The Turkish fairy tale *The Stag-Prince*<sup>1</sup> analyzed in the present article belongs to the ATU 450 Brother and Sister tale-type. The folktale is one of the fairy tales and folktales collected from the mouths of the Turkish peasantry by Ignacz Kunos during his travels through Anatolia which were first published in 1889 (translated from Turkish to Hungarian) (Bain 1896:v). The folktales were collected from Anatolia (Asia Minor) before the railroad construction there, i.e. before the interference of the external influence of Western civilization (Bains 1896:vi). Although the English edition is a translation of a translation, the translator, according to his words, followed the Hungarian text very closely (Bain 1896:vii).

In the fairy tale the brother and sister are children of a Padishah. When the son ruled in his stead he squandered away his whole inheritance and the brother and sister decided to quit the palace and take up their abode elsewhere in order to escape the humiliation of being chased away by the people. They came to a vast sandy desert extremely exhausted and thirsty under the burning heat. Then the brother saw on the ground a little puddle of water and insisted he would not go even a step further unless he drank the water. His sister tried to stop him and warned him that if he drank even a single drop of the dirty water, he would turn into a stag. But he did drink of it and immediately became a stag. Then they came to a full spring beneath a large tree and stayed there – the brother procured the food and the sister waited for him mount up the tree. One day the horsemen of the Padishah of that country led the horses to be watered at the spring but the horses refused to drink. The men informed the Padishah of what had happened and he told them to look for something near the spring that was frightening the horses. They saw the maiden in the tree and she was so beautiful that when the Padishah came he could not take his eyes off her. He begged her to come down the tree but she would not and he ordered his men to cut the tree down. But when they were nearly done it became dark and they left. During the night the stag brother licked the tree with his tongue and it became even bigger than before. The story continued itself the other day. Then the Padishah decided to try some other means and sent for an old witch to make the girl come down. She tried to trick the damsel into coming down by playing on the girls' sympathy by pretending to be blind and not being able to perform certain tasks – for example by placing a kettle on a tripod upside down and thus pouring all the water on the ground – but did not succeed into talking the girl into helping her. However, when the old witch brought a sheep and started jaggng and skinning it from behind instead of cutting its throat the girl was unable to endure the beast's suffering and came down. The Padishah then caught the girl and pleaded her to marry him but she said she would not consent till they had brought her her brother. They did and the three of them started living happily in the Padisha's palace – the Padishah, his wife and the stag brother. But there was a jealous black female slave in the palace and when one day the Padishah's wife ("with a golden saucer in her hand and a silver sandal on her foot") went to the fountain in the midst of a beautiful garden in the palace the black slave pushed her in. There was a big fish in the basin which swallowed the girl. Then she pretended to be the Padishah's wife and took her place explaining the change in her appearance with too much sun which had tanned her skin. In order not to be betrayed by the stag-brother she made herself sick and gave the doctors much money to say to the Padishah that the only thing which could save her was the heart of the little stag to eat. Then the poor little stag ran down into the garden to the fountain and asked his sister for help. She answered:

"Here am I in the fish's belly,  
In my hand a golden saucer,  
On my foot a silver sandal,  
In my arms a little Padishah!"

She had given birth to a little son in the fish's belly. The Padishah heard all this, drained off the basin, drew up the fish and when he cut open its belly he saw his wife "with a golden saucer in her hand, and a silver sandal on her foot, and a little son in her arms". The little stag found something in the fish's blood and when he had swallowed it, he became a man again. The black female slave was

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<sup>1</sup> Kunos 1901.

punished to suffer a painful death. The Padishah, his wife and son, and the wife's brother lived happily together.

The construction of the space in the fairy tale according to the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema – respectively the opposition between pure and impure, good and bad, safe and dangerous, healing and damaging, sacred and profane – is pivotal for the construction of meaning in the tale. The symbolical act of ingestion, as well as the symbolism of the fish, blood and water are also central to the interpretation of the tale.

