

# The Genesis and Evolution of Modern Turkish Drama

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**Abstract** This statement refers to Turkish studies carried out in Ukraine in order to initiate a systematic analysis of artistic and literary phenomena in Turkey. The aim of the paper is to analyse historical periods of development of ancient Turks' drama, review the stages of Ottoman folk theatre's evolution, investigate the pre-conditions of Turkish author's drama's appearance, define the influence of European dramatic tradition on Turkish drama, distinguish the periods of Turkish drama's development and point out the main trends of Turkish author's drama's evolution. It is used such research methods as analysis and synthesis, functional, systematic, comparative, historical methods. The research revealed that Turkish dramatic tradition traces back for many years as there are many references to ancient Turks' dramatic performances of pre-Ottoman period, that the tradition of dramatic performances enriched with the elements of Sufis' rituals originated at the times of the Ottoman Empire, displayed that the basics of Turkish author's drama had been formed between the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Ottoman rulers' reforms and gradual Westernization of Turkish culture. Having combined the achievements of folk drama and B. Brecht's "epic theatre," Turkish drama managed to create its repertoire and gained fame abroad. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Turkish drama acquired a range of new themes and genre innovations, became really national and took its place in the world's dramaturgy.

**Key words** literature of Turkey; dramaturgy; author's drama; formation and gradual development

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Modern drama is still supposed to be a unique kind of art. Due to its nature, drama focuses on visualization of national processes that reflect the most typical features of spiritual and cultural life. This peculiarity of drama completely corresponds to the mainstream of oriental studies, particularly to basic trends of Turkish drama of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite that fact that the world's major Orientalists confirmed ethnic and esthetic significance of Turkish drama with its original structure, conditioned by both, the ambivalence of Turkey's geopolitical position and its contradictory historical, cultural and social development, the research of it, as well as the analysis of other types of art, is not considered to be a priority.

Turkish author's drama appeared as a result of activity of writers who reviewed the concept of historical memory in an artistic way, realized the status of westernized drama of their countries and wrote their works searching for their national identity. Being the main scientific problem of this article, the analysis of Turkish drama's genesis and evolution corresponds to modern studies in the field of literary science. In Turkey the theoretical models of Turkish drama's reception are represented in monographs and particular articles of such researchers as N. Akı, Z. Aldağ, M. And, O. Belkis, M. Buttancı, İ. Yenigün, Z. İpşiroğlu, M. Kırıcı, V. M. Kocatürk, Ş. Kurakul, M. Mengi, O. Nutku, H. Nutku, N. Özdemir, İ. Ortaylı, S. Sokullu, A. Çalışar, S. Şener, Z. Ünal etc. However, the majority of scientific works is devoted to modern drama, while post-modern drama is revealed fragmentary. Ukrainian Orientalists did not dedicate their researches to Turkish author's drama in particular. Almost the same can be said about oriental investigations carried out in Russia. The only exception is represented by O. Oganova's monograph and researches upon the history of folk drama made by I. Borolina, H. Horbatkina and V. Hordlevsky.

In this article we analysed the assemblage of new topics typical for Turkish dramatists who attempted to integrate Turkish literature into the context of the world's drama. We aimed to clarify the phenomenon of Turkish drama, characterized by the synthesis of traditional Turkish elements inherent to different levels of literary works, with something new and different, primarily reflected in peculiarities of European theatre's reception. We also intended to point out the specific features and dynamics of drama's development revealed at all of its stages. Thus, the detailed research of those Turkish dramatists' works that represent the most typical trends of Turkish drama, is strongly needed. We aimed to distinguish the originality of Turkish drama as a kind of art, conditioned by the syncretism of epic and traditional folk drama.

In this article we used such research methods as analysis and synthesis, func-

tional method, systematic method, comparative and historical methods, cultural and historical approaches, method of deconstruction, sociological method, method of associative and conceptual analysis, modeling of associative and semantic field, method of receptive aesthetics and communicative stylistics of literary text.

### **The History of Turkish Drama: The Problem of Periodization**

Drama is considered to be one of the oldest kinds of art developed by people. All rites and rituals associated with human beliefs, life and death must be treated as a root of drama since all of them embrace an element of it (Nayenko 158). If we define drama as an expression of some situation or event with the help of gestures and moves, it means that ancient people who applied these approaches as an attempt to communicate with each other were making drama (Nutku, *Tiyatro* 18). Dwelling on the evolution of Turkish drama it is necessary to analyse historical periods of ancient Turks' dramatic art's development and differentiate the evolution of Ottoman dramatic art (made by Oghuz Turks) and Turkish drama (made by representatives of the Turkish nation). Oriental researcher Talat Sait Halman (13), who wrote a pre-ambule to the Encyclopedia of Chicago, traces the evolution of Turkish drama since religious and traditional rituals and performances till the emergence of author's drama in 1980s. In this scientist's opinion, the periodization of drama corresponds to historical events:

- 1) pre-Islamic period (till the 21<sup>st</sup> century);
- 2) pre-Ottoman period (till the 18<sup>th</sup> century);
- 3) Ottoman period (since the 18<sup>th</sup> century till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century);
- 4) Westernized Ottoman period (since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till 1923);
- 5) Republican period (since 1923) (15).

Unlike Talat Sait Halman, O. Karaburgu offers a sort of simplified periodization focused on the period of Tanzimat:

- 1) Turkish drama (Turkish theatre) before the period of Tanzimat;
- 2) Turkish drama after the period of Tanzimat (Karaburgu 312).

M. And, famous Turkish researcher, who analyzed the periodization of Turkish, in a more specific way, presented another chronology given below:

- 1) traditional Turkish theatre;
- 2) the theatre of Tanzimat and tyranny (also referred to as “istibdat”) (1839–1908);
- 3) the theatre of Constitutional period (1908–1923);
- 4) the theatre of Republican period (1923–) (And, *Osmanlı* 14–15).

