





<p>ULUSLARARASI DİL, EDEBİYAT VE KÜLTÜR ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ</p>  <p>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURE RESEARCHES</p> <p>МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИХ, ЛИТЕРАТУРОВЕДЧЕСКИХ И КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ</p>	<i>Cilt: 5, Sayı: 1, 2022</i>
	<i>Vol: 5, Issue: 1, 2022</i>
	<i>Sayfa – Page: 15-22</i>
	<i>E-ISSN: 2667-4262</i>
	

**THE VOYAGE OF ARCHETYPES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON ACHEBE’S
THINGS FALL APART AND THE BOOK OF DEDE KORKUT**


ARKEİTİPLERİN YOLCULUĞU: ACHEBE’NİN *THINGS FALL APART* ROMANI VE *DEDE KORKUT KİTABI* ÜZERİNE KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ÇALIŞMA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p> Received: 30.09.2021</p> <p> Accepted: 07.02.2022</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: <i>Archetype, Culture, Achebe, Dede Korkut, Igbo, Turkish</i></p> <hr/> <p>Research Article</p>	<p>With the beginning of mankind’s adventure on earth, each society has created its own social, cultural, and religious systems. Although the first human existed in a single part of the world, the journey of mankind has veered to different continents. In this study, it is aimed to show the intercontinental voyage of certain archetypes by focusing on the reflection of Nigerian culture in Chinua Achebe’s <i>Things Fall Apart</i> in comparison to <i>The Book of Dede Korkut</i>. While making this cultural study between two separate nations, Igbo and Turkish cultures were compared in terms of religious, social, and literary features, regarding the concept of “collective unconscious” by Swiss psychiatrist C. Gustav Jung. As a result of this comparison, it has been observed that the two nations located on different continents have similar cultural characteristics, which validates the voyage of archetypes.</p>

MAKALE BİLGİSİ	ÖZET
<p> Geliş: 30.09.2021</p> <p> Kabul: 07.02.2022</p> <hr/> <p>Anahtar Kelimeler: <i>Arketip, Kültür, Achebe, Dede Korkut, Igbo, Türk</i></p> <hr/> <p>Araştırma Makalesi</p>	<p>Yeryüzünde insanoğlunun serüveninin başlamasıyla birlikte her toplum kendi sosyal, kültürel ve inançsal sistemini oluşturmuştur. Her ne kadar ilk insan dünyanın tek bir bölgesinde var olmuş olsa da insanoğlunun yolculuğu farklı kıtalara doğru seyretmiştir. Bu çalışmada da bir Afrika ülkesi olan Nijerya’nın kültürel öğelerinin Chinua Achebe’nin <i>Things Fall Apart</i> adlı romanındaki yansımaları <i>Dede Korkut Kitabı</i> ile karşılaştırarak belirli arketiplerin kıtalar arası yolculuğunun gösterilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Kıtalar arası bu kültürel karşılaştırma yapılırken İsviçreli psikiyatrist C. Gustav Jung’un “kolektif bilinçdışı” kavramı temel alınarak Igbo ve Türk kültürü dini, sosyal, sözlü edebiyat ve inançsal bağlamda karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu karşılaştırma sonucunda da farklı kıtalarda yer alan iki milletin kültürel bağlamda benzer özelliklere sahip olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.</p>

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Bu makaleyi şu şekilde kaynak gösterebilirsiniz / To cite this article (APA):

Bolat, E. (2022). The Voyage of Archetypes: A Comparative Study on Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *The Book of Dede Korkut*. *Uluslararası Dil, Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi (UDEKAD)*, 5 (1), s. 15-22. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37999/udekad.1002714>.