In the tale the center, according to the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema, is represented by the palace of the Padishah where there is a garden, in the midst of which is the fountain, in the fountain the fish, in the fish is the Padishah's wife, in her – their son, the ultimate center, the new life. This space of concentric circles is sacred and healing –where both sister and brother are saved from their misfortune, where the Padishah's son is born and where (the palace) they all live happily together after overcoming their exposure to the evil influence of the periphery (the desert, the dirty water, the wicked black slave).

By distancing themselves from the initial center (leaving the palace of their father) they go into the desert and to the dirty enchanted water – the periphery, the wilderness, the chaos, where there is danger, contagion, filth.

The balance is restored when they find a new center, a safe haven: first, to a lesser degree, the place with the spring and tree described as an oasis in the desert and, ultimately, the palace of the Padishah who marries the sister (within the palace: a garden – fountain – fish, respectively).

Likewise, concentric circles or circles overlapping around a center are the most common form of traditional Islamic art. In Islam, the circle represents the unity of the monotheistic God. Its center represents God, as well as the city of Mecca, considered the spiritual and geographical centers of Islam, respectively. Sometimes the circle is encompassed by an eight-pointed star, which represents the light of God spreading throughout the world. In turn, the repetition of shapes suggests God's infinite nature, as well as Islam's preoccupation with harmony and order (Lee 2016). Also, Sufi Muslims share traditional Islam's symbolism, but believe the circle has many additional meanings. Sufis believe circles acknowledge the central essences of God's many attributes, including power, desire and knowledge. Sufi Muslims also see spiritual significance in concentric circles. In Sufi philosophy, the center of the smallest circle represents close proximity to God's essence, while each outward circle suggests distance (Lee 2016).

The crucial role center and periphery play in dynamic movement is one of the reasons why we conceptualize center as safe and periphery as dangerous. Distance from the center correlates with an increase in centrifugal force. Thus the center is secure while the periphery is precarious. For example, the child at the center of the merry-go-round sits at her ease while others at the edge must hang on for dear life (Deane 1995).

The black jealous slave is associated with the periphery not only because she is evil but also because she is a slave and black.

At the one part of the continuum is the Padishah (and his wife), where all the power of the kingdom is concentrated, at the other is the slave, having no power – a strong center and a weak periphery. There is a metaphor of society as an object with a place for each individual (Deane 1995). And, if society is an object, it may have central and peripheral parts. If society is a whole, its unity and coherence depend upon the central part, for if it is removed, the peripheral parts will no longer join together to form a whole. Thus, in order to keep the balance, the Padishah's wife who belongs to the center is saved while the wicked slave who belongs to the periphery is punished with death. Moreover, the continued unity of the whole depends on the strength of the center, i.e., its ability to hold the periphery in place (Deane 1995).

Also, there is the concept of moral center/periphery. There are many conventional metaphors in which virtue consists in maintaining one's moral balance: "If you do not keep your life in balance you may fly off the handle or fall into temptation in some other way. Try to keep an even keel, live an upright life, and watch out for stumbling blocks." (Deane 1995). But it is far easier to maintain balance

at the center: the periphery is inherently unstable (Deane 1995). Thus the dynamic properties of center and periphery form the following metaphoric complex: the center, being least subject to centrifugal force, corresponds to those most capable of exercising moral self-control; the periphery, dynamically unstable, corresponds to the morally uncontrolled, who must be restrained by external force (Deane 1995).

