GENRE POSSIBILITIES OF GAMES IN AZERBAIJANI FOLKLORE

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Abstract: In Azerbaijani folklore, there is a diversity of ideas in studying, systematizing, and determining dramatic genres. The primary reason for this is the different approaches to dramatic genres by both folklore scholars and theater experts (art scholars). The second main reason is the lack of clear 'boundaries' between games and folk performances. The diversity of collected games and folk performance examples from various regions allows for their grouping together. Alongside entertaining, festive, and theatrical character games, there are also widespread musical-dance character games, ritual-religious character games, and competition-sports character games. Studying the genre-specific transformations within games in Azerbaijani folklore helps clarify how these folklore examples are categorized systematically.

Keywords: Azerbaijani folklore; identifying characteristics and genre-specific transformations of games.

1 Introduction

The genre characteristics of folklore are determined by the ethnic composition, religious beliefs, and mythical meanings of the population, as well as the geographical and climatic conditions of the region and agricultural life. The study, systematization, and determination of genre in Azerbaijani folklore's dramatic genres encompass a variety of ideas. The main reason for this is the different approaches to the dramatic genres by both folklorists and theater specialists (art specialists). The second main reason is the lack of a clear boundary between games and folk performances. This relationship is inherent in theater art; all games and performances are examples of theater for specialists, and therefore rely on acting skills. The relevance of the topic lies in studying the genre possibilities of games, including changes within genres. Folkloristics implements the exploration of this issue through a somewhat different approach. The main stages are preparation of plays and folk performances. Plays are diverse in structure, purpose, content, and performance style. The created situation sets the comparative analysis of the dramatic genre genres as the initial goal.

In Azerbaijani folklore, the dramatic genres (performance folklore) exhibit different characteristics. These genres differ in performance forms (play-song, play-puzzle, repetition, quibble-form transformations, etc.), performer composition (children's plays, adolescent plays, plays for girls, plays for boys, plays for girls and boys, etc.), performance context (ceremonial and seasonal plays, etc.), performance style (mimicry, chase-catch, dazzling, mockery, teasing, challenge, etc.), performance purpose (riddles-teachings, finger calculations), and structure (action plays, mental games, folk entertainment, etc.) [11].

The primary aim of research is to collect games and study it from structural and thematic perspectives. This involves grouping it based on assignment characteristics, linking it, and investigating it at a scientific level. The diversity of game and folk entertainment samples collected from various regions allows researchers to classify them. In addition to playful, festive, and theatrical character games, there are also widely spread musically-dance-oriented, ritual-religious, and competitive-sporty character games. There is also great interest in traditional horseback games. Additionally, the classification of games takes into account the age and gender composition of participants. Games for children and adolescents are characterized by simplicity, while games for adults are distinguished by their complex structure and the agility of participants. Games intended for women are enriched mainly with dance elements.

2 Literature review

While the history of Azerbaijani game culture can be traced back to ancient societal periods, the formal study of games based on theater and folk performances is relatively recent. Folklorists, ethnographers, and theater specialists have studied folk performances and the games associated with them. The collection and classification of game samples are considered of great importance. Various theater specialists and folklorists, including Elchin Aslanov [5], Bahlul Abdulla [7], Fuzuli Bayat [8], Elchin Mukhtar Elkhan [9], Gazanfar Pashayev [12], Beytulla Shahsoylu [13], Ilham Rahimli [16], Farahim Sadiqov [17], R. Tahirzade, and Dzh. Gurbanov [19], have conducted collection and research activities in this field. Researchers studying games analyze their regional, structural, and thematic aspects. In my personal scientific research [1; 2; 3; 4; 10; 11] on this topic, I have explored the genre possibilities, identifying characteristics and intra-genre transformations of games for the first time.

3 Materials and Methods

In Azerbaijani folklore, the genre possibilities of games are analyzed based on the historical-comparative analysis method, and the collected materials are compared to the game culture of Turkic peoples. The research is based on folklore materials collected from various regions.

4 Results and Discussion

Studying and researching the game culture generally allows for an integrated examination of folklore, ethnography, and history. Economic and domestic life, communal living rules, and historical-social events are also prominent in folklore. Researching and sometimes restoring games, which constitute a part of Azerbaijani national cultural heritage, contributes to the preservation of Azerbaijan's spiritual wealth. Fully exploring games facilitates their scientific classification.