Introduction

Various nations and ideologies have particular notions regarding the beginning of modern man's life on Earth. Recent scientific research has revealed that modern humans' ancestors originated in Botswana, which is located in the south of Africa. Based on her genetic studies, Vanessa Hayes, professor of genetics, avers that "it has been clear for some time that anatomically modern humans appeared in Africa roughly 200,000 years ago" (qtd. in Brigs, 2019) and Botswana is the first homeland of humans. As opposed to Hayes, some scientists claim that human beings may have some other homelands. In deference to Hayes' genetic analysis, Chris Stringer claims that "it's over-reaching the data because you're only looking at one tiny part of the genome so it cannot give you the whole story of our origins" (qtd. in Brigs, 2019). Although it is impossible to say with hundred percent confidence from which homelands humans initially dispersed to the other continents, it is sure that people of diverse ethnicities from all over the world share similar characteristics.

Many aspects of Nigerian culture and numerous facts about local people's beliefs are interwoven throughout *Things Fall Apart*, one of the masterpieces of Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. These diverse cultural elements that we encounter in Achebe's novel can also be traced in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, which is one of the building blocks of Turkish literature and encompasses various features of Turkish culture. When these works are scrutinized in-depth, it is discerned that Nigerian and Turkish people share diverse similitudes in terms of belief, tradition, and culture. The fact that two nations, seemingly thousands of kilometers apart and even on separate continents, have comparable and shared archetypes is reminiscent of Swiss writer C. Gustav Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, and validates Jung's hypothesis. According to Jung: "in addition to our immediate consciousness, there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals" (2014, p. 43). What Jung wants to convey with the concept of collective unconscious is the idea that humans share a common subconscious, including the memories of other people who were born before them and even live in a distant region of the world. As a result of his studies and observations on various religions, beliefs, and myths, Jung came across similar motifs in the cultures and lives of nations and communities that were not connected with each other and were almost impossible to even interact with. For Jung, "this collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents" (2014, p. 43). These archetypes, according to Jung, are the fundamental content of the collective unconscious. "The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere. Mythological research calls them 'motifs'" (2014, p. 42). Based on Jung's theory, it is perceived that similar motifs can be found in the mythologies of various societies. "Comparative cultural studies have now demonstrated beyond question that similar mythic tales are to be found in every quarter of this earth" (Campbell, 1993, p. 13). For instance, Tulpar, the winged horse in Turkish mythology, and Pegasus in Greek mythology are almost identical motifs. Likewise, the snake and the human-shaped Shahmaran found in copious nations in the Mesopotamian region and the Medusa in Greek mythology also show similar

characteristics. Such similarities exist not only in regards to motifs or characters, but also manifest themselves in a religious context. In most beliefs, the faith that the first man was created from clay is prevalent. It is believed that Adam in Christianity and Islam, Nuwa in Chinese mythology, and Enkidu in *Epic of Gilgamesh* were created from clay. Although these figures are from different countries, they share corresponding features when it comes to the creation of the first man. Such instances abound, but for the purposes of this study, I will concentrate on the Igbo people's beliefs and culture reconsidering them in the Turkish context.

The Voyage of Archetypes: A Comparative Study on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *The Book of Dede Korkut*

Achebe, the iconic West African writer, published his debut novel, *Things Fall Apart*, with an allusion to Irish poet W. B. Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*. In this novel, Achebe reflects the condition of Nigeria in the pre and postcolonial periods, hence, his novel has been studied more in the context of colonialism and postcolonialism. Understandably, Achebe's novel is mostly discussed in the aforementioned contexts, however, when we approach the novel from a different perspective, it is conceived that Achebe does not only show resistance to the colonial oppression but also conveys to the reader the local beliefs and cultures that were once dominant in his own country. Divergent from former studies, the focus of this research will be on Nigerian culture and belief rather than a postcolonial perspective. The archetypes in Nigerian culture will be examined in the Turkish context based on the *The Book of Dede Korkut* even though both nations are on different continents and are regarded to have little in common.