Furthermore, dark-skinned personages are most often assigned negative characteristics in fairy tales, although there are some exceptions – in communities where the dominant population is dark-skinned like the Highland tribes in Papua New Guinea (see Dimitrova 2016). The colour black also has negative connotations like impurity, death and evil which are all characteristics assigned to the periphery. On the other hand, the sister is presented as extremely beautiful and light-skinned (she is said to be “as lovely as the moon when she is fourteen days old”), and also as kind and compassionate (the witch tricked her into coming down the tree by provoking the girl’s compassion to the suffering animal). Her physical and moral beauty and light skin entail the MORAL BEAUTY, MORALITY IS LIGHT and MORALITY/GOODNESS IS WHITE metaphors. The black colour and evil character of the slave entail the IMMORALITY IS DARKNESS and IMMORALITY/BADNESS IS BLACK metaphors. The experiential basis of the conceptual metaphors MORALITY IS LIGHT, IMMORALITY IS DARKNESS, MORALITY/GOODNESS IS WHITE and IMMORALITY/BADNESS IS BLACK is related to the positive perception of bright/white objects and the negative perception of dark/black objects. It is common for people to believe that dark objects are inherently less valuable or even overtly harmful, and, in contrast, that good things are brightly-colored (Sherman and Clore 2012). Many studies have shown that people tend to associate positive concepts with brightness and the color white and negative concepts with darkness and the color black (see Meier, Robinson and Clore 2004; Sherman and Clore 2009).

The fountain in the midst of the garden is the center of the palace, a center within the center. Water constitutes an essential element in Islamic ritual, as a means of purification, and serves as a common theme in folklore. The Koran, in describing the creation of life, indicates that water is its basis: “And of water We have made everything living” (21:30); and “Allah has created every animal of water; some of them go upon their bellies, some upon two feet, and some upon four” (24:45). The wicked slave pushed the Padishah’s wife into the water but she did not drown, she was engulfed by a giant fish. The place of the fountain is sacred and safe because it is in the sacred center and, on the other hand, water in this context has positive connotations like purification and source of life (the Padishah’s son was born in the basin).

On the other hand, the fish which did not kill the Padishah’s wife but only kept her within itself is also a powerful symbol in Islamic culture. As in Judaism it symbolizes immortality. For example, the Koran’s surah 18 inspired many later legends which connect Khidr – a figure described in the Koran as a righteous servant of God possessing great wisdom or mystic knowledge – with water, a fish and immortality.

Also, the stag brother was transformed into a man again after he ingested something in the fish’s blood. At the same time, according to the Koran (96:1-2), God created man from a clot of blood. The symbolical act of ingestion is also a key element in the interpretation of the tale, the ingestion of contaminated water (in the desert, the wilderness, periphery) which transformed the brother into a stag and the ingestion of “something in the fish’s blood” which healed the brother and turned him into a human again, respectively.

Food plays a central role in every culture and is assigned rich symbolic meaning- not only because food is essential for sustaining life but also as a result of the psychological aspect of ingestion or incorporation. There is close correlation between food and identity. On the other hand, food habits within a culture reduce the anxiety related to the dilemma of the so called omnivore’s paradox. Being omnivorous, humans need to be flexible enough to eat variety of items sufficient for physical growth and maintenance, yet cautious enough not to randomly ingest foods that are harmful. The framework of food habits of a culture, i.e. the rules about which foods are edible, how they are procured, cooked safely, etc., provide guidelines for both experimentation and conservatism [Kittler et al. 2012:2]. This

vital balancing function of culture regarding food is implicit but very powerful and is exemplified, to cite an instance, in the halal (permitted) and haram (forbidden, e.g. pork and wine) food among Muslim people and diaspora.

According to Fischler (1988), the fundamental element on which the “omnivore’s anxiety” is focused, is the act of incorporation, i.e. the action in which we send a food across the frontier between the world and the self, between “outside” and “inside” our body (Rozin and Fallon 1981, cited in Fischler 1988). This action is both banal and fraught with potentially irreversible consequences. To incorporate a food is, in both real and imaginary terms, to incorporate all or some of its properties: we become what we eat. Incorporation is a foundation of identity. The German saying, “Man ist, was man isst” is literally, biologically true; the food we absorb provides not only the energy our body consumes but the very substance of the body, inasmuch as it helps to maintain the biochemical composition of the organism.