Thus, M. And relates this periodization to those events, which played an important role in the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. Such periodization seems to be reasonable as far as these events made a strong impact on cultural life of the country. At the same time, A. Çalışar is convinced that there was no Turkish drama before a kind of author’s drama appeared. He reckons that “Traditional Turkish theatre is a theatre without drama. A sort of theatre that has no ties with a written text. There was no dramatic literature at the time of the Ottoman Empire. It means that there was no comedy or tragedy, but there were just folk jokes” (Çalışar 12).

The periodizations offered by Turkish scholars are mostly based on historical and political events. Working over our periodization, we paid attention to both facts and trends of drama’s development in a peculiar historical period. In our opinion, Turkish drama went through the following stages:

- 1) pre-Ottoman period (till the 18<sup>th</sup> century), when ancient Turks’ dramatic art and the development of Oghuz Turks’ dramatic performances were dwelled on for the first time;
- 2) Ottoman period (since the 18<sup>th</sup> century till the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), characterized by dramatic performances, which reflected traditional rites of Sufi orders (also known as tariqats) and the emergence of traditional Turkish theatres, such as “Karagöz,” “Orta Oyunu,” “Kukla Oyunu” and “Meddah”;
- 3) the period of origination and development of author’s drama which can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of the most typical features of this period, famous thanks to its first plays, is considered to be the influence of the French literature on the Turkish one. Sultans used to share their opinions about literature’s development. This period can be divided into several sub-periods given beneath: a) author’s drama of Constitutional era (1908–1923); b) author’s drama of Republican era (1923–1960);
- 4) Turkish drama of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also referred to as “a period between two revolutions” (1960–1980);

5) the origination of modern and postmodern drama (end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century), when classical drama experienced some genre transformations;

6) postmodern drama (2000–2014), associated with contamination of genres.

Taking all this into consideration, we completely agree with the statement of O. Karaburgu who claimed that it was impossible to distinguish each stage of Turkish drama's evolution clearly as a process of switching from one period to another lasted for quite a long time (Karaburgu 32). Our periodization is relative, but as far as it is based on facts, it will enable the readers of this article to form a general impression of Turkish's drama's evolution and trace the way it was transformed from traditional dramatic performances of Turkic nations into classical Turkish theatre and, finally, into author's drama.

### **The Evolution of the Turkish Drama: From Folk Theater to the Drama of Post-modern Eve**

Dwelling on pre-Ottoman period of Turkish drama's development, it is necessary to admit that, in opinion of B. Tuncel, Turkic nations were acquainted with dramatic art represented by performances even 4000 years ago. The researcher declared that there were two kinds of theatrical performances during that period (Tuncel 67). Serbian scholar M. M. Nikolich, who analysed Turkish dramatic art of pre-Islamic period, also mentioned it. According to him, four hundred years ago Turkic nations already were highly civilized and educated. Their rulers managed to protect their art and create conditions for its progress (Nikolich 16).

Turkish researcher N. Sevin is also convinced that national Turkish drama's roots can be traced back for many years. Basing his research on historical documents, he proved that Seljuk Turks used to entertain themselves by means of dramatic performances called to demonstrate the way one of the Komnenos behaved in a ridiculous manner (Sevin 674). According to M. And, the dramatic art of Anatolian Turks came up under the influence of five major factors, such as place, genus, empire, westernization and Islam (And *Geleneksel* 9). He also thinks that this kind of art was embodied in rural and folk theatres (And *Geleneksel* 43). Despite that fact that rural theatre had no written dramas, professional actors or exact place for performances, its art was always accompanied by changing of costumes, music, ceremonial speeches etc. M. And emphasized that the inhabitants of remote Anato-

lian villages managed to save the elements of their ancestors' cultures and traditions in the best way (And *Geleneksel* 9). As for Turkish folk theatre, it was developing in the cities, particularly in Istanbul. As far as this kind of theatre was supposed to entertain low and middle classes' representatives, its traditions and style tended to change drastically. The majority of dramatic performances of those Turks who inhabited Middle Asia was based on beliefs, epos and legends. Such performances as "sığır," "yuğ" and "şölen" may be defined as the first examples of national drama of Turkic nations.

Shamans who played a role of spiritual leaders used to act as directors and actors. The sacred rituals of ancient Turkic people were accompanied by theatrical elements like declamations (when Shamans read a prayer for ill people to help them recover faster), music (they used iron sticks to recreate some rhythmic melody) and dances. Shamans may be referred to as first actors and primary poets (Şengül 56). To sum it up, Turkish scholar A. Şengül defines Turkic people's religious rituals as a real dramatic work. Later on such performances became traditional, so far people started organizing them for entertainment. One of them iron forging, described in "Ergeneqon" (Turkic epos) (Abdülkadir 231). Thus, Turkic drama's roots can be traced back to preliterate period of Turkic ethnos. We may define folk performances with Shamans' participation, performing of some sacred rituals and rites and singing songs as sources that led to formation of modern Turkish author's drama.

The Ottoman period of Turkish drama's evolution, which lasted for more than five centuries, was rich with Sufi elements. Folk performances became more popular at that period. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Turkish literature has already prepared a basis which provided rapid development of different genres and plots in literature. For instance, we may admit the emergence of written literature. It developed as the literature of "tekke" (also known as literature of Dervishes), the literature of Ashiks (also referred to "literature of saz"; saz is a member of the "bağlama" family of musical instruments) and the literature of Turkish Divan, called to strengthen the position of Islam in the state. Dervish orders, which played a role of the first literature centers, appeared at that period. The most famous orders were the Order of Ahmed Yesevi, where Dervishes performed their ritual of "zikir"; the Order of Mevlevi, where Dervishes performed their traditional dance of spinning around themselves; the Order of Bektâşi, where its members demonstrated "ayin" that was similar to musical drama). Despite that fact that ritual peculiarities of these orders do not fully correspond to dramatic performances, they remind them with their dramatic elements, such as music, moves, performance and delivering phrases from the Holy Qur'an.