Upon perusing Achebe's novel, it is noticed that cultural and religious elements constitute the basic elements of the novel. Even from the beginning of the work, Achebe represents that the Igbo people have a society adhering to their beliefs. The Igbos believe in the power of prayer, which is one of the most essential aspects reflecting their beliefs. Okonkwo's father "Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and protection against their enemies" (Achebe, 1996, p. 5). The Igbos place a high value on prayer, which is also highly welcomed in Turkish culture. The power of prayer is also stressed throughout *The Book of Dede Korkut*. We encounter the following expression in the *Epic of Kam Püre's Son Bamsı Beyrek*: "Oghuz Beys held their faces to the sky, raised their hands and prayed" (Ergin, 2003, p. 37). In the narrative of *Dirse Han's Son Boğaçhan*, we understand the intensity of the belief in prayer. Dirse Han, performing certain rituals, has a child after receiving the prayer of a pious person. The circumstance illustrates that praying is very essential to the Turks. *Dede Korkut Book* lays emphasis on prayer because these stories were actually written during the period when the Turks converted to Islam although they were formed orally before Islam. That is why the influence of Islamic elements is felt throughout the book. Believing in the power of prayer is quite common in Turkish society since this is a religious imperative. The underlying reason for this situation is the following verse in the Quran: "Say, (To the disbelievers) In no way would my Lord care for you were it not for your invocation" (Quran, 25/77). Religion and religious discourses, which are significant factors in the design of social life and people's attitudes, also affect the lives and behaviors of individuals. That is why prayer is of great importance for Muslim Turks.

Sacrificing an animal before commencing a substantial work is also an essential ritual for the Igbo people, who believe in the power of prayer. Unoka tells that “before he puts any crop in the earth, he sacrifices a cock to Ani, the owner of all land” (Achebe, 1996, p. 13). Likewise, “Uchendu took the hen from her, slit its throat with a sharp knife and allowed some of the blood to fall on his ancestral staff” (1996, p. 93). A similar notion exists in Turkish culture, too. Before starting a new career or getting rid of mishaps and misfortunes, people sacrifice animals and shed blood as a kind of sacrifice. They believe that if they adhere to this ritual, they will be safer and their business will flourish. Furthermore, in Turkish culture, people make sacrifices in order to fulfill their aspirations. In the narrative of *Dirse Han's Son Boğaçhan*, Dirse Han “sacrificed a stallion, a camel, a ram” (Ergin, 2003, p. 13) in order to have a child. The ritual of sacrificing animals for a particular purpose is one of the religious parallels that both Turks and Igbos embrace.

Aside from religious affinities, certain parallels between Igbo and Turkish culture subsist in terms of customs and traditions. One of them is that the bride's family demands a bride price from the groom's family before the wedding. “Akuke's bride price was finally settled at twenty bags of cowries” (Achebe, 1996, p. 51). The bride price is considered as an allowance granted to address expenses relating to the girl's upbringing. As bride price, any property or money can be given to the bride's family by the groom or his family. In *Epic of Bamsı Beyrek*, we see that the bride's family demands certain things from the groom's family. Crazy Karçar demands several things from the groom's family: “Bring a thousand male camels, bring a thousand stallions that have never bred with a mare, bring a thousand rams, bring a thousand tailless and earless dogs, and bring a thousand fleas” (Ergin, 2003, p. 43). Such rituals persisted in Turkish culture, particularly in the Anatolian region, until ten or twenty years ago, and the tradition is still alive in some parts of Turkey, albeit to a lesser extent.

Igbos and Turks share comparable sentiments toward archetypal figures because they partake a common denominator in terms of belief and tradition (consuetudo). When comparing Igbo and Turkish cultures, it is observed that the “mother” figure occupies a prominent place in both. “Like any other archetype, the mother archetype appears under an almost infinite variety of aspects” (Jung, 1982, p. 109). In the novel, for example, we come across the following sentence: “A child cannot pay for its mother's milk” (Achebe, 1996, p. 117). This remark implies that children cannot pay for their mothers' rights, and it emphasizes the value of the mother by stressing breastfeeding. In Turkish culture, breastfeeding is also regarded to play a vital role in a child's life. In *Epic of Uruz Bey*, we see the following expression. “May my mother make her milk halal for me” (Ergin, 2003, p. 71). In fact, a mother might say, “I do not give my milk halal” (anonymous) if she perceives anything she does not want her child to do or to discourage them from doing something she does not really like. Although this conversation may appear mundane, it is a binding manifestation in the child's behaviors and life. In essence, the statement means that the mother has a significant deal of moral authority over her child. Although it sounds as a symbolic expression, the fact that the mother breastfeeds her children is morally vital for them.