Examples of folklore performance forms, differentiated by performance style and performers, include the games-songs, such as "Hop-hop" and "A Yel Baba", as well as children's folklore examples in the form of games and puzzles with clapping and string instruments. Religious spectacles, usually involving a single curtain, are characterized by change, dialogue, dramatization, and ring games. They are staged in special arenas and courtyards of mosques, typically involving a large number of participants. Camels and horses are used to captivate the audience, and in some cases, canopy tents are set up [11].

It is possible to classify the genre-specific variations of games into several stages. The first stage includes:

- Descriptive games (including riddles and others)
- Kinetic games (including tag games and others)

In the second stage, games are divided into two groups:

- Intellectual games
- Rhythmic (entertaining) games

The third classification stage distinguishes games based on prosaic and poetic texts:

- Preparatory games for other games (such as warm-up exercises, counting games)
- Preparatory games for folk spectacles
- Entertainment-based games
- Folk spectacles (with prosaic and poetic texts).

Games are divided into two groups based on age composition: children's games and games for adults. Among children's games, there are widely spread games like "Mozu-mozu," "Mərəköçdü," "Beşdaş," "Bənövşə," "Dəsmalaldıqaç," "Gizlənpaç," "Gözbağlıca," "Qələndər," "Siçan-pişik," "Evcik-evcik," "Eşşəkbelixırç," and other similar games that carry an entertaining character. The purpose of sports-competition-themed games is to develop qualities such as agility, speed, and courage in children and adolescents. Games like "Cilingağac",

"Telbir", and "Sürməağac" are organized for health purposes and enhance the athletic preparation of adolescents. The selection of winners based on physical and mental prowess indicates that these games are also at the center of attention for adults. Such games for adolescents were performed for the purpose of preparing them for professions that require courage and had a sequential character. For example, in ancient times, performers who played tag and fulfilled the role of a troubadour were prepared in this way [4].

Preparation games involve touching and tagging, where players are divided into teams and touch each other. Both tagging and touching serve as they select players and divide them into groups. When the game leader designates and saves the tagged player by touching them with their hand, that player joins the designated group:

Hap-hapı,

Harpı sapı.

Beş barmağı,

Bir yarpağı.

Vur dirnağa,

Çıx qırağa [6].

Racing-themed games are determined by the results, winners are identified. Among the racing-themed games, obstacle courses differ in terms of rules and practical outcomes. These races can also be considered as part of physical training. Various games, including wrestling, horseracing, horseback riding, weightlifting, archery, and sword fighting, showcase the diversity of entertainment-based games. In the Mugan region, dog chasing, deceptions, donkey pulling, flying kites, stone throwing, hiding in the hills, running away, sulking, chasing, teasing are racing-themed games accompanied by special texts [6]. Game texts indicate players' preference for physical movements:

Text example for the game named as "Itqusdu":

İtqusdu, ay itqusdu,

İtim dərədə qusdu.

Pəncərədən baxırsan?

Qapıdan çıxırsan? [6].

Text example of a calling:

Blindfolded person:

-Are you ready?

Players:

-We come staggering.

-Where am I?

-You stay and swaying [6].

Similar games are also held in other regions. Farahim Sadiqov, who studies the folklore of Masalli, writes that these games preserve spiritual qualities such as gaining a new worldview, achieving victory, celebrating joyfully, and competing by defeating others: "Games like 'Shuppu-shuppu,' 'Mere-mere,' 'Diredoyme,' 'Companion, who brought you here,' 'Banovsha banda dusha,' "Besh dash' (five stones), 'Ashuq-ahuq,' 'Ashuq tokhan,' 'Sichan-pishik' (cat and mouse), 'Blindfolded', 'Gizlanpach' (hide-and-seek). Some of the games are played by boys, while some are played by girls" [17].

Many children's games carry historical significance, distinguishing themselves from adult activities, household chores, and religious ceremonies with a mimetic character. Some of these games are referred to as "pretend games". For example,