At the times of the Ottoman Empire such events of daily life as weddings of

sultans, their sons' birthday celebrations and ceremonies of "sünnet" (a part of Sunnah) were also accompanied by ritual dramatic performances (Karaburgu 15). The information about these rituals may be found in fiction and official documents of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Scientists consider the ceremony, held after the conquest of Constantinople in 1457 in honor of sultan Fatih Mehmet's sons (this ritual reflects the tradition of circumcision), to be one of the first performances of traditional folk theatre (Nutku *Dünya* cilt 1 193). Three types of folk theatre represented traditional drama in the Ottoman Empire. One of them was "Karagöz," which is usually referred to as the most popular traditional Turkish theatre. Its roots may be traced back to 1490. "Orta Oyunu" and "Kukla Oyunu" were two other kinds of Turkish theatre (Nutku *Dünya* cilt 2 12). Such Turkish literary scientists as M. And, R. Sevengil and S. Siyavuşgil, as well as Hungarian scholar I. Kunosh, German Orientalist G. Jacob, French researcher A. Talasso and Russian Turkologists V. O. Hordlevsky, I. V. Borolina and O. O. Oganova, dedicated their scientific works to the emergence and development of these theatres and their strong impact on the evolution of Turkish author's drama.

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when sultan Ahmet the 3<sup>rd</sup> (1703–1730) ruled the country, the Ottoman Empire exposed a huge interest towards Europe, European culture and literature. The empire experienced a strong impact of French culture and literature. That time the Ottoman state was going through drastic changes in its history, culture and science. The next wave of social and political renewal was inspired by the rule of Selim the 3<sup>rd</sup> (1761–1808), who was a talented reformer and sultan. Due to his reforms, Turkish classical literature and traditional theatre were enriched with Western elements that led to emergence of new literary genres and totally changed the structure of classical national drama.

An active Westernisation of Turkish drama gave a strong impetus to the germination of Turkish author's drama. Western trends influenced Turkish literature the most at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the era of Tanzimat started (the period of reforms in the Ottoman Empire). Before Turkish literature experienced just the influences of oriental literatures, primarily Arabian and Persian. First time in its history, which lasted for eight centuries, Turkish classical literature began to accept Western elements due to Turkish people's attempts to learn French and the appearance of (mostly French) novels by Western authors' translations into Turkish. As far as Turkish writers experienced a strong impact of European literature, they disposed their own literature to such new genres as novel and author's drama, trying to make them cohere with Turkish literature's canons.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Abdülmecit reigned, theatrical

troupes from different European countries began to visit the biggest cities of the Ottoman Empire more usually (Şengül 89). The first theatre, where author's plays translated from French and English were performed, was opened in 1840 (Tanpınar 155). In opinion of Turkish scholar A. H. Tanpınar, the year of 1842 may be defined as a beginning of drama in European traditions (155). That time Turkish drama experienced the age of romanticism caused by the huge effect of Western literature. It is necessary to admit that Turkish literature got acquainted with romanticism much later than Western literatures. Thus, romanticism was rapidly developing in drama of those countries within next twenty-five years to coexist with realism further (Nutku *Dünya cilt 1* 356). First author's plays were represented by the translations of works by European dramatists, who were famous that time. Although the costumes, actors' acting and the scene were quite far from European standards (Tanpınar 56). The representatives of some social strata revealed negative attitude towards the sultan's attendance of the "Beyoğlu" theatre (Refik 16). Thus, in order to avoid rumors, in 1858 Abdülmecit ordered to build a theatre for rulers near the Dolmabahçe Palace. This theatre was opened in a year. The sultan's interest towards theatre was giving an inspiration to young dramatists (Sevengil 4). The play "The Marriage of a Poet" (1859) by İbrahim Şinasi (1826–1871) became the first example of Western-style drama in Turkish drama.

Armenians became the main representatives of European drama in the Ottoman Empire. The efforts of G. Agop Vartovian (1840–1902), who intended to create theatres and support dramaturgy, played a great role in this process (And *Osmanlı* 169). People called "The Theatre of Güllü Agop," established in 1868, "theatre of writers." G. Agop was doing his best in order to involve Turkish writers of that time in creating a new dramaturgy. He was absolutely convinced that it was necessary to refuse from translations of Western plays in favor of Turkish ones, where local authors would reveal the most crucial issues of Turkish society. Thus, the activity of Güllü Agop initiated a new important period in the development of Turkish author's drama. It gave Turkish dramatists an impulse to form their own, nationally marked dramaturgy.

When Abdülmecit's (6 (20) July 1861) brother Abdülaziz (1830–1876) took his place, dramaturgy experienced some changes. Primarily thinking about keeping his country indivisible, Abdülaziz was not supposed to have a great artistic taste, so he severely punished everyone who tried to destroy that indivisibility (Akyüz 23). At the same time, "The Ottoman Theatre" gained its biggest popularity due to sultan's concession. Such dramatists of that time as Rezaizade Mahmut Efendi Ekrem (1847–1914), Ebuzziya Tevfik (1849–1913), Şemseddin Sami (1850–1904), Ahmet



Vefik Paşa (1823–1891), Teodor Kasap (1835–1905), Ali Haydar Bey (1836–1914), Manastırlı Mehmet Rifat (1851–1907), Hasan Bedrettin Paşa (1850–1911), Hüseyin Nazım Paşa (1854–1927), Osman Hamdi (1842–1910) and Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844–1912) became popular on this theatre's stage.

Namık Kemal (1840–1888) was one of the most outstanding personages of that time. He wrote such famous plays as “Homeland or Silistra,” “Akif Bey,” “Poor Child,” “Gülñihal” and “Black Evil.” Supporting and tutoring them, he served as mentor, critic and consultant to many young dramatists (*Tanzimat edebiyatı* 642).

The middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period when drama experienced a sort of contamination: local theatres demonstrated various kinds of performances, such as classical “Orta Oyunu” and “Karagöz,” ballet and opera with arias and traditional plays (Aldağ 25). The plays written by Goldoni and Molière and adapted to Turkish stage gained the biggest popularity. Turkish readers and spectators liked comedies “à la Molière,” whereas political and social changes in the country led to the change of aesthetic preferences. The enrichment of Turkish repertoire with Molière's works and the reception of his traditions played a great role in the development of Turkish author's drama and comedy in particular, giving both of them a strong impetus.