With the proverbs and laconic expressions in his novel, Achebe also accentuates the role of the mother in Igbo society: “A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which

its mother puts into its palm” (1996, p. 47). It is indicated in this statement that youngsters who hearken to their mothers or elders and follow their guidelines would not suffer problems. A similar saying takes place in Turkish culture: “Those who do not take elders’ advice will fall oversleep”¹(anonymous). According to this adage, those who do not listen to elderly and experienced people (such as moms and fathers) would face troubles, and hence the elders’ advice should be heeded. Achebe especially draws attention to the role of mother and uses the following expression: “Mother is supreme” (1996, p. 95). In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, we also witness the emphasis on the mother’s role and supremacy. The following statement clarifies it: “Mother’s right is God’s right” (Ergin, 2003, p. 30). Turkish culture has also another laconic expression: “There is no beloved like a mother, there is no land like Baghdad” (anonymous). Both indicate the reverence for mothers and the belief that mothers are superior beings. One of the reasons for the mother’s centrality is that mothers serve as role models in the lives of their children, particularly in Igbo and Turkish cultures. The proverb in the novel supports this: “When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth” (Achebe, 1996, p. 49). In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, it is emphasized that the children take their parents as role models while growing up. “The girl does not take advice when she does not see it in the mother” (Ergin, 2003, p. 9). Another Turkish aphorism that captures the essence of this proverb is: “Wherever the goat goes, so does the kid” (anonymous). In other words, as children grow up, they take their mothers as role models and this is a significant factor affecting their behaviors. Therefore, the place of mothers in their children’s lives is absolutely crucial in Igbo and Turkish societies.

One of the common themes in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Book of Dede Korkut* is the hero archetype. The character, who passes through certain difficulties and stages, can become a hero at the end of his difficult struggle. When analyzed in the context of the hero archetype, Okonkwo, the main character of *Things Fall Apart*, can be described as a hero, even though his fate resulted in an unwanted and forced suicide. “Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen, he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat, the great wrestler” (Achebe, 1996, p. 3). Okonkwo, a brave and courageous character, gets exiled for seven years after accidentally killing someone and then returns to his homeland. “Anyone in exile from the community is a nothing. From the other point of view, however, this exile is the first step of the quest” (Campbell, 2004, p. 356). This situation evokes the separation and returns phases of the hero’s journey. In contrast to *Things Fall Apart*, we come across more than one hero archetype in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, which contains numerous epic features. Boğaçhan, who won his name by defeating a bull, is one of these heroes. “This boy fought in the white square of Bayındır Han, your son killed a bull, let his name be Boğaç” (Ergin, 2003, p. 15). Bamsı Beyrek, who takes part in the story of *Kam Püre’s Son Bamsı Beyrek*, is also a character carrying features suitable for the heroic archetype. Bamsı Beyrek, who helped the people attacked by the infidels, achieved a great success by defeating the infidels. “The infidels were sharing akçe somewhere. Meanwhile, the gray boy, the lion of the braves’ square, the tiger of the wrestlers, has arrived. He struck the infidels with a sword, killed the infidels who rebelled, He fought and saved the property of the merchants” (2003, p. 39). However, valiant Beyrek

¹ Ulu sözü dinlemeyen uluya kalır/uyuyakalır (Anonymous).