in games like "Throwing Rushes", "Throwing Bones", and "Head of the Horse", adult equestrian games are mimicked. Equestrian sports games related to animal husbandry are widely spread in regions, particularly horse racing and tent-pegging games. These games consist of various competitions played on horseback during folk festivals and wedding ceremonies. They include acrobatic movements on horseback, throwing and catching a ring on horseback, mass games on horseback, and sports competitions such as placing the horse in several locations [5]. Horse races (known as yortma, yorğa, dördə, dördnal, löhrəm, yanıyanı, and others in Azerbaijan) are the most entertaining forms of sports competitions. The "Gər dəkqaçırtdı" horseback game is widely popular in the Yardymly region of Azerbaijan. In the Mugan region, this game is also known as "Pərdəapardı." On the wedding day, a group of young horsemen ride from the groom's house to the bride's house, grab the ribbon, and then deliver it back to the groom's house [3]. Children enjoy playing these types of games, imitating equestrian competitions. The difference is that children do not grab ribbons but instead grasp whips and run, and this game is called "Yaylıqaldıqaç". Another game that mimics equestrian sports competitions for children is called "Yortma", resembling horse racing. One of the camel racing-inspired games is called "Lökləm".

The girls are more interested in games like "Beşdaş", "Yelləncək", and "Xana-xana". The game "Yndbk" is performed by children to imitate adult games involving a circle dance. Within the circle, small girls playfully push each other and sing songs imitating adults. The circle dance celebration is related to gardening activities: "Küf" refers to the ring made by hanging ropes from tree branches. When we say "küfdibi", the celebration around the ring (yellancək) is implied, and the songs sung during this celebration are called "küyellilər" [1]. In various regions of Azerbaijan, ritual games related to tea cultivation, viticulture (wine-making), vegetable farming, apple and pomegranate cultivation have been held, during which songs related to these agricultural sectors have been sung [1]. The game songs of "küyelli" can also be seen in texts. The text "Bala, yellənə-yellənə" is sung in the game of gardeners.

Yarım gəlir biçindən,

Bala, yellənə-yellənə.

Keçir bostan içindən,

Bala, yellənə-yellənə.

Birini dərib gedir,

Bala, yellənə-yellənə

Qovunların içindən [2]

The games related to agricultural life hold a special place in "Tərəkəmə" games. These games preserve traditions, customs, and lifestyles from various historical periods. As an example of "Tərəkəmə" games from Karabakh, one can mention the "Papakh" game, "Dasmal" game, "Kechipapakh game", and "Shepherd" game [11].

Girls' games in Azerbaijan folklore include "Cicibaci", "Qaychidanchikhdi", "Fal game", "Qapipusdu", "Gulumey", "Yordu-yordu", "Gelin-gelin", "Findzhan-findzhan", "Uzuk gizletdi", and others. Typically, these games are performed during festive events and holidays. They would then imitate and reproduce these games. Teenage girls found musical competitions, dance performances, and entertaining shows captivating.

Performances beginning with puppetry, such as toy shows, are rooted in puppet theater. For example, during the eve of the Novruz holiday, the "Tekechi" ceremony is held. In some instances of this ceremony, goat horns placed on a tree stump would serve as a substitute for an actual goat. The folk spectacle "Tekehi" resembles the play "Kosa-Kosa": in the "Kosa-Kosa" play, the goat represents an image, while in the "Tekechi"

performance, the goat symbolizes the arrival of spring. However, despite this similarity, the "Tekechi" play provides a distinct folk spectacle effect. In the "Kosa-Kosa" play, the image of the goat is created by the costumer. In "Tekechi", the goat is a puppet. The "Tekechi" manipulates the puppet, causing it to speak the text itself. "Kosa-Kosa" is performed on the eve of the holiday, mainly where men gather. The "Tekechi" wanders around the courtyard. Then, it approaches the gathering crowd and recites a couple of verses, typically after the holiday feast is served [1]. The "Tekechi" ceremony has played a significant role in the development of puppet shows in Azerbaijan.

Additionally, in his research entitled "Folk Play Performances", I. Rahimli divides Azerbaijani ritual and festive play performances into two groups: ceremonies and household rituals. "Furthermore, seasonal rituals are closely intertwined with household rituals. Seasonal rituals are related to the arrival of summer, the beginning of planting, the harvesting of crops, the migration of livestock to summer pastures, and the start of sheep shearing. Household rituals include engagement ceremonies, dervish weddings, mourning the deceased heroes, calling out at the gravesite, holding mourning (crying) sessions, and ecstatic-hal games" [16]. His research aims to identify and categorize the various types of play performances in the region.

A.Nabiyev has classified Azerbaijani folk games as follows and provided detailed information about each: "1. Dance games; 2. Ritual games; 3. Household games; 4. Socially significative games; 5. Children's games" [15]. Starting with dances and continuing with wordless games, plays progress to the third and main stage, consisting of the unity of movement and speech. [15]. A.Nabiyev includes other games in the category of folk performances. His list of "Field performances" includes wrestling matches, acrobatic performances, entertainment games, puppet shows, and individual performances [15].