Turkish author's drama kept developing despite political oppressions. The relations between generations, family life and people's relationship were the main topics of plays (Aldağ 28). After 1859 such genres as comedy, romantic drama and melodrama were on the top of their popularity. Since 1866 until 1877 more than two hundred of plays were written and translated (Aldağ 29). The topics of comedies, created in Western style, were different from those of traditional folk performances. While traditional dramatic works reflected the lifestyle of middle and low class, dramatists, who worked over author's comedies, tended to demonstrate the way the representatives of high class lived, avoiding description of such daily concerns as poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. The transformation of people's virtues was a major issue of that time. On the one hand, dramatists used to ridicule people who aimed to follow Western lifestyle thoughtlessly, but, on the other hand, the effect of old traditions, superstitions and Pre-Islamic basics was still very strong. A drastic change of priorities led to the escalation of a generation gap, becoming one of the main topics of author's drama that used to be ignored in traditional folk drama. Young dramatists were closer to the truth, they were keen to switch from general topics to the specific ones (Sokullu 181–182). Traditional Turkish theatre of Meddahs and “Karagöz” kept developing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also. Their performances usually took place during religious holidays in Dolmabahçe Palace and other public places (Nutku *Dünya Cilt 1* 367).

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century author's plays, written by representatives of different cultures, obtained the main place in the Ottoman dramaturgy. The plays by Turkish and Armenian authors, as well as those by European authors, translated into Turkish and Armenian, were among them (And *Osmanlı* 171). Thus, Turkish author's drama faced obstacles at the very beginning of its development. Despite these obstacles, its representatives were trying to apply everything, considered to be a heritage of the world's drama. Theatres of that time mostly performed translated plays. At the same time, the representatives of Armenian diaspora played a crucial role in the evolution of Turkish author's drama. Nevertheless, total Westernisation of Turkish literature and culture was the main trend in their progress.

Turkish author's drama of Constitutional era (1908–1923), which we defined as a sub-period of its evolution, traces back to historical events, which had the hugest impact on its further development. On July 23, 1908, the Ottoman Empire faced a coup, as the result of which Young Turks dethroned Abdülhamid II. After the revolution, the intensity of censure and oppressions decreased in a dramatic way (Unlü and Özcan 17). Since the plays of Namık Kemal, Şemseddin Sami and Ebbüziya Tevfik, which were forbidden before, started to be performed, Turkish audience began figuring out the idea of their state's independence and the evolution of their national identity (Çeşitli 34). Despite that fact that numerous dramatic associations and theatres (“The Ottoman Association of Comedy,” “The Association of State Theatre,” “National Ottoman Drama Theatre” etc.) were established at that period, most of them were eliminated soon (Çeşitli 235). Since 1908 until 1922 the total number of plays, the majority of which was expressed by drama, comedy and musical drama (Çeşitli 241), was around two hundred (Aldağ 29). The popularization of European drama led to total extinction of traditional Turkish theatre from the capital's stages (Siyavuşgil 53–54). The main issues of dramaturgy were actively enlightened in such periodicals of that times as “Zaman,” “Dersaadet,” “Vakit,” “Servet-i Fünûn,” “Kalem,” “Sahne,” “Tiyatro ve Temaşa” and “Temaşa” (Çeşitli 135). “Dârülbedâyi,” established in 1914 as a school, was lately renamed as “The Local Theatre of Istanbul.” The main purpose of that school was to teach students act and perform plays for a wide audience. The first premiere in “Dârülbedâyi” took place in 1916. Yusuf Ziya's “The Rotten Basis” play was the first one to be performed (Çeşitli 35).

Since the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923–1938) started ruling this country. During the first fifteen years of its existence, its public officials were keen to contribute to modernization and nationalization of Turkish society, culture, economics, industries etc. After the formation of

Ankara State Conservatory in 1924, state and private theatres began to perform their activities more actively, and a number of high quality plays increased. The 1920–1930's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reflect an intensive development of dramaturgy, the main topic of which was connected with the events of national struggle for independence (Oganova 72). Such works as Faruk Nafiz's poetic dramas "The Assault" (1932) and "The Hero" (1933), Yaşar Nabi Nayır's play "It Is Snowing" (1932) and Kemal Çağlar's play "The Shepherd" (1932) are among them. Such current concerns as the Westernization of Turkish society, traditional values, the role of family, economic and cultural problems, caused by the general situation in young republic, were also reflected in that period's plays. The authors of dramatic works emphasized the conflicts with traditional outcome (death of characters, non-happy end) rather than the characters of their plays' heroes. The majority of that period's plays has a single line plot and does not pretend to a great philosophical depth. On the contrary, such plays make spectators support the dramatist's authoritarian point of view. Turkish dramatists were actively discussing the problem of national culture's enrichment and updating, as well as social concerns.

Focusing on national roots reflected Turkish dramatists' attempts to find out new forms in terms of realistic drama (Oganova 77). Thus, dramatic works by such authors as Ahmet Nuri, Musahipzade Celal, Hüseyin Suat, Halit Fahri, Reşat Nuri, Yusuf Ziya, Vedat Nedim, Vedat Orfi and Mahmut Yesari demonstrate a new period in development of Turkish drama of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kurdakul 253).

The 1950's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are marked by drastic changes in Turkish drama. It was a time when heroes of literary works reflected national characters and modern Turkey became a place of action. The topic of Turkish village became a key one. Dramatic works of that time were mostly devoted to such concerns as the self-will of village elders, position of rural woman, spiritual degradation, the conflict of values and vendetta. This period was marked by the emergence of national dramaturgy that could not be strongly affected by copying and imitating of European originals. The plays of such dramatists as Oktay Rıfat, Melih Cevdet Anday, Haldun Taner, Nazım Kurşunlu, Orhan Asena, Çetin Altan and Nezihe Meriç reveal the tendency of switching from individual problems to social ones. All of these authors were keen to analyse Turkish people's attempts to change in accordance with European models without radical shifts in their basics, examine such phenomena as outlook contradictions, a gap between conventional canons and innovations and self-identification crisis.