It is equally true in terms of our beliefs and representations. The food one absorbs is, universally it seems, supposed to act either on the state of the organism or on its very nature (essence, identity) by analogical contamination, integration or impregnation. See for example the popular wisdom absorption, especially when repeated, of a particular food tends to transfer certain characteristics of the food analogically to the eater, or the meanings associated with the phenomenon of cultural cannibalism in its endo- and exo- forms (Fischler 1988).

Moreover, the act of ingestion is also related to the ESSENCE schema and the respective ESSENCE IS INTERNAL and BODY IS A CONTAINER OF THE SELF conceptual metaphors since via the act of incorporation what is external becomes internal, part of the essence.

According to the folk ideas about the ESSENCE image schema, essence represents the center of an object while the outer part, the periphery, is seen as the weakest, more vulnerable part (Al-Harrasi 2001). Thus, the ESSENCE image schema is correlated with the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema. The essence represents the core of the object, which is the strongest part and is found in the centre (Al-Harrasi 2001).

Another recurrent element in the tale – that is related to the CENTER-PERIPHERY and ESSENCE image schemas, as well as to the symbolism of the fish, water and blood – is the description of the Padishah’s wife as wearing silver sandals on her feet and carrying a golden saucer in her hand, the moments before being pushed in the fountain and after being taken out of the fish’s belly with the little Padishah in her arms. Silver is a symbol of the Moon, the feminine, while gold stands for the masculine principle, the Sun. The combination of gold and silver, masculine and feminine is associated with the source of life while the little Padishah, before being born, is situated in the womb (centre) of his mother, she is in the fish’s belly, the fish in the basin, the basin in the midst of the garden, the garden in the palace.

On the other hand, an interesting parallel can be made between the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema structuring the space of the tale and its basic meaning and the center-periphery polity model of the Ottoman Empire.

The center-periphery model is one in which authority is concentrated in a single center which is more or less influenced by its periphery, depending upon the situation in which it finds itself. Such polities or organizations tend to develop organically, either around a pre-existing center or through generating one over time. They tend to be oligarchic in character, with power in the hands of those who constitute the center. Power is either concentrated or dispersed according to decisions taken in the center which may or may not include significant representation from the peripheries (Elazar 1998).

According to Mardin, though every society has a center, certain societies have stronger centers than others and in this respect the Ottoman Empire is an outstanding example (Mardin 1973: 169). The methods the Ottomans used in forging this center, Mardin (1973:169) writes, were ingenious and varied: by co-opting in the ruling elite individuals largely recruited at an early age from religious minorities, by socializing them into the official class, by tightly controlling, though not necessarily centralizing, the system of taxation and land administration, and by dominating the religious establishment, the center acquired strong leverage in the spheres of justice and education, and in the

dissemination of the symbols of legitimacy. Thus, according to Mardin (1973:169), the Ottoman Empire is placed side by side with the emerging Western centralized state, and its successor, the modern nation-state.

Respectively, the center-periphery polity model of the Empire led to a clash between the center and the periphery, the confrontation between the Sultan and his officials on the one hand, and the highly segmented structure of Ottoman Anatolia on the other (Mardin 1973:171).

However, there seems to be a contradiction. In the center-periphery polity model of the Ottoman Empire Ottoman Anatolia is described as the periphery and it is noted that there was a clash between it and the Sultan and his officials (center). At the same time, the analyzed tale was collected by Ignacz Kunos in Anatolia and the tale is structured around the positive connotations of the center and the negative connotations of periphery. But still, at the time of the tale's collection Anatolia was the heartland of the Turks where most of the empire's Turkish population had traditionally lived. In fact, the Ottoman Empire was created by Turkish tribes in Anatolia (Asia Minor), an empire that later grew to be one of the most powerful states in the world during the 15th and 16th centuries.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article I have shown how the CENTER- PERIPHERY image schema and certain related conceptual metaphors construct the space and basic meaning of a Turkish fairy tale. Also, a parallel has been made between the realization of the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema in the tale and the socio-political reality of the Ottoman Empire, the center-periphery polity model in particular.

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