was captured on the day of his marriage. Following the unforeseeable attack of the infidels on the wedding day, “Thirty-nine brave men and Beyrek were taken prisoners” (2003, p. 45) and Beyrek lived apart from his homeland for sixteen years. After leading a life of exile under hellacious conditions away from his homeland, Beyrek manages to return to his own home, which marks the completion of his epic journey. Being captured and returning to his own homeland refers to the hero’s separation and return phase. The protagonists in both *Things Fall Apart* and *The Book of Dede Korkut* develop into ideal figures who battle for their own people, endure certain difficulties, and ultimately transform themselves into heroes in the other’s eyes. “The courage to face the trials and to bring a whole new body of possibilities into the field of interpreted experience for other people to experience -- that is the hero’s deed” (Campbell-Moyers, 2011, p. 49). Regardless of their unique lives and adventures, Beyrek and Okonkwo can be called as heroes since they have shown the courage that a hero needs to have.

Achebe created various characters in his novel. While the tragic hero of the novel, Okonkwo, acts with his emotions, adheres strictly to his traditions and inclined towards violence, his close friend Obierika, who evokes the sage archetype in the novel, is a prudent, questioning, open-minded and reasonable character. Obierika carries the features of “the Sage archetype which is the provider of truth and understanding” (Wahlstrom, 1999, p. 133). Achebe makes the reader sense the tragic hero and sage archetypes with these binary opposite characters. When Okonkwo speaks to his friend Obierika about the need to kill Ikemefuna, he responds as follows: “If I were you I would have stayed at home. What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families” (Achebe, 1996, p. 46). Obierika’s behavior matches up with the sage archetype, because after Ikemefuna’s death Okonkwo’s life changes in a drastic way. In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, the eponymous Dede Korkut is the most vivid incarnation of the sage archetype. Dede Korkut embodies the sage archetype in that he is respected by his community, names the babies, dispenses counsel, and brings the narrative to an end. Although we see the sage archetype extensively in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, the fact that we have encountered a similar archetypal motif in Achebe’s novel is a proof that both works intersect at a similar point.

Conclusion

Archetypes, one of Jung’s most well-known concepts, are universal forms existing in the collective unconscious that function as a guide for the individual in their mental journey and gain meaning mostly with a culture. Due to their dynamic connection with culture, archetypes prevail as cultural components of societies and permeate all aspects of culture. Based on Ziya Gökalp’s definition, the culture of a society includes all elements related to “people’s traditions, habits, customs, oral or written literature, language, music, religion, morality, aesthetics and economy” (2020, p. 76). Almost all of these elements are present in *Things Fall Apart*. Therefore, rather than analyzing it in a conventional postcolonial framework, it was aimed to compare this novel with *The Book of Dede Korkut* in terms of cultural elements. However, what sets this article distinctive is the comparison of Nigerian culture with Turkish culture, which has a totally different cultural structure yet remarkable affinities with Nigerian Igbo society. Various cultural elements such as the importance attributed to the mother, the ritual of sacrifice and charity performed in certain situations, and certain archetypal figures show the

intercontinental journey of archetypes in Turkish and Igbo cultures. Based on these similarities, it can be said that universal symbols and images originating from the collective unconscious may appear similar in different cultures and nations, and the details in this study also confirm this theory. For example, archetypal events (like marriage ceremonies and traditions in a society), archetypal figures (such as mother, sacred, devil), and archetypal motifs share a great deal of similarity in Igbo and Turkish cultures. Referencing Jung's notion of collective unconscious, it is intended to highlight the interconnections of both societies by means of a comparative study on the cultures and archetypes of two separate nations on different continents. Upon examining these parallels in terms of cultural, religious, traditional, and discursive aspects, it is a crystal clear fact that various peculiar cultures can share certain elements, which is the core premise of this study. Maybe human beings have crossed continents and created a world and culture of their own, however, they share similar archetypes with thousands of people who lived before them. The dispersal of human beings all over the world after the beginning of their adventure on earth could not prevent the journey of these archetypes.

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Conflict statement: The author of the article declares that he does not have any person or financial relationship that may be a party to this study, therefore there is no conflict of interest.