The period between the 1960's and the 1980's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is considered to be fundamentally innovative in the development of dramaturgy. The artistic elite

that got an opportunity to express its thoughts and ideas more freely, started to develop new plots and choose new topics more openly (Belkıs 281). Such literary and artistic magazines as “The Upturn” (1960), “Turkish Language” (1960), “Papyrus” (1966), “Literature” (1968) etc. appeared between the 1960’s and the 1970’s. Political drama, inspired by Erwin Piscator’s works, becomes more and more popular. Turkish drama adopted such features of German dramaturgy as communist and revolutionary mood, realistic portrayal of politicians and sharp criticism of political system. Turkish dramatists that supported the slogan of Erwin Piscator, who declared that “Theatre was not a reflection of the epoch but a tool for its reformation,” strongly opposed to old theatrical traditions giving their preference to those literary works, which propagated socialist ideas. It was the first case in Turkish drama’s more than one-hundred-years history when it quit being an arena for entertainment and turned into a kind of art, claiming for philosophical ponderings (Buttanrı 64).

It is necessary to remark that researchers define a period between 1960 and 1980 as “a stage between two revolutions.” The events from real life became the central topic of that time’s literary works. The reception of B. Brecht’s views on epic theatre played a great role in the development of Turkish dramaturgy of 1960–1980. Turkish writers got interested in this German dramatist’s works for several reasons. Firstly, a huge number of his works was translated into different languages. Secondly, they coincided with the mood of that times’ Turkish society, which intended to make its choice freely and depict events in a realistic way. Loyal political conditions in the country also contributed to popularization of Brecht’s theatre. Turkish dramatists noticed how similar traditional Turkish folk theatre was to Brecht’s epic drama. Taking this resemblance and national peculiarities of Turkish drama into consideration, Turkish dramatists created conditions for writing plays that would be clear to Turkish audience from the point of view of their content and would remind Brecht’s style with their theatrical language. Haldun Taner (1915–1986) was the most outstanding representative of epic theatre. Following the traditions of folk drama and enriching them with oriental didacticism, he managed to create original plays (İpşiroğlu 80).

Keeping its development, Turkish drama was gradually overcoming borders and spreading to such countries as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, France and Germany (Nutku *Dünya Cilt 2* 369). When Herbert Melzig translated Aziz Nesin’s play “Could You Come?” into German in 1962, it became the first significant step in this direction. Today we can state that plays, written in the period since 1960 until 1980, combined both the elements of Turkish folk theatre and the innovations of modern dramaturgy.

Political conflicts and the events of September 12, 1980 in particular, that became a tipping point in Turkey's life, had a great influence on the germination of postmodern drama. It has strongly affected the development of culture, art and literature in Turkey. Between the 1980's and the 1990's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century both Turkish literature and dramaturgy experienced a sort of "thematic" crisis, caused by political and economic problems. Censorship, repressions, restrictions and limitations regarded to both political and cultural spheres. Aiming to restrict any manifestations of the freedom of thought, the government forbade works by many writers and even tried to exclude such words as "revolution," "nation," "organization / association" etc. from every-day use. The 12<sup>th</sup> of September is usually referred to "the bloodiest period in the history of republic" since it was characterized by the attempts of "total rearrangement of Turkish society" by means of tortures, repressions, oppressions and high-profile cases. Trying to avoid political issues, dramatists started to work over those themes that society used to consider obscene and too private. Such topics as sexuality, sexual relations, private life etc. were among them (Balık 2380). Such genre as tragedy started to escape from the stage since it gave its place to vaudevilles and comedies. The appearance of such historical dramas as "Mad Ibrahim" and "Selim III" (Turan Oflazoğlu), "Hürrem Sultan" (Orhan Asena), "I am Mimar Sinan" (Turgut Özakman), "If I Were Yunus" (Nihat Asyalı), "Goncagül's Pen Name" and "Parents" (Oktay Arayıcı), "Yunus Emre" (Recep Bilginer) and "Our Love is the Biggest Fire in Aksaray" (Güngör Dilmen) was rather exceptions than the rule. Such authors as Adem Atar, Behiç Ak, Haluk Işık, Civan Canova, Coşkun Irmak, Coşkun Büktel, Erman Canatan, Yıldırım Şentürk, Memet Baydur, Mikail Burak Uçar, Murathan Mungan, Orhan Güner, Turgay Nar, Hasan Erkek, Ülkü Ayvaz etc. created a new generation of dramatists. Constantly being limited and restricted, Turkish writers were gradually losing their wish to write. Despite that fact that private theatres managed to keep their position, they also had to perform one-actor plays to be able to cover their financial losses. Theatres were losing their spectators who tended to give preference to TV programs (Şener 223). Theatres began to perform plays of such foreign authors as W. Shakespeare ("King Lear," "Hamlet"), C. Goldoni ("Servant of Two Masters"), N. Gogol ("The Government Inspector"), E. Ionesco ("The King is Dying"), W. Peter ("The Investigation"), A. Strindberg ("The Creditors"), E. Shine ("Traces") etc.

The period of the 1980s and the 1990s was not favorable for active development of Turkish dramaturgy. Despite rather complicated political situation, those plays that vividly reflected the main elements of national identity became very popular. Such concerns as historical memory and the intention of Turkish people to be

back to their basics are considered to be among these elements. Turkish dramatists actively described the topics given below:

1. *Family relationship, problems of women and youth* (“My Wife and Daughter” and “The Jealous” by Recep Bilginer, “Worms in the Root” and “The Game of Dreams” by Hidayet Sayın, “The Coltsfoot” by Necati Cumalı, “Blue Birds in the Birdcage of Saz” by Semih Serger, “The Abyss” by Erman Canatan, “Goncagül’s Pen Name” by Oktay Arayıcı, “The Old Children of the World,” “The Remotes” and “The Sprouts in Love” by Ülker Köksal, “Martyrshka Doll” and “Ladies” by Tuncer Cücenöglü, “The Branches Must be Green” by Vedat Türkali, “The Slaves of the Night” by Dinçer Sümer, “The Custom” by Turgut Özakman, “The Fight for a Corner” by Hidayet Sayın, “Behçet Bey’s Slouch” by Kenan Işık, “When Water Comes” by Remzi Özçelik, “Women’s Cell” by Lale Oralöglü, “The Scorpio” by Eşber Yağmurdereli, “Behind the Taurus Mountains” by Orhan Asena, “Two People Who Did It,” “The Medal” and “Halay” by Refik Erduran, “The Republican Girl,” “Orchids in the Place of Fire,” “A Masked Rider” and “Okra with Forcemeat Cooked in Pressure Cooker” by Memet Baydur).