Researchers who approach games as a type of sports classify folk games into two groups based on their movement and sporting characteristics. Additionally, games can be simple or complex. Folk games are also classified based on the "degree of theatricalization" [19]. F. Bayat, who conducts fundamental research on the games of Turkic peoples, provides insights into historical, philosophical, and classificatory issues. In his studies, he conducts analyses, characterizing dervish tales, folk theater performances, field games, toy/puppet shows, and plays with figurines that have refined and plot-driven elements. It is possible to include wrestling matches, village entertainers, folk dances, children's games, acrobats, and horseback games among games that do not rely on dramatization and lack theatrical elements [8].

F. Bayat, who examines the source of folk games, investigates the semantic function of field games, provides classification of children's games, and analyzes games and festivals related to rituals. He also pays attention to genre and intra-genre changes. He examines the content, structure, purpose, similarities, and differences in how games are performed among Turkic peoples.

Some games feature texts in the form of prayers, curses, invocations, or blessings. For example, during the performance of the game "Kose Geldi" recalling the Azerbaijani variant the songs sung are rain prayers. These songs are commonly referred to as blessing prayers. Participants in the ritual pray to God for rain, sunshine, calm winds, and protection from earthquakes. Interestingly, during the game named as "Kose Geldi" provisions are distributed to the poor and needy through bags given to children, and after eating, these same children offer rain prayers:

Allah bir yağış ele

Dam duvarı yaş ele [18]

In Azerbaijan, one of the most famous games played before Novruz is called 'Kosa-kosa'. One intriguing aspect of this game involves the ritual of inviting the Sun. This staged game sometimes resembled the Danatma ceremony. The Danatma

ceremony was held in honor of the Al Deity where "Al" is one of the early names for the Sun. The ritual of inviting the Sun typically began with the welcoming of the Sema Odun and continued with calendar games such as "Gundog'du", "Yazguntani", and "Danatma" [9].

In research, games that differ in performance form and composition (such as game-songs and word-games) are discussed as examples of children's folklore. Meanwhile, performance-oriented games are considered examples of folk performances, shedding light on controversial outcomes. Various approaches are also employed to classify games. These folklore examples are categorized and studied by dividing them into descriptive and movement games, as well as intellectual and rhythmic (entertaining) games. Games with poetic and prose texts are also classified according to their content or purpose. In this regard, counting games, chants, and finger calculations are included in preparation games. Following this stage, preparation games for folk performances come into play, and these are distinguished from performance-oriented games. Poetic and prose (narrative) games form the basis of folk performances, leading to their transformation from game to performance on the stage. However, the genre category intended for written literature cannot encompass all genres of oral literature. Therefore, dance games, ritual games, household games, socially meaningful games, and children's games form a suitable category for the genre classification of oral folk literature. Additionally, active games can be compared with games classified according to sports types. Ritualistic games, on the other hand, are of interest as part of customs and traditions, and the practical importance of research lies in determining the genre characteristics of games and understanding intra-genre variations theoretically. Studying games based on types and genres, clarifying inter-genre relationships, and comparatively exploring similar and different aspects increase the practical significance of research. Therefore, this research work is invaluable in compiling dictionaries related to literary studies, theater studies, and folkloric terminologies.

5 Conclusion

The sources we consider allow for the creation of a unified principle within the realm of games. Consequently, it is possible to divide games into three categories::

▪ Spectacle-oriented games;
▪ Entertainment-oriented games;
▪ Competition-oriented games.

Spectacle-oriented games consist of ceremonial games and religious play-spectacles, which are also studied as folk spectacles. Additionally, there are performance preparation games that constitute the preparatory stage for these events, involving activities such as recitations, mimics, imitations, finger calculations, and others. Entertainment-oriented games encompass a variety of forms, including toy games, word games, dance games, and dramatic play. Additionally, they may involve activities such as magic tricks, hypnosis, and other forms of amusement. Competition-oriented games encompass a wide range of activities, including fun sports games. Examples of such games include horseback games like jousting, sea games, and animal plays featuring dogs, monkeys, deer, pigs, and more.

By studying intra-genre variations of games in Azerbaijani folklore, we can achieve a theoretical clarification of the genre assignment of these folklore examples.

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