2. *The combination of mythic and historical motives* (“Make or Break” and “The First Years (Hürrem Sultan)” by Orhan Asena, “Two Sons of the Emperor” by Nezihe Araz, “Yıldırım Beyazıt” by Hidayet Sayın, “The Illustrated History of the Ottoman Empire” and “I am Mimar Sinan” by Turgut Özakman, “Sokollu” and “After the Culmination” by Yılmaz Karakoyunlu and “Barbaros Hayrettin” by Fazıl Hayati Çorbacıoğlu) that consists of *historical* (“Yunus Emre” by Recep Bilginer, “I Have Found the Best,” “Afife Jale” and “Cahide” by Nezihe Araz, “I Have Also Entered It” by Tarık Buğra, “I Have Played the Role of Yunus” by Nihat Asyalı, “Mevlana” by Recep Bilginer, “The Appointment” by İsmet Hürmüzlü, “Oh Motherland! Motherland!” by Necati Cumalı, “Our Sky” by Sönmez Atasoy and “Bizarre Orhan Veli” by Murathan Mungan) and *mythic* (“Crazy Dumrul,” “White Gods” and “I Was Killed in Troy” by Güngör Dilmen, “Tepegöz” by Turgay Nar, “Mahmut and Yezida,” “The Empathy” and “The Curse of the Deers” by Murathan Mungan, “I Miss Troy” by Ülkü Ayvaz, “The Beauty of Miletus” by Coşkun Irmak and “The Toys of Gods” by Hidayet Sayın) plays. Thus, O. Asena devoted his play “The First Years (Hürrem Sultan)” to the relationship between Suleiman the Magnificent and Hürrem Sultan (also referred to as Roxelana), who played a significant role in the history of the Ottoman Empire. The preference of psy-

chological moments is determined by the image of Sultan. As the majority of writers who dedicated their works to Suleiman the Magnificent, O. Asena also did not manage to avoid idealization of his image, as far as he depicted him as a fair ruler who takes efforts to improve simple people's life. In his play Suleiman says: "*A fisherman, who has no money to feed himself and his family, also matters to me*" (Asena 24).

It is necessary to admit that both Western and Oriental writers tended to describe their rulers in an idealistic way, claiming them to be very different from their real prototypes. The image of Suleiman the Magnificent created by O. Asena is rather far from the one fixed in historical sources. However, such contradictions did not reduce the magnificence of Suleiman's figure as a ruler and person or make it less persuasive. The intension of young generation's representatives to interpret the images of historical figures in this way is determined by their wish to create a new mythology based on their national history.

3. *The evolution of human personality* ("Our Love Is the Biggest Fire in Aksaray" by Güngör Dilmen, "Wake Up Smiling" by Necati Cumalı, "Istanbul's Languorous Eyes" by Melisa Gürpınar, "The Immortals" by Melih Cevdet Anday and "My Bicycle Was Blue" by Dinçer Sümer). Thus, D. Sümer, who wrote his play "My Bicycle Was Blue" (1986) as a confession and retrospective self-reflection, depicts a wish of human beings to understand their essence and find their own place in the society. This play mainly consists of monologues where its characters reveal their inner emotions and hidden intensions that enable spectators to capture dramatic dynamics of their feelings, veiled behind the dialogues that seem to be superficial. This technique, that requires the deceleration of action in monologues and its acceleration in dialogues, provides the intensity of emotional field. Since the play "My Bicycle Was Blue" was created according to Meddahs' performing style and traditions, it has a limited number of characters. We have to admit that the remarks given in this play are longer and more significant in comparison with those of his prior works. It displays a gradual increase of remarks' role in Turkish dramatic discourse of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

4. *Liberation war, historical memory and attempts to gasp out the meaning of Atatürk's figure* ("The Speech" by Özdemir Nutku, "The Speech" by Özer Ozankaya, "For the Sake of Motherland" by Semih Sergen, "The Metamorphosis" by Refik Erduran, "To Tear One Soul Off Another One" by Orhan

Asena, “Five Minutes to Nine” by Nezihe Araz, “From War to Peace, From Love to Quarrel” by Recep Bilginer and “Goodbye, Republic!” by Selim İleri).

5. *The events of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September* (“The Deadlock” by Tuncer Cücençoğlu, “Let the Glasses Break” by Adem Atar, “The Memories of a Prosecutor” by Faruk Erem, “Woman That Does Not Exist” by Kenan Işık, “The Joy of Pain” by Bilgesu Erenus and “Once Upon a Time There Were a Man and a Woman” by Ferdi Merter). “The Joy of Pain” by B. Erenus made a sort of breakthrough in drama in terms of both content and composition. Its plot is based on the events of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September and their impact on four young people’s fate. This play became one of the first dramatic works with a multi-vector plot. There are several actions, related to the destiny of each character. This play is not just up-to-date in terms of its topic, but also nationally based, as its plot reflects a crucial moment of Turkish history.

One of the most peculiar features of dramas written after the 1990’s is the tendency to limit the place of action. In this way writers intended to reveal the souls of lonely urban inhabitants, imprisoned in a big city. Such dramatists as Turgay Nar (“The Seamstress’s Scissors,” “Love’s Legs” and “Okra with Force-meat Cooked in Pressure Cooker”), Memet Baydur (“Love”), Civan Canova (“On the Doomsday’s Eve,” “The Light on the Opposite Side of the Red” and “The Leaves of Jasmine”), Özen Yula (“Tired of Red” and “Black Oriental Eyes”) and Behiç Ak (“The Parting” and “The Building”) also raised this topic in their plays (Çetindoğan 113). Thus, in the play “On the Doomsday’s Eve” (1994) C. Canova, having introduced its characters, informs the readers and spectators telling that the action will be taking place in a flat located in one of Istanbul’s living blocks. The dramatist immediately lets them know that here the image of house or flat, usually referred to as “family hearth,” will undergo some transformations. The flat in megalopolis becomes a place where the main heroes live and die. It serves as a living space to several generations, represented by mother, father, their son and his pregnant wife. They are all waiting for the doomsday since they watched the news reporting about a huge comet, falling down to totally ruin the Earth soon. The reader or viewer may notice the characters’ passivity and unwillingness to make their life better in all their phrases:

**Husband:** Horses, wolves and jackals... All of them are informing us about the catastrophe for twenty-four hours a day.

**Wife** (appealing to herself): It is so hot over here.

**Husband:** And it keeps intensifying. Even yesterday it was not so strong.



Last night.

**Husband:** It is because it is coming... It is approaching as a dragon that came very close to his victim. We are so weak. We keep sitting here motionlessly. We are... a prey. All of us, all the world...

**Father:** Everything, everything that may breathe will be in this ugly creature's burning jaws soon. Everything including this room and all our memories...

**Wife:** Oh these mice, they kept rustling all night long. If only I could catch all of them.

**Husband:** Skip it, they will all die and extinct with these wine glasses... (he switches on the radio).

**Speaker:** Scientists are working hard in order to make the comet change its fall radius.

**Father:** While they are working hard, this comet is coming closer and closer to us, so it will reach us soon.

**Speaker:** Today Vatican made a pronouncement. "Regardless of religion a human... (interferences) All the representatives are gathering in Vatican... (interferences) The presidents of all countries of the world... (interferences) are quite anxious... During the day it is going to crash into the Moon and within next four hours it is supposed to bump into the Earth," said the Bishop of Rome (Prushkovska 301).

Such delimiters as door and window that symbolize the possibility to pass to a new space limit for a confined space of their flat. However, the author emphasizes his characters' reluctance to overcome their fears and make a step towards a better future. Somebody knocks at their door all the time: it may be their housekeeper Satılmış or their mother's relative. While both the housekeeper and their mother's relative change their place freely and do not think about the doomsday, mother, father and their son just receive the guests "from outside" and do nothing to leave that enclosed space.

Their son's pregnant wife is the only person who managed to keep her common sense and her belief in a better future. C. Canova consciously resorts to the opposition between the doomsday and new life in order to encourage his readers and spectators to think over and analyze their own life. He believes that fears are just people's superstitions to be overcome (Prushkovska 304).

A period between the 1990's and the 2000's is significant due to productive activity of such writers as Memet Baydur, Murathan Mungan, Tuncer Cücenoglu,

Sabahattin Kudret Aksal, Nezihe Araz, Orhan Asena, Erdoğan Aytekin, Recep Bilginer, Sabahattin Engin, Refik Erduran, Bilgesu Erenus, Mehmet Murat İldan, Yılmaz Karakoyunlu, A. Turan Oflazoğlu, Turgut Özakman and Hidayet Sayın (Buttanrı 72). Memet Baydur played the most significant role in Turkish drama of those years. In every play (there are over twenty of them) he raises such problems as the state of Turkish society and the nation's moral code ("The Republican Girl," "Orchids in the Place of Fire," "A Masked Rider," "Okra with Forcemeat Cooked in Pressure Cooker").

Necati Cumalı depicted life of people living in a totalitarian state ("Wake Up Smiling" (1990), "Monstera deliciosa" (1992)). Despite that fact that concerns that N. Cumalı were rather actual, they were not original or fundamentally new. Such concerns as women's state in the society ("The Housewives" (1995) by E. Canatan, "A Place in the Middle of the World" (1994) by Ö. Yula), family conflicts ("Only the Dead One" (1990) by N. Cumalı, "I Miss Troy" (1993) by Ü. Ayvaz, "On the Doomsday's Eve" (1994) by C. Canova), inter-gender relations ("Love's Legs" (1992), "The Birth" (1992), "A Kiss in Its Common Meaning" (1993), "The Chinese Butterfly" (1994) by Memet Baydur and "Matryoshka Doll" (1994) by T. Cücenoglu), human beings' attempts to find their place in the society and self-definition of youth ("The Anxiety of the Moon" (1996) by Ö. Yula, "The Light on the Opposite Side of the Red" (1996) by C. Canova, "The Threshold" (1997) by H. Erkek), relations between society and individual ("The Lorry" (1990), "Okra with Forcemeat Cooked in Pressure Cooker" (1991), "A Green Parrot Called Limited" (1992), "The Fragments of Glass" (1996) and "The Thieves of Apples" (1996) by M. Baydur) and historical memory ("Hello, America" (1992) by H. Işık, "Vladimir Komarov" (1990), "Tenzing" (1993) and "The Osier" (2000) by M. Baydur, "Kerbela" (1996) by A. Berktaş, "Marcus Antonius, Cleopatra" (1993) by O. Güner) were also traditional. Thus, the dramatists of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mostly continued working over the topics of previous periods and did not raise new concerns in their works. Nevertheless, the majority of Turkish plays of that period was focused on national issues. In addition, the quality of that time's works became much higher.

Since the 2000's postmodernism becomes a mainstream in Turkish literature. Turkish postmodern dramatists tend to deconstruct social, national and religious myths ("A City for One Person" (2002), "The Killer of Image" (2005), "Two Multiplied by Two" (2006) and "What Does Newton Understand About Computer?" (2012) by Behiç Ak, "Something Like a Play" (2001) by Haluk Işık and "Mevlana" (2001) by Recep Bilginer). Literary critics, culturologists and translators begin to analyze dramatic works. Such facts as a huge number of published dramatic plays

nowadays, a great variety of state and private theatres in Turkey, an updating of their repertoire annually, an appearance of dramaturgy faculties in Turkish universities and an increase of critical editions devoted to the problems of theatre show that there are some positive tendencies in modern Turkish drama's development. In addition, it is necessary to admit that such peculiarities of postmodern literature as an adoption of various cultures' aesthetic achievements, an application of text arrangement principle that regards literary based material, its metaliterary character and intertextuality etc. are inherent to modern Turkish drama.

During the period between the end of the 1990's and the beginning of the 2000's such authors as Tuncer Cücenöglü, Memet Baydur, Ferhan Şensoy, Uğur Uludağ, Orhan Güner, Ali Berktaş, Tarık Günersel, Zeynep Kaçar and others became popular both in Turkey and abroad. Volkan Taha Şeker, Savaş Aykılıç, Cemal Arslan and such young dramatists as Caner Bilginer, Raşit Çelikezer and Şule Gürbüz also contributed to the development of Turkish drama. Thus, T. Cücenöglü became popular due to thematic universalism and topicality of his works in terms of any country's literature. Since F. Şensoy actively applied the traditions of folk theatre to his plays, such of them as "The Song a Tram Went Through" and "See You, Godot" gained the biggest popularity among Turkish spectators.

There were several commonly revealed topics during that period. Dramatists of that time usually worked over such themes as human beings' attempts to find their place in society ("Something Like a Play" (2001) by H. Işık, "Not Those People" (2001) by R. Çelikezer, "Without Compass" (2007), "In the Deep Country" (2006) and "Lick But Don't Swallow" (2007) by Ö. Yula, "White Lie" (2009) by A. Bayramoğlu, "Sell Me the Forbidden" (2013), "Posters in the Shade of Stars" (2013) and "The Shovel" (2013) by V. T. Şeker), the role of women in modern world ("The Wedding" (2011) by A. Bayramoğlu, "Such a Fairytale About Love" (2001) and "Real People, Plastic Deaths" (2008) by Z. Kaçar) and the role that individual plays in historical process ("A Half Glass of Water" (2003) by T. Günersel, "King Harun" (2003), "Troy Is Invincible" (2002) and "Feather, Sword, Heart" (2002) by S. Aykılıç, "The Wedding at Dobrinj" (2004) by N. Kazankaya and "Shams, Do Not Forget!" (2006) by Ö. Yula. Thus, we may conclude that Turkish dramatists worked over traditional themes for quite a long time. Authors just changed their opinion about these issues and improved quality of their artistic materials' representation. Since postmodern art requires both remote and usually ironic attitude towards various phenomena that humanity used to believe in, and freely combining them in different ways, this stream was highly appreciated by many Turkish artists who resorted to it in order to interpret drama's national traditions in a new way.

## Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of facts dealing with Turkish dramaturgy and revealing its main features give an opportunity to recreate the key points of its development since the germination of traditional folk theatre till the emergence of author's drama and the newest postmodern theatre. It also enables researchers to trace its thematic and stylistic evolution. As the majority of periodization alternatives, previously introduced in academic sources, ours is based on the main events of Turkish history. However, we took the role of external literary impacts into consideration and expended those schemes adding facts upon the appearance of author's drama that became a significant factor in Turkish dramaturgy's evolution. Our research revealed that Turkish dramatic tradition traces back for many years as there are many references to ancient Turks' dramatic performances of pre-Ottoman period (until the 13<sup>th</sup> century). Our research demonstrated that the tradition of dramatic performances enriched with the elements of Sufis' rituals originated at the times of the Ottoman Empire (since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). It also detected further popularization of such kinds of folk theatre as "Karagöz," "Orta Oyunu," "Kukla Oyunu" and "Meddah." The problems raised in that period's Turkish drama, as well as its artistic peculiarities, were determined by certain non-literary (strengthening of Islam's position in the state, empire building and formation of its ideology, attempts to maintain a balance between national specifics and Western impacts) and literary (going beyond its merely entertaining functions, masked characters' role definition, complication of folk drama's composition) factors. That period served as a stage for switching from folk drama to author's one. Our research displayed that the basics of Turkish author's drama had been formed between the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Ottoman rulers' reforms and gradual Westernisation of Turkish culture. 1842 is considered to be a year when the genres of Turkish dramaturgy started to vary (comedy, tragedy, musical drama, farce) following the example of Western European dramaturgy. The influence of French dramaturgy (particularly inspired by Molière's works) became more vivid. At the same time folk drama managed to keep its position, as Meddahs' mono-performances were still popular. Available scientific works show that in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkish dramatists were keen to create an original literature, basing on Western European examples. Their efforts enabled the synthesis of various traditions including Turkish, Armenian and Western European. At the same time, Turkish folk theatre "Karagöz" also kept functioning. Enriching their works with elements of "Orta Oyunu," Turkish dramatists of that period tended to resort to

genre contamination (ballet, opera) and stylistic symbiosis.

The materials dealing with Turkish drama demonstrate that it experienced its golden age within the 1960's and the 1970's. Having combined the achievements of folk drama and B. Brecht's "epic theatre," Turkish drama managed to create its repertoire (an individual's attempts to find his or her place in society; the role woman plays in the modern world; an artistic comprehension of national mythology and history), and gained fame abroad. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when young writers' generation got involved in Turkish literature, Turkish drama acquired a range of new themes (particularly, nationally marked topic of the 12<sup>th</sup> of 1980 became inherent to political drama) and genre innovations, became really national and took its place in the world's dramaturgy. This evolution became possible due to such factors as numerous transformations that folk drama faced under the influence of Westernisation, the application of borrowed dramatic techniques in terms of Turkish literature and Turkish authors' intension to reconsider and figure out their "essence" in another social and cultural context. At the same time, it is necessary to admit that Turkish dramaturgy experienced a sort of "accelerated" but forced development that did not enable it to form its own stylistic peculiarities replaced with their eclectic alternatives.

Thus, having emerged in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Turkish author's drama managed to take its place among national dramas of the world within one hundred and fifty years, due to strong traditions of folk drama enriched with Western European experience.

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